

A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory

A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory

Edited by Imre Szeman, Sarah Blacker, and Justin Sully

WILEY Blackwell

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Introduction

Imre Szeman, Sarah Blacker, and Justin Sully

[Thought] is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action – a perilous act.

—Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (357)

Though both critical and cultural theory have undergone innumerable changes since the term “critical theory” first started to be used in conjunction with the work of the Frankfurt School (*Institut für Sozialforschung*) in the 1930s, the impulse and imperative guiding the activity of theory remains the one named bluntly by the School’s director, Max Horkheimer: “Its goal is man’s emancipation from slavery” (1975, 246). We might be tempted to imagine that the knowledges generated by cultural, social, and political inquiry over the past several centuries – a process still best captured in the drama of human maturity that Immanuel Kant named as the answer to the question of “What is Enlightenment?” – have taken us a long way towards this goal, if not having achieved it altogether. But we would be wrong to accede to this temptation. The quotidian, commonsense view that, over the course of time, the world has become more democratic and equitable is a powerful one; it has maintained its hold on our imaginations in the face of all manner of evidence to the contrary. The tasks of achieving genuine emancipation, real autonomy, vibrant democratic self-rule, active civic participation, and true social justice – these tasks, among many others central to the activity of politics, remain incomplete. We can (and should) argue over exactly what constitutes emancipation, and we can (and should) challenge the presumptions that have long made “man” a too easy substitute for “human” (as in Horkheimer’s phrase above). But the point remains: there is still an enormous amount of work to be done for the planet’s population to attain the capacities, possibilities, and opportunities that one might want it to possess, individually and collectively.

The work of generating new knowledge cannot but contribute to the project of emancipation. But if, as the saying goes, “knowledge will set you free,” critical and cultural theory has attended to all of the ways in which the great and expanding systems of knowledge of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also able to entrap us. What

makes critical theory “critical” is its ceaseless interrogation of the processes by which knowledge gets transformed into doxa. Critical theorists have approached the problem of particular forms of knowledge being rendered as “natural” and “inevitable,” and their circulation as common sense, from a number of different angles, many of which are addressed in the contributions to this *Companion*. As distinct from (say) political philosophy or social theory, which might also attend to the generation of what Antonio Gramsci described as the “spontaneous consent” of hegemony, critical and cultural theory names a range of theoretical and conceptual approaches to the mechanisms through which some knowledges are rendered into common sense within the space of culture, broadly defined. Even a quick glance at the titles of the chapters collected in this volume underlines the degree to which “culture, broadly defined” has expanded to include zones of social life quite incompatible with any notion of culture that circulated fifty years ago. This insatiably incorporative, interdisciplinary drive in critical and cultural theory is not new, nor are the attendant problems that continue to emerge at the margins of “culture” as it abuts, intersects, and melds with the political, economic, biological, and informational. In this sense, to analyze the cultural reproduction of hegemonic common sense – that discursive mechanism that filters our worlds into meaningful statements, calculable information and knowledge – is to work at softening the edges of categorical distinctions. The site- and thematically specific analyses collected in this *Companion* endeavor to understand how particular social orders are naturalized and reified through the cementing of social hierarchies in places that often appear to be distinct from politics *per se* and the terrain upon which inequalities are reproduced – sites such as identity, race and ethnicity, the body, popular culture, and affect – but which, in fact, constitute the most important spaces of the political today. The chapters that follow describe the analytics used by theorists to render these processes of naturalization and reification legible for critique, highlighting how emancipation requires a thorough grasp of the increasingly complex mechanisms of cultural and social life today.

The modern period is defined by nothing if not the creation of a division of labor that produces intellectuals responsible for generating and safeguarding expert knowledge. These systems of expertise concern the natural world, with its many laws and axioms, but equally the social world and the operations of subjectivity. For all their disagreement, the most influential theorists of the past two centuries are bound together in their assault upon the self-certainties of knowledge as it becomes systemized and, in the process, transformed into a form of expertise whose commitment is no longer to the task of emancipation, but of securing the social and political power granted to expert knowledge. From Karl Marx’s interrogation of political economy to Sigmund Freud’s investigation of rationality and subjectivity, and from Judith Butler’s examination of the constitution of gender to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s exploration of subalternity and the problems of representation – each advances claims about the order of things that aim to unsettle scientisms and simple positivisms; each wants to show the ways in which power seizes hold of knowledge to define reality for the benefit of some and to the detriment of everyone else. The systems of expert knowledge that underwrite modern experience are ineluctably bound up with the emergence of the modern state, which has exerted its power, through direct domination, “the technologies of the self,” or via the political rationality that Foucault described as “governmentality.” The modern university is both a product and an instrument of this bureaucratic system of knowledge

production and management. “The state,” Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, “has the power to orient intellectual production by means of subsidies, commissions, promotion, honorific posts, even decorations, all of which are for speaking or keeping silent, for compromise or abstention” (1984, 17). Against these operations in support of the official knowledge stand critical and cultural theorists – figures who ceaselessly “struggle against the forms of power that transform [them] into its object and instrument in the sphere of ‘knowledge,’ ‘truth,’ ‘consciousness,’ and ‘discourse’” (Foucault in Foucault and Deleuze 1977, 208).

Innumerable volumes that set out to track developments in critical and cultural theory have tended with surprising consistency to stage and affirm it as an area of expertise, one that (given what we’ve just said above) critical theory would itself need to immediately challenge for the way in which it transforms knowledge into static *dispositifs* of a technocratic kind. This is why students and researchers alike have come to imagine the practice of cultural analysis as being divided up into a set of discrete methodological choices from which they can choose as if choosing tools from a toolbox.¹ Even more problematically, these choices are all too often imagined as – and indeed, in practice all too often are – guided by personal preference, rather than motivated by the critical work demanded by the problems encountered. A real danger of a book such as this resides in this tendency to further reinforce the idea that work of critical theory consists of self-identification with a specific approach or cohort of researchers (“I’m a Marxist” or “I’m a feminist”). To avoid this, this *Companion* has been shaped to emphasize critical and cultural theory’s capacities to challenge the language of expertise across the disciplines, and, in doing so, to draw attention to the range of ways it engages in the collective project of emancipation.

Gathering together some of the most widely read and innovative theorists working today, *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory* collects thirty-three essays designed to illuminate the topics that dominate theoretical debate today and, we anticipate, for some time to come. In framing the book around the problems and issues animating contemporary discourse, we have worked at every stage to ensure that each chapter provides a sense of the longer history of these conversations in order to reflect the massive work of synthesis that has shaped critical and cultural theory as it exists today. At the same time, our hope is that by shifting focus away from the more familiar “approaches” to theory, this book will provide readers with fresh perspectives on both familiar and under-theorized questions and topics animating the field of contemporary critical and cultural theory. Capturing the dynamism of contemporary theory, the essays collected here present a comprehensive account of the ways in which the study of literature, culture, and social practices has been, and continues to be, challenged by the conceptual and political energies of critical and cultural theory.

The book is divided into two sections, entitled “Lineages” and “Problematics.” Taken together, these sections are designed to provide a genealogy of critical and cultural theory that highlights its heterogeneous geographical, cultural, and theoretical influences (“Lineages”), while also foregrounding the issues and problems animating contemporary theoretical discourse (“Problematics”). The first section traces the movement of ideas in critical and cultural theory across space and time. The main theoretical movement or school each chapter addresses is included in the chapter title; however, instead of offering an encyclopedia-like overview, we have encouraged contributors to develop a narrative shaped around a specific vector of dates and places significant for

the development of that school, movement, or orientation in theoretical discourse. By encouraging authors to narrate the intellectual history of critical and cultural theory through a set of concrete events and contexts, we aim to emphasize the way in which the foundational concepts and topoi of contemporary theoretical discourse (e.g., mediation, representation, ideology, and identity) are formed *conjuncturally* as part of a larger drama of personalities, institutions, political struggles, and social and cultural contexts.

Instead of beginning with “the Frankfurt School,” or “Deconstruction,” for instance, chapters in this first section of the book present a more situated history of the events, disagreements, and migrations out of which these familiar schools of thought arose. From this perspective, the time and space of origin of some of these key movements are surprisingly contained. In Sean Homer’s account, structuralism is a Parisian theory, developed out of debates between French thinkers about epistemology and the history of science; as it migrates to the United States via the important 1966 Johns Hopkins University conference, “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,” and in the wake of civil unrest in France in May 1968, the originary energies and commitments of structuralism drain away. Other theories live more global lives. Neil ten Kortenaar narrates the development of colonial and postcolonial theory through three key speeches – by Jawaharlal Nehru (1947), Martin Luther King (1963), and Nelson Mandela (1964) – each with a distinct aim: the first to kick off the development of a new constitution, the second to motivate a mass demonstration in the U.S. capital, and the third to indict those whose racism allows them to imagine they are enacting some perverse form of justice. Behind the cities in which these speeches are given – Delhi, Washington, and Pretoria – lurks a second set of spaces equally (if not more) important to the narrative of the development of postcolonial theory – Ahmednagar Fort, Birmingham Jail, and Robben Island – the names of the prisons in which each figure was held. In the case of postcolonialism, theory and history are folded together in such a way that it would be impossible to grasp the dynamics that have shaped its commitments and politics without attention to the narrative of political and racial emancipation out of which it emerged. Providing a sense of the complex historical foundation of critical and cultural theory itself, we believe the conjunctural approach of the “Lineages” section generates new critical-theoretical accounts of influences, affiliations, and connections, both within intellectual currents and in relation to broader developments in culture, society, and politics.

Let us be clear: the point of these named beginnings and ends is not to identify the birth or death of specific critical movements, or to speak to high points in the life of ideas (after which they’ve since faded away), as might seem to be the case. We are not implying (for instance) that the era of cultural studies lasts from the founding of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (1964) to the 1990 conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that resulted in the book *Cultural Studies* (1991), or that analyses of gender and sexuality begin with Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) and end with Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990). These would be bizarre claims in both cases. In many respects, 1990 marks not the end of cultural studies but its full appearance on the intellectual scene: the moment when it arrives in the United States and becomes an important, ongoing approach to the study of culture. So, too, with respect to the study of gender and sexuality: Butler’s influential book is an index of the reinvigorated critique of gender in the 1980s and 1990s, one that informs some of the most vibrant forms of critical cultural analysis today. The aim is for these chapters to offer broad histories of critical and cultural theory by focusing on a

dominant moment or trajectory, against which other developments can be measured, assessed, and contextualized. As Sarah Brophy puts it in her sweeping account of the crystallization of gender and sexuality as objects of theoretical inquiry, “the legacies of 1949–1990 are incendiary – desiring, passion-infused, world-transforming ... thinkers in this period imagined ways of collectively and individually resisting gender and sexual oppression and rethought the very constitution of gender and sexuality.” Overall, we hope that this section will provide an exciting history of the moments and passages of critical and cultural theory around the globe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, one which will give readers a sharper sense of the contexts out of which it has emerged, and its ongoing significance for literary and cultural studies writ large.

The second section, called “Problematics,” also introduces a new way of characterizing and conceiving of the what and the why of contemporary theory. This section provides an overview of critical and cultural theory by tracing the key problems and issues that the field engages. As these chapters make plain, the conversations driving critical and cultural theory today rarely conform to schools of thought (structuralism, post-structuralism, etc.) or to allegiances of individual theorists (Badiou, Butler, Haraway, etc.). Grouped together by analytical orientation into three sub-sections (“Living and Laboring,” “Being and Knowing,” and “Structures of Agency and Belonging”), the essays on problematics cut across the field’s existing debates, foci, and subfields, with the aim of capturing the horizontal, collaborative production of theory, and in so doing highlight new questions and approaches in critical and cultural theory. By tracking dominant problems of critical and cultural theory, this volume again moves away from the idea of theory as blunt method, instead drawing attention to how and why theory originates out of questions and issues animating contemporary cultural, social, and political life. In this way, we believe that this volume better captures the issues that have given shape and direction to literary and cultural studies since World War II. Despite the tremendous level of innovation that characterizes writing in theory today, most recent volumes published as “guides” or “companions” to critical and cultural theory have done little to address the degree to which debates have changed since the theoretical “turns” of the 1980s and 1990s. *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory* offers its readers a sense of the sharp and sophisticated investigations that are taking place on a whole range of issues: community, work, race, indigeneity, the everyday, disability, science, nature, narrative – much more.

An important analytical framework deployed by many of the *Companion’s* chapters is a Foucauldian one that draws attention to the ubiquity and seeming banality of power as it circulates on a micro scale, constituting our everyday lives without much fanfare. Contributors to this book hone in on the mechanisms through which a power–knowledge nexus produces and naturalizes our lived realities, encapsulating them with an impenetrable sense of necessity that all too often inhibits critique and our ability to imagine otherwise. In grappling with and analyzing the function of the myriad “regimes of truth” that produce our commonsense understandings of who we are and what is worth striving for, each chapter models methods through which we can trace the work of power as it produces knowledge through discourse, institutions, science, law, and popular culture. These chapters follow Foucault, too, in their emphasis on the productive capacities of power, rather than focusing solely on its repressive aspect. An important outcome of Foucault’s emphasis on the mechanisms through which power produces social orders and regimes of truth is an opening through which work in critical and

cultural theory can address not only the modalities of oppression that produce forms of inequality, but also the modes through which knowledge is produced that allows concepts of difference to begin to be legible in the first place. To look at one example, in his chapter on “Race and Ethnicity,” Min Hyung Song discusses how neoliberal humanism works to naturalize inequality by rendering race a category of identity, thereby obscuring histories of exploitation. Song’s own aim to demonstrate how “inequalities are historically produced” does not, however, necessitate doing away with the concept of race, in the name of which so much harm has been done. He critiques the neoliberal “post-racial” society and the forms of historical amnesia it promotes, arguing instead that just as the concept of race holds within it the capacity to enact violence, the concept also holds value because it allows us to name these forms of oppression, to analyze the forms of power that produce these forms of oppression, and to develop forms of resistance to counter the endemic forms of devaluation that allowed racialization to emerge and flourish as an epistemology and form of social control.

The attempt to “culturalize” inequalities so that they appear natural and inevitable in any given social order also raises familiar, but no less troubling questions for cultural theory. How should we understand the relationship between culture and the economy? While the base–superstructure model has been widely critiqued as reductive, the question of how to understand the role of a political-economic system and its dynamic relationship with the social order as it informs culture remains a pressing one. To continue with the example of Song’s chapter, it is important to examine how among the conditions of possibility for the development and flourishing of capitalism was a culture of racialization in which groups of people were understood to be biologically distinct from one another; the cultural entrenchment of this hierarchization allowed for racist practices that supported the development of capitalism, from the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the mechanisms through which the present-day criminalization and imprisonment of racialized Americans keeps the U.S. prison-industrial complex afloat. Many of the chapters in this *Companion* situate the problematics they address within a clearly defined political-economic context, and they productively problematize any simple notions of how this “base” and the cultural forms in question shape one another. Moving well beyond the once-dogmatic trio of modalities of oppression – of race, class, and gender – these chapters also explore more complex social forms arising out of power’s productive capacities.

In an era in which knowledge is being both produced and obscured at a rate faster than we – or our new companion species, the big data aggregator – can adequately interpret, some believe that we have reached the limits of critical and cultural theory’s capacity to remain a generative practice. In “The Misadventures of Critical Thought,” Jacques Rancière comments that many now believe we’re at the end of “the tradition of social and cultural critique my generation grew up in” (Rancière 2009, 26). “Once we could have fun denouncing the dark, solid reality concealed behind the brilliance of appearances,” he writes. “But today there is allegedly no longer any solid reality to counter-pose to the reign of appearances, nor any dark reverse side to the opposed to the triumph of consumer society” (26). Rancière doesn’t believe claims about the end of social and cultural critique are correct; and if for different and distinct reasons – as many as the voices, outlooks, and critical vantage points collected here attest – neither do the authors in this *Companion*.

We are living through an exceptionally challenging time in which new mechanisms of knowledge production and circulation, together with those economic and political

practices that have been termed “neoliberalism,” are threatening many of those small achievements that have been made in the name of emancipation. In her book *Undoing the Demos*, Wendy Brown reminds us “democracy can be undone, hollowed out from within, not only overthrown or stymied by anti-democrats. And desire for democracy is neither given nor incorruptible; indeed, even democratic theorists such as Rousseau and Mill acknowledge the difficulty of crafting democratic spirits from the material of European modernity” (2015, 18). Contemporary critical and cultural theory reminds us that democratic life – even of the impoverished variety found in most actually existing forms of representative democracy – is not achieved simply by the forward momentum of history. And it provides us with the vocabularies and vantage points from which we can – we must – continue to challenge the myriad ways in which we are asked to accept as given the concepts and practices that power has shaped into our commonsense understanding of the world. Emancipation is too important a task to be left behind or left undone; we hope this book gives impetus to projects of critical and cultural theory that will help shape what we are into what we want to be.

Note

- 1 The reference here is to Jeffrey T. Nealon and Susan Searls Giroux, *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the New Humanities* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). Even if it suggests too great of a fixity of theoretical approaches, the metaphor of theory as tools is far better than theory as personal preference, since specific tools are used to undertake specific tasks.

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Part I

Lineages

1

Frankfurt – New York – San Diego 1924–1968; or, Critical Theory

Andrew Pendakis

All thoughts are zoned, but very few come to be known by the name of a place. Though Jena was the site of a remarkable flourishing of thought in the 1790s it never acquired the legacy of an eponym; similarly, the milieu called “poststructuralism” by Americans was never really a “Paris School” despite the almost total confinement of the phenomenon named by the term to that city. It would appear that neither spatial proximity, nor coequality, nor even resemblance on the terrain of ideas is enough to transform a network of thoughts into the concreteness and determinacy named by a place. It was possible for Frankfurt to become the eponym of a thought, indeed, a synonym for critical theory itself, because that thought was first a “school” – a formalized, articulated institutional machine.

A socialist benefactor whose father made his money in grain; a prudently negotiated affiliation with the University of Frankfurt; a significant network of research and administrative assistants; a spacious building constructed from scratch to house the institute: this is the infrastructural unconscious of perhaps the most comprehensive critique of “administered life” ever developed (Marcuse 2012, 50).¹ Critical theory survived the myriad (mortal) risks of its time, in part on the basis of the durability and material effectiveness of its institutional form. This is neither a guiltily smoking (political) gun nor a banal aside. Whatever its proximity in spirit to the anti-bourgeois *avant garde* and to the ambient aesthetic nomads and revolutionaries of the interwar period, and however often its members were themselves forced into precarity and flight, critical theory was logistically intentional, organized, and decidedly this-worldly in its desire to intelligently anticipate the conditions for its own comfortable reproduction. Peace and quiet, a certain institutionalized refuge from disruption (and from the disruption of institutions themselves, the endless meetings and obligations of the traditional university form) are consistently framed by Theodor Adorno as the *sine qua non* of thought in an age of mass distraction: “bustle endangers concentration with a thousand claims” (Adorno 2002, 29). He goes one step further: “for the intellectual, inviolable isolation is the only way of showing some measure of solidarity” (26).

There is in this a substantial departure from an earlier Marxist type, that of the vocational or professional revolutionary intellectual. For figures like Lenin, Gramsci, or Mao (and of course for Marx and Engels themselves), invention, creativity, and thought were dialectically inseparable from distraction, risk, and practice: one could only really think

in the mess of the event, in the externality and obligation – as much temporal as moral – of the demands placed on the intellectual by the political experiments of the many. Nothing could be further from the spirit of this model than Max Horkheimer’s frank admission that he “lived his life as an individualist” (1978, 13). For some, it is precisely in the schoolishness of critical theory – its buttressed existence apart – that one can discern the outlines of an enfeebled middle-class hexis, one which structures from within many of the School’s worst limits, aporias, and failures. György Lukács’s notorious 1962 suggestion that critical theory had taken up residence in the “Grand Hotel Abyss” (Lukács 1971, 22) – a phrase he originally used to characterize the “irrationalism” (Lukács 1981, 204) of Arthur Schopenhauer – turns precisely on an imagined alignment between the political pessimism of the School and its comfortable separation from the risks and intensities of actual political struggle. The abyss is not simply taken in from a (seated) distance, an object of enjoyment viewed from a vantage-point of comfort. Instead, it is to some extent *produced by this watching*, and in two senses: not only is the abyss history’s *summum malum* – everything cruel made possible by safety – it is also a direct symptom of passivity, the sadness of a body without politics (Lukács 1971).

Even for those for whom the Frankfurt School names an historical retreat from political praxis, the erudition, provocativeness, and rigor named by the term “critical theory” remains difficult to dispute. This was almost certainly the most sophisticated cultural Marxism ever produced. Its commitment to autonomy, and to an extremely rare (often austere) precision, made it possible not only to be a Marxist philosopher² (or a Marxist *in philosophy*), but also to be a Marxist *at all* in an era of massively redrawn revolutionary horizons. Indeed, after Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Adorno, it was possible to be a Marxist not only in philosophy, but in music, literature, science, and art. The reconceptualization of theory itself as a form of praxis was a strategy of conservation, a way of remaining faithful in thought to a practice without options or agents. For some, it only abetted the collapse of twentieth-century socialist praxis, exacerbating the distance between theory and what Marx called its “material force”: the brains, bodies, and energies of the oppressed. For others, it was a necessary and principled retreat, a turning back and away that replenishes a body and gives it time to lick its wounds (Marx 1970).

Frankfurt 1924–1935, The Welter of Method

The Institute for Social Research opened under the directorship of Carl Grünberg in 1924 with the intention of producing a space on the margins of the German academe for the application and diffusion of Marxist social science. Its institutional structure allowed the Institute to share resources (and vital symbolic capital) with the University of Frankfurt, while at the same time granting it administrative control and effective autonomy in the domain of research. This location within and beyond the space of legitimate scholarly discourse was tactical. It was an attempt not just to (subtly) politicize the university, but also to academicize Marxism. If in the wake of the sequence linking October 1917 (in Russia) to November 1918 (in Germany) Marxism could be construed as historically ascendant, its proximity to politics compromised its claims to (positivist) scientificity by sullyng its “truth-value” (the integrity of the opposition between values and facts) in the grit, specificity, and bias of mere interest. The Institute, then, was to be a space of open

yet methodologically delimited inquiry that was disciplinarily close to Marxism's classical emphasis on political economy and history (and to the increasingly prestigious field of sociology). Its mandate was to work unchecked by the threats posed to thought both (from above) by the republican state and (from below) by the communist movement and its militants. Though many of the School's research assistants were communists and its core faculty avowed the movement's long-term objectives, the Institute was to function primarily as a site for depoliticized Marxist analysis, a zone emphatically free of Second International cant and orthodoxy.

Cutting messily across these institutional and political polarities were a set of methodological quarrels associated with the human sciences and, more specifically, the rule of positivism, during the interwar period. Though the Institute's plan to formulate a rigorous historical materialist social science should not be conflated with Karl Kautsky's determinist positivism (the important critiques of this position had already been formulated by Karl Korsch and Lukács in the early 1920s), it is certainly the case that this period is marked less by overt epistemological considerations and is broadly empiricist in its desire to apply Marxist theory to scrupulously collected social, economic, and historical data. Even the kind of highly theoretical project undertaken by a figure like Henryk Grossman, whose work aimed to express "the logical and mathematical basis of the law of [capitalist] breakdown," belongs to a broadly defined tradition of scientific empiricism: theory, in this context, is a means (via schematization, or "simplification") into the "real world of concrete, empirically given appearances," one "too complicated to be known directly" (Grossman 1992, 2). The characteristic texts emerging out of this period, produced by figures like Karl August Wittfogel (1931) and Friedrich Pollock (1928) – on the economic history of China and on the state of the planned economy in communist Russia respectively – are broadly in line with the kinds of texts being written by Lenin and Rudolf Hilferding, both in terms of object and method. For all their alignment with a broadly Marxian (or even post-Kantian) tradition of "critique," these representative Marxist projects of the period of the Frankfurt School's emergence remain distant from "critical theory" properly speaking. The critical theory associated with the Frankfurt School diverges sharply from the mainstream of Marxist thought of the 1920s in its distinctive meshing of philosophy and sociology, as well as its sustained interest in the specificity of the cultural field. The outliers, here, are Leo Löwenthal and Walter Benjamin. Löwenthal's early research on the sociology of literature, in which he documents on the level of both content and form the traces left by the mode of production in a specific genre or text, would directly anticipate the superstructural turn of the 1930s (cf. Löwenthal 1984). Walter Benjamin's 1925 (technically failed) habilitation, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, though still idealist-romantic and metaphysical in tenor, would come to play an important role in the development of Adorno's mature dialectical criticism.

The term "critical theory" was first used by Horkheimer in 1937 and was still employed by Adorno as a rough synonym for dialectical materialist thought as late as 1966 (Horkheimer 1972, 188). The concept's broad outlines can be traced to Immanuel Kant's 1781 insistence that history had passed into a definitive new register – an "age of criticism" (1998, 100) – in which the unquestioned dogma of Church and King (established theology as much as the dogmatic political absolutism it absolved) would finally be supplanted by the transparent sovereignty of reason: that which exists would no longer be left to the brutal contingency of interest, but brought

under the jurisdiction of rational and moral law, Kant's enlightened (if not still purely regulative) "kingdom of ends" (2012, 48).

If Kant, however, did not reject religion, but allotted it – like Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Rousseau – a supreme social utility, critical theory pushes beyond his strategically curtailed rationalism toward a Marxist reason that is openly – indeed constitutively – atheist. This is a stance it adopts in opposition to positivism's (post-metaphysical) interdiction against deciding either way. Along with Louis-Auguste Blanqui, critical theory discerns within the agnostic's punctilious restraint the residues of a "bourgeois skepticism" that prefers its metaphysics unconscious (Adorno 2004, 394). Uncertainty about the nature of being falls away into a profitable practice that answers the question in hard cash. Materialism, however, is not simply one metaphysics among others, but an objective (though never unmediated) encounter with the world as it is. Eschewed here is any attempt to reduce the death of God to the local subjectivism of a *Weltanschauung* (a world view) or to a mere ideology in the sense imputed to this term by Karl Mannheim's relativist sociology of knowledge (a position frequently attacked by Horkheimer). Critical theory rejects monist determinism, abjures as Cartesian or idealist any attempt to express matter in the form of a definition or to utilize such a definition as the first principle of a system, and shows little interest in what we might call abject materialism, the gesture – perhaps most famously linked to George Bataille – in which everything naïvely high and pure is drawn down (and intentionally humiliated) in the impurity and lowness of the real, the dust and shit of things "as they really are." Its materialism, in other words, is Hegelian Marxist, a work of spirit and history: it is less interested in proving immanence than in the dialectical possibilities opened up for thought (and practice) at the moment it is simply assumed to be the case. Critical theory goes beyond merely asserting, as Hume did, that moral life is *possible* without religion; instead, following Feuerbach and Marx, the overcoming of transcendence is re-envisioned as the *necessary condition* of true happiness, justice, and freedom. The critique of religion, however, is significantly framed by the School – again following a position adopted by Marx as early as 1844 – as itself merely preparatory ("essentially completed" in the words of Marx himself [Marx 1970, 131]); for it to matter at all it has to be extended onto the terrain of less obvious gods and fetishes, to capital foremost of all, but also to the many residual Baconian "idols" – from property to representation – which structure the innermost germ cells of modern liberalism (Bacon 2000, 56). It is in this context that Benjamin in 1921 described capitalism as itself religion, a "purely cultic religion" that is "perhaps the most extreme that ever existed" (Benjamin 2004, 288).

At the root of the post-Kantian conception of critique the Frankfurt School inherits is a project of autonomy and freedom. For Hegel, freedom was an arrangement of the whole, a sum distributed throughout by the correct disposition of its various bits and pieces; it is the whole – expressed in the constitution of the absolute idealist state – that is self-conscious, not each and every one of its constituent parts. Substance is the prerogative of women and farmers; universality that of the philosopher bureaucrat. In this Hegel follows very closely the proto-functionalist, hierarchical political philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Critical theory rejects this political Aristotelianism for a line of thinking that begins in Rousseau, coupling enlightenment to a comportment necessary on the level of the part itself, in the thinking, educated, and free political activity of the individual. What Marx and later Lukács add to this is an idea of enlightenment as collective self-transformation – a liberty inseparable from the very process by which it

comes to be. This understanding of freedom as self-determining praxis remains a core aspect of the enlightened futurity envisioned by critical theory. Crucial, here, is the way these thinkers turn their rationalist suspicion onto the sovereignty and unquestionability of reason itself; this is a project they accomplish without for an instant taking refuge in irrationalist intuition or immediacy. Critique, then, would be precisely this dance undertaken between reason and its own limits, a project undertaken not with a view to Lockean epistemological humility or hygiene, but an unleashing of everything depotentiated by the shape of the given. What Horkheimer calls “the critical attitude” (Horkheimer 1972, 207) of the Frankfurt School is thus very close in spirit to what Nietzsche champions as a thought restlessly and perpetually “at odds” with the present, a thought “of the day after tomorrow” (2002, 106).

The term “critical theory” also needs to be seen as a project emerging out of a specific image of time. It is this that separates the project from critique envisioned as mere *disagreement*, a sedentary or cloistered form of intellectual dissidence. For the thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School, “critical” designates time as the point of contact between two (or more) states of being, a moment grown both heavy and light in the dice roll that separates one future from another. This is Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit*, a time of rupture, of maximum danger and alertness, in which everything still to come, but also everything already lost to death and pain, wavers in the suddenly “open air of history” (2007, 261). Benjamin counterposes this temporality with the empty, homogeneous time of a present that simply happens to us from the outside and which we fill like a receptacle or chore. From a certain angle, history conceived of as this “state of emergency” (2007, 257) looks exactly like Hegel’s “slaughter-bench” (Hegel 2012, 21): it sounds like screaming bodies. From another, this emergency is the joy of revolutionary negation: its sound is that of “redemption” (Adorno 2002, 247), of a leap taken in the open air, but also that of all the happiness history might have had, but didn’t. The School’s critics are right to discern in much of Adorno and Horkheimer a kind of pessimism, a sobriety of the negative they wrongly attribute to class pretension or humorlessness (a fusty extension of their hatred of jazz and cinema). This darkness, however, is simply the shadow cast by subsequent cruelty on the blocked potentialities of 1917. It arrives from a memory of depression and violently suppressed communist revolt, from Hiroshima and Auschwitz, as much as it does the still resonating bones of all of history’s Thomas Müntzers.

The entire spirit of the Frankfurt School, however, remains foreclosed if the English word “criticism” is not allowed to spill over into the more austere resonances of “critique.” The critic, as opposed to the “theorist,” has its origins in radical aesthetic and literary milieus, and finds its paradigm in German Romantic figures like Friedrich Schleiermacher or Friedrich Schlegel. In this tradition, the critic’s pleasure is judgment, a kind of Nietzschean discrimination that emphatically, even cruelly, divides the good from the bad. This is a writing occasioned from without, a minor, incidental mode always being pulled into the wake of new appearances. It is fragmentary, open to aphorism (as well as paradox), and highly attentive to questions of style; it flirts with the idea that in an age of machinery and information, style itself might protect a thought from its own world-historical irrelevance. The state of emergency mentioned above, then, is not merely politico-historical, but existential, a matter of subjective concern and reflection. The great ideological foils of critical theory – Horkheimer’s Schopenhauer, Adorno’s Kierkegaard, Marcuse’s Heidegger – are never simply irrationalist enemies,

but heavily caveated reserves of solace and hope. It is only in their identities as critics that the continuing interest in aesthetics, art, literature, and music can be properly understood. If Adorno can still be said to participate in a scale that is unconsciously Hegelian – both *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), despite their fragmentary nature, are ghosts of systems – there remains in his method (and that of Benjamin's) a good measure of the tactical speed and nimbleness one finds in a Karl Kraus or Siegfried Kracauer.

The period of thought opened by Horkheimer's address in 1931, one virtually isomorphic with the life-span of critical theory proper, can be distinguished from the Grünberg years by a certain wild disciplinary profusion and mixing, and by a hyper-sensitivity to questions of method. This was a response, in part, to the sheer quantitative inflation of institutionalized knowledge in *Grossdeutschland* after the death of Hegel, an inflation linked to the dramatic progress made by the natural sciences in the period and to the neo-Kantian and positivist philosophies which emerged as the natural sciences' epistemological accomplices. It was also a response to the *Lebensphilosophie* and new ontologies – including those of Henri Bergson and Nietzsche – which emerged to contest precisely a world in which science had become the *sine qua non* of truth. The proliferation of theory into which the Frankfurt School inserts itself was mirrored in the domain of practice by the breakdown of parliamentary monarchism and the illusion that Germany could transition itself from what was still (effectively) a feudal political structure to a modern nation-state via the seamless, apolitical growth of technologies and markets. Tensions already apparent in 1848 – quelled first by Frederick William IV and later by the conservative nationalism of Otto von Bismarck – burst into full view in November 1918 and began a period of instability that witnessed putsches from both the right and the left. This was an era of depression, hyper-inflation, unemployment, civil unrest, and war. In such a context, method becomes the *deus ex machina* of catastrophe: it is no coincidence that a contemporary of the Frankfurt School, Ludwig Wittgenstein, chooses to visualize his method in the form of a ladder – an escape, of sorts, from impossibly difficult circumstances.

Critical theory begins from a hyper-attentiveness to milieu; it is alert to the cacophony of methods not because it is particularly interested in epistemology, or in a modern Cartesian dream of logical certainty, but out of a profound indebtedness to Hegel. The dialectic, of course, has always been a machine built to restlessly accumulate rivals. Critical theory emerges in the space between disciplines, not out of a desire to create bridges, but to burn them: it is a thought that begins in aggression. It is this agonism that allows the School to pursue an image of totality it frames as produced in flashes by the constant breakdown of any given discipline's claim to have exhaustively described the whole. Critical theory was always also ready to turn this aggressive attention to limits on its own claims and practices. There is perhaps no thought in the twentieth century that has so comprehensively registered its own limits, limits at which critical theory met not only theoretical rivals, but the whole ramifying terrain of things themselves, from the abstract objects of phenomenology to the concrete, sociologically determinate phenomena of radio or anti-Semitism. Compared with this plunge into the heterogeneous fields of economics, philosophy, and sociology, a plunge taken, as well, into a kind of interminable everyday phenomenology, a theoretical practice such as deconstruction appears strangely mono-lingual (even timid), and this despite its self-avowed interest in alterities, margins, and outsides. Critical theory is always being

cracked open from the outside even if this cracking is no longer the kind of “revolutionary practice” once imagined, for example by Karl Korsch, as the necessary catalyst of thought, but a welter of methods, enemies, and things (Korsch 2009).

The work of the Frankfurt School is a neo-Hegelianism altered by close encounters with Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Returning to the work of the School in the wake of the recent work of Slavoj Žižek and others, it is easy to miss the radical improbability and strangeness of this return to Hegel. Remember that in 1820 it was possible for many to believe with Hegel that he had in some profound sense “completed” philosophy – that his project of a *Wissenschaft* that comprehends entirely its object (but also *all* objects, and all *possible* objects) had been fulfilled. A new conjuncture began to emerge in the decades after Hegel’s death in 1831, one that made it increasingly more difficult (if not impossible) to imagine his work as the last word in German (and really world) thought.

Four tendencies were here decisive. First, thinkers like Friedrich Albert Lange and Hermann Cohen championed a “return to Kant” premised on the replacement of Hegel’s speculative idealist logic with an emphasis on epistemology and on the scrupulous attention to the limits of the understanding. This made particular sense against the backdrop of the increasing prestige granted to the empirical sciences, a form of knowledge that didn’t (seem to) require a philosophy of Being to accurately describe and manipulate the natural world. Resistance to *Naturphilosophie* was intensified by instances in which its specific, empirical claims spectacularly failed to keep pace with developments in the natural sciences: the most embarrassing of these is certainly Hegel’s rejection, *avant la lettre*, of the Darwinian theory of evolution. There would no longer be room in such a context for a logic with ontological pretensions, one that was, according to Hegel, an “exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and...finite spirit”; henceforth, logic would be confined to the task of laying down the rules for consistent speech and thought (Hegel 2010, 29). Critical theory’s turn to Hegel is all the more surprising given the widespread mistrust of the latter among certain groups of Marxists. “Scientific socialists” like Kautsky, for example, had gone to great lengths to downplay the extent of Marx’s debt to German Idealism.

Second, from an angle we might simply call (with caveats) historicism, questions began to be asked within the newly codified discipline of history (and within culture more broadly) about the mechanics of historical change, an inquiry that would culminate in the rejection of the very notion of a “philosophy of history” as inherently contradictory and meaningless. Here again we see echoes from an empiricist hegemony that frames concepts themselves as (metaphysical) leftovers: the inductive accumulation of data and a focus on positive causal connections replace the soteriological scale of Hegelian World History. What Jacob Burkhardt will most detest in Hegel’s understanding of history is its reliance on a final causality derived from Aristotle (and thought dead since Spinoza). In Burkhardt’s account this reliance transforms history into hierarchy, a move that deprives a given culture or age of its own specificity and difference, but also obscures the complex (efficient) causes actually at work in historical change.

Third, the turn within nineteenth-century European thought toward motifs of the self, experience, authenticity, and life – the existentialism we today link to Kierkegaard, Bergson, or Nietzsche – rendered Hegel’s organicist ontology a sudden cipher for crypto-totalitarian control and overreach. Freedom was no longer the (self-regulated) functioning of a part in a just and rational whole, but an expressive, experientially intense encounter with the absence of objective necessity. For Nietzsche, for example,

the task was not to engineer a final reconciliation between subject and object, but to free the subject – now the “self” – from every trace of realist obedience to the given: Kant’s categorical imperative had here come to fruition in the form of a self-legislation withdrawn entirely from the horizon of the universal (Nietzsche 2002, 81). Seen in the light of Nietzsche, Hegel came to appear stuffily moral and abstract, a figure badly alienated from the precious singularity of the individually lived life.

Fourth, for the century’s burgeoning liberal, communist, and social democratic movements, Hegel’s politics were perceived as dangerously anachronistic. There was, they argued, an underlying medievalism in his work, one visible in his rejection of universal suffrage, for example, or his taste for corporate (guild-based) subjectivity. This resonated with the empiricists and positivists for whom it only confirmed what they already suspected – that Hegel’s logic itself was little more than bad theology, a trick made possible by analogy and microcosms (for example, in the repeating tripartite functionality of the dialectic, or his obsession with circles).

What useable bits and pieces does critical theory find in the badly weathered legacy of Hegel? First, the School finds in Hegel the model of a method that does not begin (like Descartes or Spinoza) at first principles and definitions, but through an immanent, self-interrogating encounter with things themselves. Critical theory is, in this sense, a dialectical materialist realism that begins *in medias res*, and not a traditionally grounded philosophical system. Though the School will reject Hegel’s contention that the object of philosophy is in the last instance God, they do to some extent posit an identity between the ambit of philosophy and Hegel’s Absolute: thought directly grasps Being (a word the School associates with Heideggerian mysticism and largely avoids), though in a manner that is always historical, local, mediated, and unfinished. Even Adorno’s late work is not an epistemology of doubt or finitude (as it is most often imagined to be), but a philosophy of truth that takes as its objective an extreme, interminable dialectical engagement with what is.

Second, what Hegel offers critical theory is a picture of thought as intrinsically communal, social, and shared. Though Hegel begins the *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) with what first appears to be a solitary cognitive act, this sensory immediacy is later shown to be inhabited from within by an inescapable sociality, the “We” of concepts, of transcendental presupposition, but also that of society more generally conceived, and of a space/time that is necessarily political. Philosophy, for Hegel, is always already “social philosophy” (the term Horkheimer would first use to characterize the work of the School [Horkheimer 1993]). What critical theory likes about this side of Hegel is the way it targets and denatures the seeming immanence and natural autonomy of the bourgeois individual.

Third, critical theory’s characteristic interest in group subjectivity is clearly foreshadowed by Hegel’s “forms of consciousness,” even if it remains in an idealist register in Hegel that connects subjectivities to Herderian wholes, rather than dynamic, internally conflicted Marxist totalities. The School finds in Hegel a model of trans-individual subjectivity, but adds to it a genealogical and genetic impulse that conjoins these mentalities to the historical process and to the specific socioeconomic conditions that produce, abet, and negate them. These subjectivities are submitted to a criterion of “timeliness” that plots them along an axis determined by their distance not from an endpoint of history (Hegel’s own tendency), but from the objective capacity of humans to be better (more free, happier, etc.) (Horkheimer 2013, 59). On these terms, a thought might be

“residual” or “progressive” depending on its relationship to the dominant politico-economic tendencies of the age, with the important caveat that the long-term “progressiveness” of these tendencies is no longer vouchsafed by final causality and instead continuously susceptible to violent reversal, involution, and collapse. One might say: progress is the limit placed on things as they are by the regulative ideal of better.

In addition to Hegel, critical theory owes an enormous methodological debt to sociology, though not one that can be properly traced to any stable sociological school. It was precisely this debt, this disciplinary proximity (as well as a certain emphatic distance) that Horkheimer attempted to demarcate under the early rubric of “social philosophy” mentioned above (Horkheimer 1993). There are two core dimensions to this debt. To begin with, critical theory insists on the heuristic and material efficacy of concrete universals, of abstractions that are real, but which take place beyond the ambit of individual consciousness and psychology. This is a tendency drawn variably from Tönnies, Weber, Durkheim, and Marx (not to mention Hegel himself). Critical theory abjures positivist sociology’s interdiction against universals, but takes great care to avoid the cancellation of appearance by essence often attributed by critics to economicist (or vulgar) Marxism: indeed, Adorno explicitly states that “essence must manifest itself...[in and through] appearance” (Adorno 2000, 21). This is really another way of saying that theory is not an enemy of the particular. In fact, Adorno and Benjamin in particular can be said to have perfected a style of dialectical materialist criticism in which individual *faits sociaux* are read as radiant “ciphers” for the “objective laws” they reflect and refract (22). The presence of the whole in the part does not negate the latter; in fact, the particular as such can only be encountered by a thought that determinately specifies its relationship to the whole. This sometimes takes a different form in Benjamin, for whom the particular is occasionally framed as an end in itself (as in variants of existentialism), a resonant form capable of being “blasted” out of the continuum of homogeneous time and encountered in a light that is at once historical and eternal (Benjamin 2007, 261). Critical theory would agree with Kautsky’s consistent naturalism, wherein the human is placed unapologetically into the determinist domain of the animal, but adds to it Hegel’s insistence on the difference introduced into matter by spirit, by the gap or hole made by thought in nature. The latter, for the School, in a position that draws simultaneously on both Kant and Marx, is at once inescapably determined and relatively (let’s say potentially) free. They have next to no interest, however, in hypostasized, undialectical “universal law[s] of human nature” of the kind famously posited by Spinoza (Spinoza 2001, 175). Universal naturalist human laws such as self-preservation, or the preservation of the species (both of which appear in Kautsky’s work) have no place in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (cf. Kautsky 1988).

At the same time, and despite their well-known suspicions of empirical sociology, the Frankfurt School, especially in the Grünberg years, demonstrate an intense interest in the collection and interpretation of empirical social data. The School does not reject quantification *per se* (as if number and being were inherently opposed to one another), but instead rejects the naïve attempt on the part of empirical sociology to import untheorized the protocols, models, and standards used to produce truth in the natural sciences. Particularly galling to them is the way a truth tethered inflexibly to empiricist description subtracts from the actual all of the virtualities that haunt it from within. An alignment appears between such ostensibly neutral description and the key historical materialist truth that in the last analysis all human facts are norms: when viewed from

the angle of dialectical sociology, what appears to us as a deadened and incontrovertible “is” is no more than an entrenched material “ought.” Though both Marcuse and Adorno concede that “pragmatic sociology” – celebrated by opponents of critical theory as a more “realistic” and “relevant” approach to injustice – is capable of ameliorating the present by making small, yet concrete improvements to the system, both insist that it is ultimately a form of technocracy, one which in the last instance serves the interests of the established order and impedes the imagination of new worlds. At all costs, says Adorno, must the critical sociologist avoid becoming a “research technician,” “social expert,” or mere “salaried employee” (2000, 21–22).

Critical theory owes a final debt to the contributions to this history of thought made by psychoanalysis. While psychoanalysis has a multifaceted and distinct impact on the work of individual members of the School, at core what the Frankfurt School draws from the work of Sigmund Freud and others is a way of articulating an alternative axis of historical domination. The latter is no longer simply an effect of class oppression, but understood as a constituent element of what Nietzsche once called “organized society” itself. For Freud, “civilization” is the necessary locus of repression, an apparatus of deferral which foregrounds survival, necessity, and work at the expense of the human’s chaotic instincts and drives (Freud 2005). In contradistinction to those communisms which propped up labor as freedom or as the site of an essential unfolding of the human, the Frankfurt School uses psychoanalysis to sort through the myriad ways a society built around work, but also class hierarchy and sanitized social norms, embeds into contemporary subjects a complex of neuroses, frustrations, and anxieties. For members of the School, a sharp analysis of the mechanisms through which social revolution (in the broadest sense – not only worker from capitalist, but son from Father, and woman from man) lay latent in the work of Freud. The realization of this critical potential, however, is only possible if the pessimistic philosophical anthropology of psychoanalysis is jettisoned for a properly historical materialist conception of the human. Though the School is quick to say that pain, frustration, anxiety, etc., are necessary (even precious) elements of the human experience, they unambiguously insist that the human can be happier and less repressed and its libidinal complex altered by transformations in the economic infrastructure of society. As such, the School shows little interest in psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice apart from social revolution; the former, in fact, is often itself framed as itself a key contributor to the reproduction of “wrong life.” Nevertheless, as an alternative means of understanding control and repression in modern social life, revamped and reworked concepts drawn from psychoanalysis would play a key role in the School’s assessment of mentalities and subjectivities, as we shall see below.

New York 1935–1953, Life Subsumed

Almost immediately after Hitler came to power in 1933, key members of the Frankfurt School began to make plans to leave Germany. The Institute – whose members were not only Marxist, but also largely born into Jewish homes – would have to emigrate. It was eventually decided by Horkheimer to move the School to New York, where an institutional affiliation was established with Columbia University. Safety did not induce the School’s members into a cautious new centrism (that path of lesser evils). Instead, the

School would come to find at the heart of what was arguably the world's most advanced liberal state precisely the barbarism they had left behind in Germany. Though in New York the School turns its attention to the cultural, psychoanalytic, and political logics of fascism, these lines of investigation are posed entirely within the coordinates of the history and political economy of capitalist modernity. Refused is any attempt to transform Nazism into the surprise of an outside, something that merely happened to modernity from behind or beyond. Nazism is no meteorite – a foreign body that disrupts modernity in the form of an accident – but the direct expression of “monopoly capitalism” taken to its most extreme limit (this is, at least, the argument put forth by Franz Neumann in his magisterial *Behemoth*) (Neumann 2009, 385). If Friedrich Pollock will alternatively locate the origins of Nazism in the abolition of liberal capitalism proper, he is still able to see it as a shift within modernity intelligible on the terrain of the latter's obsession with domination and control. Rejected as well in all of this is the idea that fascism is little more than the sudden irruption into view of the human animal's deep or repressed truth, a phenomenon of the id; for the School, this kind of explanation transforms into dark necessity (something always already there on the inside of the human body) that which is entirely within the purview of political reason to name, anticipate, and avoid. Even more interesting (and controversial) was the School's insistence that fascisms could be found in embryo in even the least collectivist and political of commercial pleasures. What the School sees in the spectacular consumerism of the New World is not innocent fashion, leisure, or delight, but disturbing new forms of intensified control and repression.

At the root of the Frankfurt School's critique of modernity is an understanding of history as singularity. This is a conceit drawn directly from Hegel and Marx. A oneness subtends the history of the human even if this oneness is entirely virtual; the latter is expressed as everything possible or thinkable – everything that may have, or may still be – negated by the faux objectivity of things as they are. What is objectively shared by the human is the unnecessaryness of suffering, repression, and domination. This means not only that history is not merely a scattered dispersion of particulars, but also that the historicist confinement of truth to the specificity of a given historical stratum is itself only partially true: true, because all human thought exists *in situ*; false, because no one stratum or context is ontologically necessary. The coming into contact of the human with its own freedom is in this sense an encounter between a being and its own essence; there is in this a residual Aristotelianism inherited by the School via its proximity to Hegel. Freedom is at once a (non-essential) norm conventionalized by humans for their convenience – as in Hobbes and Locke, for example – and an ontologically relevant proposition that has to do with what relates to it in the deepest possible sense. This would appear to be the case for Benjamin, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Fromm; Adorno is to some extent the exception here, as he is always finding in even the barest (Hegelian or Marxist) anthropological remainders from the great philosophies of essence, traces that remain untheorized and so function, in the last instance, as barriers to radically free thought. Though modernity as the era in which the human decisively encountered its own historical materialist “essence” is universal – a precious and ultimately untranscendable horizon that is *for everyone* – it is also a breakable, unevenly distributed *promise*, a project that can stall or fail completely.

Modernity is a catastrophe, then, and in two distinct ways. First, the development of scientific reason as well as bourgeois individualism introduces into history a new

experience of the self, an uncertainty and anxiety that we sometimes collect under the predicate “existential.” This is the abyss (*Abgrund*) pointed to by both Nietzsche and Heidegger, an unmooring linked to the collapse of the paradigm of meaning, but also the givenness and immediacy of every *Gemeinschaft* (what Fromm describes as the security and comfort provided by “primary ties” [2013, 53]). Critical theory concedes the appearance of the abyss, but not the politico-ethical conclusions drawn from it by these figures. Instead, following Hegel and Marx, critical theory affirms the crisis of meaning as the ineradicable prerequisite of the very freedom described above: “nihilistic revulsion,” says Adorno, is the “objective condition of humanism as utopia” (Adorno 2002, 78). The second sense of modernity as catastrophe begins precisely here, in the gap between the possible and the actual. The failure of modernity is expressed by critical theory as the incapacity of the process of modernization to engender a historical subject capable of consciously and collectively articulating its own (repressed) potentiality. Said otherwise, the inversion of modernity lies in its failure to have undergone political “redemption”: a genuine, global, fully realized Marxist revolution (Adorno 2002, 247).

Two logics dominate this “unfinished modernity” (Habermas 1997, 38). The first, derived from Marx, is the law of value, the domination of individual and collective potentiality by the capitalist exchange relationship. In a direct sense this implies the subordination of human beings to economic laws that are (paradoxically) materially *objective* and at the same instant nothing more or less than relations between people. The diversion of human intelligence and energy into money-making (the hell of “getting ahead”); the psychical and biological effects of poverty and economic insecurity; the wastage and uncertainty produced by business cycles; the differentiated social limits and trajectories distributed by class (reinforced rather than simply alleviated by post-Napoleonic meritocracy): all of this can be included in the inventory of heteronomy established by capitalist exchange (Horkheimer 1978, 21). To be added to it would be the way politics – both national and international – are captured by logics of exchange, endogenously via the transformation of the state into a bourgeois mechanism of control and, exogenously, in the imperialist logics of expansion and war introduced into states by the injunction to endless growth. This fairly straightforward catalogue of the social suffering produced by capitalism – what Marcuse calls broadly a “life of toil and fear” – can be found across the work of the School and should be emphasized to guard against a contemporary tendency (especially in readings of Benjamin and Adorno) to foreground their anti-idealism or their critique of technical rationality (administered life, the state, etc.) at the expense of the consistent, frequently acerbic, and often quite naked rejection of capitalism found in their work (Marcuse 2012, 2). Capitalism, writes Horkheimer, “is exploitation organized on a world-wide scale”; its “preservation preserves boundless suffering” (1978, 28).

In addition to the “social physics” described above – a domain with near-mechanist causal properties and liable to empirical analysis – is a parallel fold within the logic of capital characterized by forms of determination that are resonant and analogical. These are qualitative or intensive changes rooted in quantitative (or extensive) material formations. According to this model, structures constitutive of capitalism – be it property, commodity production, or money as a general equivalent – seep into dimensions of existence that are conceived by society as inherently separate or distinct. Psychologies, practices, objects, and institutions, however autonomous they may appear, are here

shown by the School to radiate the logics and limits of the economic forms mentioned above. No inch of social space escapes contact with these resonant forms of determination. The commodity as a form flows into everything, from love and romance and the (seemingly) natural interiority of the family, to the relations established between ourselves in the quietest moment of subjective reflection. Though framed by positivist critics as insupportable generalizations, the metaphysical nature of this causality is wholly immanent to social process and transforms historical existence from within (not from without). This domain of non-mechanist causation was first discovered by Marx, but left undeveloped until the publication in 1922 of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, a book that had an enormous impact on all of the key members of the Frankfurt School (especially Benjamin and Adorno).

The second core logic at work in blocked modernity is that pertaining to “instrumental reason” – what members of the School consistently called “rationalization” (Marcuse 2012, 49; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 218). This is the process by which the theologico-political systems that dominated medieval Europe – systems that organized common sense in every domain of social life – were slowly disqualified and displaced by mathematized natural science. This displacement is at once emancipatory and enslaving – the enlightenment destruction of transcendence, the “superstition” Spinoza and Kant saw as integral to absolutist rule – reverting into a system of domination and blindness that would eventually culminate in the total subjection of planetary possibility to “machinery” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 33). What appears under the rubric of “progress” as the fortunate coincidence of knowledge and happiness, is in fact little more than thoughtless momentum, an unsupervised speed that conceals as its worst possible outcome catastrophe on the scale of the planet itself. Increasing rationality on the level of local parts and processes paralleled by an “increasing irrationality of the whole”: this is how Marcuse understands the paradox of modernity (2012, 252). This is a state of affairs epitomized for the School by the meticulously organized violence of Auschwitz or the technically ingenious, but humanly disastrous potentialities of Oppenheimer’s atom bomb.

There are a number of key “externalities” produced by instrumental reason. First, the scientific emphasis on analysis, its claim to exhaustiveness, as well as its interest in systematicity, particularly when combined with the reduction of truth to quantitative verification or bare efficacy, transforms into “nonsense” or “meaninglessness” all value not immediately expressible in the form of a number or subject to repeatable empirical tests. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the refusal to distinguish truth from fact relegates all of ethics, art, culture, politics, and experience to the insubstantial, untestable, domain of mere feeling. As such these phenomena become atavistic remainders, the purview of myth, opinion, uncertainty, mysticism, guessing, or silence. This sharp bifurcation of the world into carefully patrolled “objective” and “subjective” spheres has grave consequences for the subject of science. A miserable dialectic springs into motion. Granted a formidable control over the natural world, the subject pays for its mastery with alienation not only from nature (an extremely complex concept for the School, one not to be confused with German Romantic formulations), but also “itself” (emphatically not “himself,” a term that leaves too much idealist personality and untheorized patriarchy in the concept). Nature ceases to appear as an endlessly differentiating event, an unfolding that remains in some deep way mysterious (and even beautiful, ineffable, or dangerous), and instead takes the form of a complex, yet ultimately meaningless

machine. The subject comes to take one of four dominant shapes: (1) pure transcendental receptivity (an abstractness without specificity, a certain generic Kantian humanity); (2) a psychological monadism indistinguishable from the exercise of mastery and from the blind desire to preserve the self at any cost (a form which, according to Hobbes, builds “competition,” “diffidence,” and an endless questing for “glory” into the very nature of the human); (3) a positivist extension of the animal in which human action is reduced to biologically determined “behavior”; (4) a being “outside of nature,” pure unmediated subjectivity or personality, a form in which the human is granted the capacity to create, think, exist, etc., but in a vacuum fundamentally delinked from social and biological determination (Hobbes 1996, 88).

The affinity between these two dominant logics intensifies along the seam separating “late capitalism” from its nineteenth-century antecedent (Adorno 2002, 239). Whether it is the shift from “private” to “state” capitalism articulated by Pollock in 1941 (Pollock 1990), or that from a “liberal era” (Horkheimer 1972, 198) to one “in which industrial power came to control everything” (1974, 10) suggested by Horkheimer, what remains beyond the terminological differences is a sense of an entirely new interpenetration of instrumental reason and capitalism (Pollock 1990, 72). Though capital has always been incipient rationalization, and rationalization itself a motif consistently exercised within the growing sovereignty of capital, the concept of industrial capitalism is thought to name a distinctly new system with grim consequences for the welfare and autonomy of human beings (to say nothing of life on earth more generally). Marcuse calls this new order “advanced industrial civilization,” while Fromm names it “the monopolistic phase of capitalism” (Marcuse 2012, 124; Fromm 2013, 203).

The assemblage at the center of this new dispensation is the “modern large-scale enterprise,” the giant, vertically integrated corporations, which appear in the steel, pharmaceutical, armaments, and automotive industries toward the end of the nineteenth century and begin to completely dominate capitalist production by the period between the two world wars (Kracauer 1998, 29). These “modern mechanized complexes” can be distinguished from the corporate entities that preceded them by the extent to which specialized scientific knowledge comes to be integrated into every facet of the production process (Horkheimer 1972, 18). In the first instance, this involves a transformation in the executory and communicational infrastructure of the corporate form, a shift from the private sovereignty of the entrepreneur/owner to the scientific, impersonal, highly articulated operationalism of the manager. Control in such structures is at once vertical – with knowledge at any point in the hierarchy confined to a highly circumscribed domain of specified functions and tasks – and spread throughout, such that each of the system’s parts begins to reproduce itself in a bureaucratized and machinic manner that is effectively unconscious. The existence of a CEO – a subject still in control of the system as a whole – becomes a working fiction, a way of assuaging the fear attached to the thought of a process without direction or agency. This same pattern will be seen to structure social relations more generally in industrial societies (whether in democracies or totalitarian states) where leaders take on promethean, auto-poetic traits and styles even as the societal whole increasingly resembles an unwatched machine, an enormous “integrated unit” (Pollock 1990, 77).

The fragmentation of knowledge in the modern corporation and its tendency to inhibit the construction of an active comprehension of the whole becomes a key metonym for life more generally conceived under the “social division of labor” enacted by

industrial capitalism (Adorno 2002, 243). The age of the “employee” is one characterized by the supreme value placed on obedience, one that embeds into social life a nervous dependency that can only be expressed in mass sadomasochism (Horkheimer 1974, 11). This creates a world, says Pollock, of “commander[s] and commanded,” one comprised, at every moment in the hierarchy, by an endless oscillation of suspicion, emulation, and fear (1990, 78). A rage for fragmented tokens of smartness, i.e., for “certificates” which establish somebody as an “expert” in one field or another, takes root even as the old Humboldtian model of the university, grounded in an idea of holistic reason and active citizenship, is eclipsed by a mandate of higher education as mere “training” (Kracauer 1998, 33). However, even as the individual is constantly faced with the psychological frustrations of life in hierarchy, it is also encoded with an overwhelming “need to be part of and to agree with the majority,” to disappear, as it were, into the comforts of the many (Horkheimer 1974, 12). The linkage of corporate culture with “groupthink” and conformity is one that will strike readers born under the sign of the Googleplex as particularly incomprehensible (Whyte 1952).³ Yet, a key hypothesis of the School about the nature of industrial capitalism is that it engenders a corporate culture that requires mimetic adaptation to existing codes rather than innovation or “outside the box” thinking (the latter, of course, being one of the governing clichés of today’s “knowledge capitalism”). “Regulations replace individual judgement,” says Horkheimer (1974, 12). Much of this was mediated via the reaction of critical theory to the trauma of the modern office, its birth as a highly controlled, ideologically sanitized space, but also to the emergence of a new class of salaried worker, *Die Angestellten*, studied by Kracauer in his book by the same name (1998). The automated office represented a new form of exploitation, one that no longer employed (and wasted) the forces of the body, but targeted those of the mind and spirit, too. Mind – with all of its Hegelian resonances of ontological adventure, political transformation, and even truth itself – is reduced to mere consciousness: the empty, interminable superintendence of a “now” withdrawn entirely from substance and history. The form of perception appropriate to the age of the employee, in other words, is that of “attention” and “information,” a state of consciousness that has as its verso a constant state of distraction, a presence that is only ever half-there.

However, it is not just that capitalist production had changed: it had undergone a dramatic transformation in scale. If machines made humans into gods they also triggered – amidst the sheer quantitative profusion of objects or under the brute verticality of the skyscraper – a new animal tininess, “the fragile human body” famously mentioned by Benjamin in “The Storyteller” (2007, 84). The “monstrosity of absolute production” is growth in a coma forever, an autotelic, inherently fascistic form of techno-economic expansionism that threatens to absorb and negate everything long imagined as precious beyond economic calculation (Adorno 2002, 15). “Life,” “culture,” “experience,” even “existence itself”: nothing stands untouched by total(itarian) production. If this process begins in the factory, it is only in its (seeming) opposite – the mediated pleasures and privacy of the home – that the full measure of its power becomes visible. Mass culture – newspapers, radio, cinema, but also department stores and mass-produced consumer objects – had colonized age-old interpretive and narrative functions – the very distribution of meaning itself – and subordinated them to the blind imperatives of monopoly. Packaged for delivery from a centralized point, its makers the very same people who owned the means of production, culture had itself become a growth industry. The result is mass stupefaction, a standardized, cliché and

jingle-ridden popular culture that Adorno holds in open contempt: “every trip to the cinema leaves...me stupider and worse”; elsewhere, famously, “fun is a medicinal bath” (2002, 24; 112). What is experienced subjectively as “entertainment” – a spontaneous release from the tensions of work – is in fact nothing more than the introjection on the level of the part of “false needs” instrumental to the reproduction of a (unthinking) whole.

These false needs do a number of different things at once. First, they paper over and displace the abyss generated by modernity’s dissolution of “primary bonds” (Fromm 2013, 53). As such, they are mechanisms of escape from the discomforts and uncertainties of freedom – what Marcuse will call “the catastrophe of liberation” (2012, 225). Second, they sustain domains of ideological fantasy that distract the subject and inhibit its capacity to comprehensively map its political and economic “powerlessness” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 116). “Amusement,” they insist, “always means putting things out of mind” (116). Third, and finally, they induce identification with social roles and functions compatible with the reproduction of the system as a whole. If, in the era of the factory, it was enough to be a docile body, the era of the cinema, the department store, and the white-collar office is one in which the individual is now burdened with the pleasures and miseries of “being someone,” of creating and (ceaselessly) curating what the School often derisively calls “personality.” The latter is here completely withdrawn from the German Idealist resonances which once linked it to self-engendered expression and fullness, to a life lived meaningfully in a rational (and even beautiful) social whole; instead it becomes little more than a child’s ill-fitting plastic mask, a socially necessary illusion amenable to life on set. For men it involves the adoption of a charming, effortless, and always slightly cruel masculinity (of the kind seen in Cary Grant films), and for women, a hieratic and brainless femininity – what Kracauer describes caustically as a “morally pink complexion” (1998, 38). Though the Frankfurt School had displaced the attention of Marxism from political economy to culture, the incompleteness of this shift continued to be expressed in its refusal to submit the “texts” of capitalism – its popular films, comic books, and newspapers – to close analytical scrutiny; if they were nothing more than microcosmic repetitions of the whole, there could be nothing more to find in them than the monotonous sameness of the commodity form. It would not be until the much later work of Fredric Jameson (himself influenced by Adorno) that these texts themselves would be minutely examined for the ways they ideologically think, diagnose, and even resist the subsumption of life by capital.

San Diego 1965–, Quandary of the Riot

Two vignettes have come to define our understanding of “late theory.”⁴ The first is that of Marcuse in the sun, now a professor in San Diego at the University of California and made famous by *One-Dimensional Man* (1964). Not only was he arguably the 1960s student movement’s most important theoretician, he was also politically active (involved directly in protests and occupations) and took publicly explicit and often highly controversial positions on current events. From Angela Davis to the war in Vietnam, Marcuse was determinately for and against things. He saw in the student movement a political subject capable of pushing beyond Stalinist conservatism and into a “radical transvaluation of values” that would call into question everything from traditional gender roles and identities to the capitalist apportioning of labor and time (Marcuse 1972, 54).

The second image is of a now “grey on grey” Adorno, frozen stiff at his lectern by student breasts and riots of 1968.⁵ He is a caricature of oldness. For the most part, he maintained a crafted distance from what he characterized as student “actionism” – a fully formed pathological complex born of “despair” in the face of unchangeable conditions – and openly (even provocatively) avowed a shift in his work to an even more intensified register of theoreticity and abstractness (Richter and Adorno 2002, 19). “Philosophy cannot in and of itself recommend immediate measures or changes,” he insists, “it effects change precisely by remaining theory” (ibid.). Theory, in other words, is its own praxis: difficulty, in an era of total immediacy, itself a form of politics. Nothing could be further from Karl Korsch’s claim in *Marxism and Philosophy* (1972) that the dialectic must exist in constant contact with the “living unity of revolutionary practice” (and that it can have no life as a “science” apart). Though the anecdotes which clouded Adorno’s last year have been used by critics as proof of a jacobitism intrinsic to “mere” theory, the illusion of an outright confrontation between opposites is undermined not only by the student movement’s open debt to Adorno’s critique of the culture industry, but by his own continuing commitment to socialism as an idea.⁶ Nevertheless, the tension it points to outlines core differences in the conception of politics taken up by the various members of the School, differences there from the beginning, but exacerbated and irreconcilable by the end. The insights and practices of the Frankfurt School would find purchase in different modalities of politics and theory as the drama of World War II and postwar Keynesian compromises gave way to what would become in time the forces and pressures of neoliberalism.

In its earliest form, and despite its investment in a certain idea of intellectual autonomy, critical theory was never simply against, but always also *for*: its positive moment lies less in a determinate commitment to a particular party or state and more in an emphatic fidelity not only to socialism as a (Kantian) regulative ideal, but as a system now technically possible on the level of infrastructure itself (cf. Horkheimer 1978, 28). In the sense intended by Horkheimer, Marcuse, and others, socialism described as “technically possible” is not an implication of weak likelihood, but an argument designed to interrupt those for whom socialism is nothing more than idealist moral whim. Consistent rationalism required conceding that the “economic-technical” base had, for the first time in history, the objective capacity to transcend the era of unequally distributed scarcity (Marcuse 2012, 3). In other words, capitalism itself was now “outdated,” a revenant, something staggering on despite its own objective obsolescence (Horkheimer 1978, 29). This is a position less easy for people to understand today in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet economy. But between 1922 and 1970 it was not only possible to believe that socialism was “technically possible” (on the level of infrastructure), but *superior on the terrain of economics itself* in its capacity to achieve full employment, macroeconomic stability, and even, for a while, real growth, making it an attractive alternative to capitalisms plied by labor unrest, mass unemployment, and unstable business cycles. In fact, what is perhaps most surprising about the School’s position before World War II is how little attention it gives to the actual economics of socialism: outside of Pollock’s work on planned economies in Russia, it often feels as if the technical and the economic are conflated by the School and that all that remained for practice was to evolve a democratic variant of the existing communist systems.

A key motif in the School’s work between 1930 and 1950 is the need to produce a collectively “free subject” capable of “consciously [shaping] social life” (Horkheimer

1978, 51). This free subject, says Horkheimer, “is nothing other than the rationally organized socialist state that organizes its own existence” (ibid). This would be a democratic, “classless,” “planned economy,” effective on the terrain of the planetary whole, rather than confined to a single national space (1978). Crucial to this imaginary is the notion that fully socialized technology would liberate humans from the stupefying protocols of necessity, all of capitalism’s needless work, as well as its division of labor, which violently depotentiate the duration of a life by transforming it into a bare function of the production process. Beyond arresting the “anarchy of the market” – the wastefulness, suffering, and constant incitement to war produced by the law of exchange – this economy would make possible less a collectivist New Man than an epoch (the first of its kind) of “free individuals” (Horkheimer 1972, 200). Under communism, subjectivation would be the prerogative of an individual’s “conscious spontaneity,” rather than unfold under the cloud of ideological individualism; relations between whole and part would no longer be veiled by the obscuring nooks and crannies of capitalist life and labor, but rendered transparent by a negative dialectics which does not even allow its own practice to remain untouched by skepticism, let alone concepts like “transparency” or the “individual” (Horkheimer 1972, 200).⁷ Rationalization would abet rather than thwart universal rationality and make possible ways of thinking free from the parameters of instrumental reason: “if the productive apparatus could be organized and directed toward the satisfaction of the vital needs, its control might well be centralized; such control would not prevent individual autonomy, but render it possible” (Marcuse 2012, 2). It is important to note that there is no trace of a desire in Horkheimer and Adorno for Babouvist egalitarianism (founded on an ideal of sameness), the Gueverist celebration of the dignity of work (“*trabajo voluntario*”), nor for the tiniest Maoist intensity (that erotics of struggle we still detect today in the revolutionism of Alain Badiou). Revolution, for Horkheimer and Adorno, is nothing more than an undesirable means to a desirable end. Taken as an end in itself, a form necessary to, or coextensive with communist subjectivity, it became its opposite: fascism, atavism, unreason. The exception, here, is Benjamin, in whom traces of a kind of surrealist bolshevism can be detected, a desire for the open chasm of revolutionary time, a certain pleasure taken in revolt he derives in part from Georges Sorel.

However, an important transformation takes place in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno that has to be mentioned. Toward the end of their lives both thinkers reduce determinate political imagination to the bare insistence on the virtual capacity of the present to be otherwise – a position which avows theoretically the capacity of thought to envision alternative futures, but which leaves this capacity oddly unfulfilled on the level of content. It is not simply that the left had been defeated on the terrain of the political, it is that thought itself was in danger of being exterminated by universal “amusement” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 116). Politics is here reduced to thought’s fidelity to its own endangered essence as negation: its task is to immortalize the negative, to protect from death its last, precious seeds. The future is no longer to be the product of a plan, but evolved concretely out of the long baking-process of a praxis that is not actual or imminent, but merely awaited. This has as much to do with Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of idealism – the political ontology of models – and their suspicion of instrumental reason as it does with a clear sense for the “blocked” nature of the present (and an increasing suspicion of the Soviet Union). Horkheimer’s shift, however, goes further: not only does he begin to conceptualize American liberalism as itself the

best possible alternative to totalitarianism, he comes late in life to a fully anti-communist position (even going so far as to support America's war in Vietnam). If, in 1923, Horkheimer could speculate that political violence might offset the greater brutality of an unjust whole – a position that covers even the pacifist in blood – revolutionary outcomes were now so uncertain, and their tendency to devolve into authoritarianisms so well established, that the best (system) was simply the least intolerable among the worst (1978, 22).

It is only in Marcuse that we continue to encounter determinate “historical transcendence,” a thought that openly (and concretely) *fantasizes* the future (2012, 15). It would be wrong, however, to conclude that this suspension of political (or revolutionary) specificity on the part of Adorno, for example, reflects an abandonment of the terrain of utopia; instead, the lines connecting thought to the latter continue to exist, but in a paradoxical detour through the past rather than the future. In Horkheimer and Adorno, but also (and perhaps most intensely) in Benjamin, a form of thought (and in my view an occluded style of political prescription) appears that we might call *dialectical nostalgia*, provided that such a practice is rigorously distinguished from the merely reflective, psychologistic tendencies of a remembrance of things past. Across their work, distinct gestures, phenomena, practices, and ways of seeing and habits of thought are invoked, meticulously described, and then placed into the context of an industrial modernity that has either outright negated them (leading to their extinction as forms) or changed the ecology in which they flourish so dramatically that they can only continue to persist as spiritless rites, repetitions shorn of “truth” or necessity. For Benjamin, *flânerie*, childhood, and the passionate “confusion of [the collector’s] library” (2007, 60); Adorno’s Beethoven, or the “guest [that] comes from afar” (Adorno 2002, 178), but also the simple “ability to close a door quietly”; the gloominess noted by Ernst Bloch of a “mountain at evening” (Bloch 1998, 64) – all such moments are defining characteristics of the School and often read as vestiges of a romanticist aristocratism unable to come to terms with the accelerationist or posthuman dimensions of technological change. These moments, however, are not untheorized remainders, but positions curated under the pressure of dialectical ascesis. How precisely does such a form of nostalgia work, and in what sense can it be envisioned as revolutionary?

On first glance, the impulse at work in these motifs is purely ethnographical: it cites as *simply having existed* a form or gesture now lost to being for good. Registered here is the impression left on thought by photos of the dead, a kind of melancholy that forms in the dissonance established by the medium between verisimilitude and extinction. As such, the task of this writing – one originating in Hegelian Marxist social ontology – is to safeguard for thought a working inventory of forms, an archival function presumably indispensable to the only animal characterized by the burden and the freedom of having, and one presumably indispensable to the radical multiplicity of the human, its right to be otherwise.

These moments, however, are more than expressions of a neutrally flat ontology, an extensive domain of forms that merely exist (or at least have in the past). One can often discern here the presence of a stronger injunction, the contours of something that looks like desire, a hope that what has ceased to exist, might still do so again. In other words, it is possible to detect in such passages a crypto-Aristotelian hierarchy of forms, a *scala naturae* of sorts, though one from which any trace of a presumed *ergon* of the human has been dispensed with. The American highway, says Adorno, knows “no mark of foot or wheel, no soft paths along their edges to vegetation, no trails leading off into

the valley”: it abolishes entirely any presence of “the human hand.” These kinds of statements are often misread by critics of the School as primitivist oversight, but they should in fact be seen as dialectical attempts to preserve key seams in the history of the human, seams that, once erased, limit once and for all the scale and intensity of its existence. They are not simply, then, indifferent objects of “experience” – a term which, for the English empiricists (and even Kant himself) implied nothing more than mere cognition – but points of entry into a mode of experiencing the world that makes it bigger, stranger, and more beautiful. These are descriptions of a form of being, a mode of life, a way of thinking or existing that should continue to be and that any just, free, thoughtful, or true society would incorporate into its “constitution” (with the latter here not conceived as a founding document, but in an Aristotelian sense as an organizing politico-economic dispensation). This nostalgia is in some ways the necessary verso of any nuanced desire for the future and illustrates just how suspicious the School was of communisms that envision their own *telos* as evolutionary necessity, a techno-utopian fullness wholly at odds with the past’s long history of misery. For the School, such a thought leaves the future feeling oddly machinic and sterile while simultaneously reducing to squandered possibility all of those who have lived and died before us. Why might we not find in a just and rationally organized tomorrow scraps from all of the beauty, pleasure, and justice already experienced by history? This is a socialism wonderfully pocked by anachronism, one which sees in the future a motley assemblage of things old and new, things experienced and not yet invented, a system as rational and “instrumental” (i.e., centralized) as it is libidinal, democratic, self-reflexive, and free.

- see CHAPTER 2 (VIENNA 1899 – PARIS 1981; OR, PSYCHOANALYSIS); CHAPTER 4 (BIRMINGHAM – URBANA-CHAMPAIGN 1964–1990; OR, CULTURAL STUDIES); CHAPTER 8 (PETROGRAD/LENINGRAD – HAVANA – BEIJING 1917–1991; OR, MARXIST THEORY AND SOCIALIST PRACTICE); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM)

Notes

- 1 For comprehensive introductions to the Frankfurt School and its history, the two best sources in English are Martin Jay’s *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973) and Rolf Wiggershaus’s *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (1994).
- 2 I am here speaking exclusively of the difficulty of enacting Marxisms in the West in this period, rather than within the space of the period’s actually existing communisms.
- 3 For more on the cultural logics of industrial society see Kracauer’s *The Salaried Masses* (1930), William H. Whyte’s *The Organization Man* (1956), and Vance Packard’s *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), all texts that significantly influenced debates in the period.
- 4 The Frankfurt School, of course, lives on in the important work of Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and others, but this afterlife, however interesting, lies outside the purview of this chapter.
- 5 During the winter term of 1969, Adorno offered what would be his final seminar, “Introduction to Dialectical Thinking”; he would die in August of that year. Adorno cancelled the seminar mid-way through the term, following numerous disruptions by

- students inspired by the activist “happenings” of the late 1960s. These disruptions included an infamous incident in which three women approached Adorno at the lectern during his lecture, bared their breasts, and sprinkled flower petals over his head.
- 6 At the same time, it is absolutely the case that Adorno, despite his insistence that he had always been an opponent of sexual conservatism, was not in any way prepared to understand the new social movements.
- 7 “Only thought which does violence to itself is strong enough to shatter myths” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 2).

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Vienna 1899 – Paris 1981; or, Psychoanalysis*James Penney*

With the possible exception of Marxism, no discourse in the cultural theory repertoire has witnessed as fractious and factional a history as psychoanalysis. Marxism upset the modern liberalist consensus about a formally defined social equality by positing the profoundly divisive power of capitalist social relations. In short, class antagonism divides the social field from itself by restricting the ownership of property to a bourgeois elite. In a roughly analogous way, psychoanalysis split the emergent nineteenth-century discipline of psychology from within by outlining the disruptive effects of an unconscious subject unavailable to human knowledge. In his clinical work and writing, Freud struggles to the difficult conclusion that human sexuality is devoid of inherent social or cultural meaning and remains dramatically in excess of any presumed reproductive aim. The human subject is thereby implicated in the irrational insistence of an inherently perverse – only tangentially reproductive – sexuality.

Further, Freud insists on both the critical sovereignty of desire and the dependence of this desire on a properly psychical object. More plainly put, our relationship to objects is conditioned neither by biological need nor psychological demand, but rather by the difference between the two; or the “rip[ping] away,” as Jacques Lacan puts it, of the latter from the former (2006d, 689). This means both that we demand of our objects more than we need and that our demand must be left forever unsatisfied. For psychoanalysis, our subjection to language and the resulting repression work together to split consciousness from itself in a way that no therapeutic, social, or political process can remediate. For these reasons, any competing theory of subjectivity premised on the notion of consciousness as self-knowledge or personhood will always contradict Freud’s description of the subversive effects of a fantasmatic object that thwarts the ego’s ambition to lend an invulnerable coherence to our sense of reality.

Though certainly imperfect, this rough parallel between psychoanalysis and Marxism lies at the root of the comparable historical struggles of the two discourses against various forms of revisionism. In short, because both thought systems cut through established knowledges in so radical a fashion, periodic restorations of doctrinal accuracy become necessary as a means of correcting the discourse’s historical course. The *militant orthodoxy* that characterizes the histories of both psychoanalysis and Marxism contrasts sharply with the commonly held view that cultural-theoretical discourses must routinely update themselves, radically reformulating their most central assumptions, in

order to take account of the new: the alleged history-ending triumph of capitalism, for instance, or the digital revolution in media. The militantly orthodox position takes the inverse tack: New realities are interpreted through the original theoretical tenets in such a way that these realities appear in something other than their contemporary guise. Put differently, theoretical conceptuality is valorized over phenomenological appearance as a means of resisting the seductive ideological pull of the “new” and the “now.”

In the case of Marxism, for example, the anarchist current blithely glossed over the necessity of the Party – here understood as something like the formal necessity of political organization – while the social democrats entertained the merely theoretical possibility of creating social justice within the bounds of a tamed and regulated capitalist system. That is, Marxist orthodoxy insists both that the creation of social equality under the conditions of capitalism is a non-starter and that the elimination of capitalism requires the exercise of reason, and therefore a structure of leadership and discipline. In the psychoanalytic tradition, revisionists of various kinds struggled against the cornerstones of a theory which, as Freud untiringly insists, are merely the necessary logical and scientific¹ implications of clinical observation. Any attempt to deny the agency of the libido in the formation of neurotic symptoms or to redeem this agency through translation into more palatable biological, cultural, religious, or moral terms can never be qualified as properly psychoanalytic in the sense defined and effectively policed by Freud himself.

The very premise of a history of psychoanalysis is intimately tied up with Freud’s struggle to preserve the authentic kernel of his doctrine, which pivots around his central notion of an unconscious subject disjoined from both the normative force of social ideals and the forms of any possible knowledge. In 1914, he wrote a polemical essay that recounts from his own perspective the origins and development of the discipline; it already engages in sharp criticism of colleagues who had begun to stray from the analytic path. Published in conjunction with the ouster of Alfred Adler and Carl Jung from the editorship of the *Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse*, “On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement” (Freud 1957) makes a direct connection between the events leading up to Freud’s initial insight about the entanglement of neurosis with sexuality and the tendency of this insight to be forgotten, ignored, or better, *disavowed*. In the essay Freud recalls how in his early career both the insight and its disavowal were demonstrated to him in informal situations of everyday life. Recounting conversations with three eminent medical men of the time, Freud reveals how each explicitly betrays in his utterance an assumption about the role of sexuality, which he will then deny having made. The significance of Freud’s anecdotes lies in their attribution of even the origin of the psychoanalytic insight about sexuality to a disjunction between knowledge and consciousness in the subject. More precisely, as subjects of the unconscious, our own everyday speech routinely articulates information of which we remain blissfully oblivious. Lacan concisely expresses this insight with his claim that the Other quite literally *speaks through* us: “ça parle dans l’Autre,” or it/the id/the unconscious speaks in the Other (2006c, 579). This Other makes itself heard through, and in spite of, our intended meaning; our communicative aim is subverted in and through the articulation of our own utterance.

In Freud’s first anecdote, early collaborator Josef Breuer makes an offhand remark about the strange social behavior of one of his patients after her husband approaches him during a walk through town with Freud. Freud and Breuer had already radically

broken with contemporary medical practice by insisting upon allowing the patient to speak freely without regard to any rational communicative aim and then subjecting this speech to rigorous scrutiny. Surely the patient's problems have something to do with "*secrets d'alcôve*" (1957, 13), Freud reports Breuer saying using the French expression, adding for explanation that these discreetly named secrets relate to the conjugal bed. Note that Breuer would later abandon Freud's project after being confronted with disturbing evidence of the famous hysterical pregnancy of one of the earliest patients of psychoanalysis, whom the collectively authored *Studies on Hysteria* refer to as Anna O. (Freud and Breuer 1955). Freud implies in his essay that Breuer failed in the moment to draw any consequences from his remark for the treatment of the patient. More precisely, Breuer speaks as if his own view of the very cause of his patient's neurosis were of no consequence whatsoever for the case.

Eminent *belle époque* neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot is the subject of Freud's second anecdote. In the early 1890s, Freud had traveled to Paris to study with Charcot at the Salpêtrière hospital. At an evening reception, Freud overhears a conversation between his mentor and a colleague about a young neurotic female patient "from the East" whose husband, Charcot advances, is "either impotent or exceedingly awkward." When his interlocutor expresses surprise at the notion that the patient's suffering could be related to her husband's sexual difficulties, Charcot gets visibly excited, "hugging himself and jumping up and down in his own characteristically lively way," Freud writes. "In such cases it's always the genital thing ... always ... always ... always," concludes Charcot. The young Freud, still engrossed in his earliest neurological research, finds himself wondering about the offhand remark. If Charcot is so convinced of, and excited by, the notion of a link between sexuality and neurosis, "why does he never say so" to his students in his teaching (Freud 1957, 14)?

Finally, after returning to Vienna to assume a position as lecturer in nervous diseases, Freud receives a request from a busy colleague to take on the treatment of a woman patient suffering from attacks of nervous anxiety. Freud discovers during his first visit that the patient's symptoms recede when she hears detailed information about her doctor's whereabouts. Once again, the husband's impotence is identified as the problem. Freud's colleague takes him aside to inform him that though "she had been married for eighteen years," the woman concerned was still "*virgo intacta*" (1957, 14). Intriguingly, Freud in this third instance hints at the motivation behind the colleague's inability, or rather unwillingness, to allow his insight to influence his approach to his patient's treatment. As was the case with Breuer, the doctor steps aside when evidence of his own implication in the patient's nervous illness becomes impossible to ignore.

In each of the three anecdotes, Freud stresses the formidable force of the repression that nonetheless fails to prevent the expression of the knowledge on which it acts. Given the chance to take ownership of their part in the birth of an increasingly illustrious (if notorious) new practice, all three men of science decline, unable or unwilling to recognize their own explicit but disavowed acknowledgment of the powerful agency of sexuality in mental suffering, however over-simplistic their diagnoses surely were. The inaugural insight of psychoanalysis emerges in this way through a very particular act of interpretation, which Freud puts into practice in his recounting of the anecdotes. For psychoanalysis, interpretation in its simplest sense means the symbolic acknowledgment, the *registration* of a piece of knowledge that emerges in a subject's speech. In other words, interpretation aims at rejoining knowledge and consciousness. Its goal

is to bridge the gap that separates the knowledge objectively communicated by what we say and our own knowledge of that uttered content. By implication, psychoanalytic interpretation subverts the sense of authority we routinely attribute to an artist or author over their own creative production.

But the details of Freud's examples require us to refine our statement about the disjunction between knowledge and consciousness. Indeed, they make plain that the problematic knowledge of concern is not even necessarily uttered unconsciously, if we take this last term in its most literal sense. In the moment, for instance, Charcot would certainly not have been unaware of what he was saying, despite the fact that he goes on to deny exactly this on later occasions. This is to say that Charcot's comment was not a slip of the "Freudian" kind, according to the ordinary understanding of the expression. In this more rigorous sense, unconscious knowledge is knowledge we know and don't know at the same time; we act *as if* we didn't know part of what we know. Octave Mannoni's famous chapter title (1969) captures the fetishism inherent in the subject's knowledge: *je sais bien mais quand même* ("I know very well, but all the same..."). Freud's vignettes reveal that the theoretical elaboration of psychoanalysis originates in an act that acknowledges not so much the gap between knowledge and consciousness, but rather more precisely the non-coincidence of knowledge and *reflexive* consciousness; or self-consciousness, to use the Hegelian term: consciousness that is conscious of itself. If the unconscious is the psychoanalytic name for the failure of self-consciousness in this more developed sense, then this is because there are things *we don't know we know*. More generally, the anecdotes are yet another way in which Freud consistently minimizes his role in the birth of psychoanalysis while at the same time foregrounding his reluctant perseverance in protecting its central tenets from symptomatic acts of disavowal.

The history of psychoanalytic revisionism provides ample evidence showing that analytic theorists and practitioners are far from immune from the effects of the epistemological fetishism inherent in unconscious knowledge. It is to his tremendous credit that during his own lifetime Freud allowed himself to be persuaded by the commitment to his own discovery to found a tradition of *theoretical correctness* as a means of combating the peculiar double consciousness he observed even in his own teachers. By theoretical correctness I mean to signal the rhetorical strategy assumed in the elaboration of a discourse in a view to draw a clear line of demarcation between the authentic tenets of its doctrine and rival arguments deemed to jeopardize both the truth-value of the theory and the effectiveness of the practice.

To read Freud's numerous attempts to defend the core principles of psychoanalytic praxis is to witness the awesome perseverance with which he insists, at great personal cost, on their singular value, as well as the sober resignation with which he acknowledges the inevitability of the sometimes aggressive resistance of both professional and lay publics. Indeed, Freud is eventually forced to the conclusion that if psychoanalysis insists on the necessity of repression in psychic life, then it only stands to reason that its fate as a discipline is to be repeatedly dismissed as an illegitimate endeavor based on pseudo-science and charlatany. Lacan was the first to insist on the consequence that psychoanalysis must periodically be refounded, its core principles rediscovered and reformulated, as a means of correcting its course. To be sure, Lacan's early teaching chooses as its rhetorical pivot point the contention that what psychoanalysis needed most in the 1950s was a rigorous and faithful "return to Freud."²

Revisionist currents within psychoanalysis had already begun to emerge quite dramatically during Freud's lifetime. Their consideration here can serve to identify the most fundamental internal controversies within psychoanalysis. It will also demonstrate, as will become clearer later on, how more recent debates in the broader field of cultural theory find their roots in these earliest antagonisms. Though their contentions in some respects overlap, four main tendencies among the original dissident currents can be identified. The first tendency is the ego-psychological tradition, which we can trace back to the figure of Alfred Adler and was further developed in the work of not only Anna Freud, but also the first-generation psychoanalytic exiles who fled fascist central Europe for the United States. Adler's "comparative individual psychology" signals the psychologizing tendency of the current by abstracting the subject from its mediation by linguistic structures and positing as the telos of analytic method the recuperation of "the unity of the individual" from the ravages of the unconscious (1964, 2).

In the most general terms, ego psychology attempts to tame the disruptive effects of the unconscious by attributing to the ego the power to conform to normative ideals of health, strength, individuality, and social adaptation. In the most conventional strands, the analyst's ego is held up as a model for identification, to which the analysand – whose own ego is under assault by its symptomatic psychical conflicts – can then conform. Ego psychology stresses the need for what Anna Freud calls a "therapeutic normalization of the ego" (1969, 33–34). This requires that the interpretation of unconscious fantasy be preceded by a consideration of the ego's mechanisms of defense. Whereas these mechanisms in more orthodox strands are primarily viewed as fuel for the fire of neurotic symptoms, and therefore as hindrances to the cure, for Anna Freud they can be enlisted to effectively tame the libido, thereby establishing "the most harmonious relations possible" (1946, 193) between the various components of the psyche. The notion of the "healthy personality" elaborated in Erik Erikson's work even more strongly valorizes dubious therapeutic ideals of "inner unity" (1959, 51). These ideals are upheld in the interests of the patient's personal social success and adaptation to standards of thought and behavior specific to his or her cultural group.

Second, Carl Jung's psychoanalytic writing sought to culturalize the unconscious by glossing over with compensatory meaning its imbrication with an excessive and maladaptive sexual drive. Drawing on mythology, anthropology, and folklore to develop a repertoire of unconscious archetypes, the Jungian tendency jettisons Freud's explicit insistence that the interpretation of the unconscious material encoded in the symptom will always do violence to the subject's own sense of itself and its place in the world. The unconscious acquires in Jung's writing the sense of a deep-set and collective psychical interpretation of the experience of "physical fact" (1974, 23). This meaning runs roughshod over Freud's rigorous analysis of the condensations and displacements by means of which the ego protects the subject from disturbing unconscious thoughts. Further, by mystifying the properly libidinal character of unconscious fantasy, Jungianism is able to lend sexuality and sexual difference a set of illusory and ideological cultural meanings that can only further impede our difficult access to the subject as Freud defines it in his texts.

Third, biologizing "feminist" psychoanalysis in the vein of Karen Horney's work aimed to simplify the complexity of Freud's perennially controversial outline of sexual difference by grounding this difference in the apparent self-evidence of either anatomical form or biologically defined sex characteristics. Rather than viewing sexual

difference as a function of the way the unconscious attempts (and fails) to *represent* anatomical difference in terms of presence and absence, Horney emphasizes the role of the “anatomical structure of the female genitals” (1967, 52) themselves. This unfortunate move has the effect of naturalizing the heterosexual bond as the optimal expression of a deeply ideological understanding of womanliness. To be sure, sexual difference is among the most frequently misconstrued elements of psychoanalytic discourse and, as we shall see, it animated clamorous debates in the French intellectual field in the 1970s. These debates echoed significantly across the Anglo-American world and beyond in such explosions of discourse as the brouhaha concerning Lacan’s concept of the phallus in the 1990s (Schor and Weed 1992). Freud’s insistence that sexual difference is different from both biological *sex* and social *gender* runs counter to the set of assumptions that continue to shape not only psychoanalytic discourse itself, but also and more broadly the mainstream of feminist and queer or anti-homophobic theories in the English-speaking world.³

Lastly, the various and complex traditions within the so-called British school of psychoanalysis (Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott’s respective work, paradigmatically) develop notions such as the object relation and counter-transference which together emphasize the role played by fantasy and affect in the creation of neurotic symptoms (Kohon 1986). In this rich current, an attempt is made to shed more analytic light on the internal worlds of early childhood, populated most consequentially by pre-Oedipal parental objects. Klein’s development of the play technique for clinical work with children shifts the medium of analysis away from its strict dependence on the patient’s speech. In parallel with elements of the ego-focused revisionist current, however, Klein problematically links the infant’s “strong identification with the good mother” with the development of what she calls “a stable personality” and the capacity to “extend sympathy and friendly feelings to other people” (1963, 7). In this way, Klein aligns the ego with an ideological construction of selfhood associated with normative ideals of adaptive social behavior and an unwarranted belief in humanity’s capacity to express an unhypercritical altruism.

Also underappreciated in this influential current is Freud’s always present but never fully theorized insistence on the importance of acknowledging the properly linguistic qualities of the unconscious. A corollary of this is that whatever access one has to the pre-Oedipal realm in analysis is always already, as it were, mediated by the logic of what Freud called the primary process. More precisely, Freud’s strong metapsychological concept describes the unconscious not as a storehouse for repressed fantasies, nor as a concatenation of unacknowledged affects, nor again as a reservoir of actual or potential drive energies, but rather as a system that *represents* these fantasies, affects, and energies to the mind in the psychical forms Lacan chooses to call signifiers. Indeed, in an early seminar Lacan reproaches Klein for the rough-and-ready way in which her play technique imposes a rigid symbolic structure on the child, an imposition that could be avoided by simply listening to the child speak (Lacan 1988, 68–70).

In hindsight, the massive impact of post-Saussurean structuralist linguistics (Benveniste [1971] and Jakobson [1971–1985], most importantly) and its subsequent offshoots (the semiotics and semiologies of Barthes [2009] and Metz [1974], among others) on the French intellectual field through the mid-twentieth century helped create by comparison to the Anglo-American arena a more receptive audience for these more formal constituents of Freud’s text: not the comparatively vague investigation of drives

and affects, but rather the precise description of the mechanisms of the signifier's play in the unconscious. Indeed, these elements were left largely undeveloped in the British and American analytic traditions until the French currents began to make their presence felt in the 1970s. Summarily put, the Lacanian contention is that the Freudian unconscious functions according to rules that can be formally defined in terms developed in aspects of the linguistics discipline, as well as, according to the later teaching, in elements of postclassical logic and mathematics. This is the formulation of the unconscious that Lacan would influentially redefine as the agency that imposes and regulates what Jacques-Alain Miller has helpfully termed "the logic of the signifier" (Miller 1966).

As Lacan's teaching began to address more deeply the vexed problem of sexual difference in psychoanalysis in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new generation of feminist writers in France began to broach the question of femininity in a new way. Despite its egregious sociological-existentialist reduction of the Freudian unconscious, Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 classic *The Second Sex* (2011) rightly argues that the idea of femininity has been used for centuries as a means of marginalizing women and devaluing their social role. When they are not stereotyped with attributes like emotionality or a propensity for nurturance, attributes that work ultimately to limit their access to the public sphere, women are judged as lacking these presumed gendered qualities and dismissed as inadequate representatives of their sex. For Beauvoir, the inquiry into femininity – the attempt to define it once and for all or else make it come into being – is most decidedly a dead end for feminism.

In critical dialogue with Lacan and the work of some of his followers, figures such as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray began in the 1970s to question Beauvoir's conclusion, convinced that there is indeed a fundamental psychical difference between the sexes, however it may be defined, and that the theorization of feminine difference in consequence can be a legitimate and meaningful exercise. For Kristeva, the feminine entertains a privileged relation to what she calls the *semiotic*. The semiotic in Kristeva's work is a specific, archaic register of language she associates with poetic discourse; it is more attuned than normative language to pre-Oedipal⁴ drive energies close to the body and resistant to the force of repression. More strongly critical of Freud's elaboration of sexual difference and especially of the Lacanian school, Irigaray for her part develops an elaborate critique of a narcissistic and male-identified phallogentrism that originates in her view in Platonic doctrine and runs consistently through the western intellectual tradition. Her writing works up to the contention that the eventuality of an authentic sexual relation depends on the creation of a specifically feminine language that pivots around an alternative to the phallus, which is viewed to repress the expression of women's sexualities.

Central to Irigaray's theoretical project is the argument that "the phallus is the emblem, the signifier and the product of a single sex" (1991, 79). Most Lacanians argue that Lacan developed his phallus concept as a means of distinguishing the anatomical penis, which plays the central role in Freud's outline of sexual difference, from what he described as the signifier of desire: that is, the representation in the psyches of *both sexes* of what the subject lacks. For Lacanians, to assert that the male subject 'has the phallus' in some absolute or unproblematic way is simply to deny the reality of masculine castration. For Irigaray, however, the phallus is rather the ideological symptom of the failure of not only psychoanalysis, but also western thought as such, properly to

account for the existence of women. More specifically, Irigaray's argument reproaches Freud's work as well as the Lacanian reading of it for failing to recognize how the concept of the unconscious is embedded in a thought system guilty of turning a blind eye to feminine difference.

Here Irigaray's contention makes audible a specifically feminist echo of a critical refrain we have already identified in previous revisionist currents. In its generic form, the critical argument posits that the universalizing ambitions of Freudian theory – its pretension to describe structural elements of the psyche that remain more or less invariable over time; in Lacanian terms, the notion that these structures are *real* rather than symbolic or imaginary – cause it to ignore the ways in which the particular social, cultural (or 'discursive') circumstances of Freud's historical context inevitably determine its contentions, severely limiting the theory's applicability to other places and other times. In Irigaray's version of the argument, psychoanalytic theory can only bear the traces of patriarchal assumptions embedded in the same tradition of thought which in other important respects it seeks to overturn. The "theory and practice" of psychoanalysis, concludes Irigaray, rest upon what she calls a "historical nothingness" (1991, 80).

To the extent that psychoanalysis does indeed advance the claim that there are properly structural elements of the psyche that remain historically invariable, there is tremendous value in testing this contention against the particularities of the symptoms that emerge in the clinical context over time. Like other iterations of the historicist objection, however, Irigaray's remains vague on the question of what precisely, according to psychoanalysis in general or Lacanian discourse in particular, is meant to remain historically unchanging. Is there anything especially controversial, for instance, in claiming with Lacan that the condition of the human subject's subjection to language is not in and of itself a function of history, or indeed culture for that matter? In other words, the putative ahistoricism of psychoanalysis surely rests in an important and undramatic sense on the simple and indeed universal fact that human infants are born without the capacity to speak and must then acquire this capacity. Of course, Irigaray is aware of this fact, and her work even accepts the corollary that it has significant psychological consequences. The problem lies where Irigaray's discourse insists on using the historicist-culturalist argument against Lacan even when her own set of assumptions features universalizing premises of the same kind.

The cultural and historical tenor of Irigaray's objection to Lacanian discourse can also distract her reader from specific doctrinal disagreements that can and should be articulated plainly. As we have seen, for Irigaray the history of phallogentrism in the western tradition has prevented the development of an authentic sexual difference that would properly acknowledge or represent the feminine. Irigaray's project is based on the underlying idea that feminist practice can coax into being the true sexual relation that would finally allow men and women to live their sexual specificity alongside one another. By stark contrast, Lacan elaborates his teaching on sexual difference with the proposition *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* ("there is no sexual relation") (2001, 455). By this aphorism Lacan means, among other things, that the advent of the authentic heterosexual bond as Irigaray forecasts is simply an impossibility due to a condition of human sexuality unamenable to historical remediation. What Lacan takes to be a bedrock fact of sexuality – a man and a woman do not combine with one another to form a complete whole; one sex doesn't have what the other sex lacks – Irigaray considers rather a symptom of what she (with Jacques Derrida) calls phallogentrism. This term is meant to

evoke the historical failure of men collectively to acknowledge that women are fundamentally different in more or less all respects – social, cultural, political, and, for Irigaray, especially psychosexual.

The fact that Irigaray's work found an enthusiastic readership in the English-speaking world among lesbian critics now appears in a decidedly ironic light. When Irigaray wrote influentially about the lips of women "speaking together" in an experimental text addressed to an explicitly feminine "you" (1985b, 205), many readers assumed that the exchange of love lyrically evoked in the essay was intended, in addition to serving as an attempt to repair a mother–daughter relation sabotaged by the reign of the phallus, as an explicit celebration of homosexuality among women. Through the image of the lips, Irigaray appears to want to theorize a specifically feminine mode of exchange or being together that would not be premised on the phallic identity she imputes to masculine discourse; a mode of being, in other words, in which the I and the you blend into indistinction without however merging into unity. "I/you touch you/me," she writes, and "that's quite enough for us to feel alive" (1985b, 209). Irigaray's overarching concern is the historical construction of an ersatz femininity for the pleasure of men. Her creative discourse and celebration of homoeroticism are plainly cast as strategies for developing a different kind of femininity for women and by women, one that breaks free from the norms and judgments developed over centuries of men's writing on sexual difference, including in particular Freud's.

The translation of Irigaray's celebration of female homosociality and homosexuality into a specifically lesbian theoretical idiom is certainly not illegitimate in any a priori way. However, subsequent writings make abundantly clear that the lesbian resonances of Irigaray's homosexual interlude are a mere waystation on the road that leads to her ultimate and very different utopian destination. This destination can only be described as a normative – fulfilled, redeemed, reconciled – heterosexual bond. In other words, if Lacan is right to say that there is no sexual relation between men and women, then this can only be the work of the patriarchy. Once they have spent sufficient time with one another acquainting themselves therapeutically with their libidinous bodies and creating a new language that accurately reflects their desire's difference, women can then return to their male partners and enjoy a newfound ethical sexual relation based on a sexual difference now fully actualized in social, cultural, linguistic, and even political terms (Irigaray 1993). Indeed, Irigaray's belief in this suggested eventuality might have been discerned as early as her well-read 1977 essay "This Sex Which Is Not One." At its provocative conclusion, the author anticipates the criticism that her opportunistic and temporary feminist separatism might only further alienate women from the structures of power. Irigaray defends her project from this charge, defining it as a set of "indispensable stages," and specifying that women are to "keep themselves apart from men *long enough* to learn to defend their desire" (1985a, 33; my emphasis). Female homosociality, however evocatively or explicitly eroticized, is merely a one-time tactic designed to pave the way for a fully realized heterosexual relationship.

Irigaray's evocation of heterosexual partnership purged of the patriarchal damage inflicted upon it shares important features with the biologizing revisionist current discussed earlier with reference to Adler and Horney. From the orthodox perspective, two main errors are committed. First, sexual difference is reduced to a question of biology or anatomy, contradicting Freud's most significant original argument on the issue. And second, the heterosexual relation is renaturalized: Whereas lesbianism is

dismissively cast as a tactic deployed to repair a perverted heterosexual relation, male homosexuality is strongly linked to androcentric phallic narcissism – that is, to men’s fetishistic failure to recognize feminine difference. From the Freud-Lacanian perspective, Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference is simply a feminist ideology that masks the central truth of psychoanalysis concerning the inherent deadlock of sexuality. This deadlock lends to sexuality its merciless resistance to the establishment of any uncomplicated or unconflicted, natural, or smoothly functioning sexual relation whatsoever, no matter the biological sexes or gender identities of the partners involved.

In comparison to Irigaray’s, Kristeva’s contribution to psychoanalytic theory is less ideologically charged on the sexual difference issue. It is closer to the spirit and letter of Freud’s texts, and therefore of greater consequence for the discipline of psychoanalysis writ large. In general terms, Kristeva’s early work can be read as an attempt to mediate productively between, on the one hand, the Kleinian tendency’s emphasis on drive and affect over questions of representation in the unconscious and, on the other, the logicizing and mathematizing impetus behind Lacan’s teaching – its attempt to formalize psychoanalytic doctrine through the use of non-‘ordinary’ symbolic languages. With concepts such as the *chora* and especially the *semiotic*, Kristeva sought to valorize the properly subjective function of language. In her view, this function had been historically marginalized in the various post-Saussurean schools of linguistics, with their characteristic emphasis on synchrony (structure) over diachrony (history), and concomitant valorization of *langue* (language) over *parole* (utterance) (Saussure 1977).

For Kristeva, psychoanalysis shares with music and especially poetic language an interest in those elements of the human utterance that are left unrecognized by the formal categories developed to understand the phenomenon of language. Defining it as “a psychosomatic modality of the signifying process” (1986a, 96), Kristeva’s semiotic marks the expression of a negativity logically prior to castration, and therefore anterior to the establishment of the self–other relation and the establishment of the body-image during what Lacan influentially called the mirror stage (2006b). As such, for Kristeva the semiotic bears a privileged relation to the drives and to the figure of the mother; it is therefore capable of evoking the more primal and destructive features of the pre-subject’s libidinal energies. Coupling dense theoretical and philosophical passages with careful readings of the modernist poetry of Lautréamont and Mallarmé, Kristeva’s early work greatly influenced a generation of critics looking for new ways to bring psychoanalysis to bear on close readings of literary texts. In comparison to Lacan’s forays into literature which, despite their philological rigor, seek primarily to uncover new ways of illustrating theoretical concepts, Kristeva’s discourse offered fresh tools for developing literary readings more attuned to the text’s own linguistic specificity. Enthusiastic readers also endorsed Kristeva’s critical assessment of the Lacanian school as promulgating a theoretical formalism ill-equipped to hear the semiotic nuances of speech, and therefore badly placed to appreciate the complexities of the drive’s expression in and through the vicissitudes of language. It is no coincidence that Kristeva chose for her own analysis a figure of the Parisian clinical scene, André Green, recognized for his objections to the Lacanian school.

Despite a brief, skeptical mention in the seminar (Lacan 1977) of her book *Polylogue* (Kristeva 1977) at the time of its publication, Lacan never substantively addressed Kristeva’s work in his lifetime. Still, there are significant contrasts in emphasis that should be duly noted. In general terms, Kristeva’s preference for close literary analysis

and case-historical publications is shaped by a reading of Freud that emphasizes the individual over the social. Further, Kristeva's approach views the social through the prism of a personalized construction of the psyche. As an exile from Cold War-era, highly bureaucratized Eastern Europe, Kristeva imbues her work with a sensitivity for the discourses of the cosmopolitan and the dissident, as well as a sense of rebellion against a perceived hyperrationalist materialism deeply embedded in the Marxist tradition of cultural criticism.

As such, Kristeva's writing is markedly ill at ease with the allegedly conformist and stifling ethos of collectivity. Relatedly, it also features a vanguardist, almost libertarian appetite for the symbolic possibilities inherent in more "polyvalent" (1986b, 274) geopolitical regions such as the United States, where long-standing and entrenched cultural traditions like those of Europe are considered absent, and where a multiplicity of identities and aesthetic practices is viewed to nurture an intellectually stimulating creative energy. Whether or not Kristeva's late-1970s fascination with America, which she shared with the rest of the *Tel Quel* editorial group, produced a legitimate reading of its cultural production, it remains emblematic of the way her discourse draws on psychoanalytic theory to make judgments that prioritize aesthetic innovation and creative freedom over more materialist and directly political forms of analysis. Indeed, one begins to wonder if the exit from ideology in Kristeva requires a vanguardist preciousness and a belletristic sophistication that can only too easily be dismissed as fashionable, if weirdly parochial, Parisian theoreticism.

When Kristeva's work does turn directly to politics, it relies on a problematically culturalist understanding of the social. Responding to increased racial and religious tension in France during the 1980s and 1990s, Kristeva began to endorse in her writing a quintessentially French-republican construct of an *esprit général* derived from the work of Montesquieu. Though carefully distinguished from the Germanic substantialist idea of a *Volksgeist* bound by land and blood, Kristeva's cultural reference grounds an understanding of the social from which all references to political economy and class struggle have been cast aside. Referencing Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*, a canonical text of French political liberalism, Kristeva traces the origin of her *esprit* to Enlightenment's universalizing culturalism, premised on references to "climate, religion, laws, principles of government, examples of things past, customs, manners" (1993, 54). This is precisely the set of notions that Marxian historicism would displace with its foundational emphasis on the mode of production.

Further, as many non-French readers argued at the time, the universalist ambitions of the general spirit always fail to create a level playing field for all, especially for those whose religious practices, minority ethnicity, or lack of historical belonging to the nation mark them as bad incarnations of the universality the culture is meant to impart to everyone. A provocative radical point can be made here: Kristeva's liberalist cultural politics is in fact *worse* than the racializing Germanic *Volksgeist* commonly held to feed directly into twentieth-century fascism. Whereas Enlightenment liberalism disingenuously disguises its ethnocentrism and latent nationalism under a distracting and edifying humanist veneer, all the while turning a blind eye to its complicity with colonialism and empire, *Volksgeist* at least wears its racializing assumptions on its sleeve, selecting between the chosen and the rest according to criteria that are explicitly stated, bluntly communicated to all with the transparent intent to discriminate, or indeed exterminate.

By the time Lacan died in Paris in September 1981, the psychoanalytic field internationally was as split and factional as it ever had been. Not only did Lacan's unilateral dissolution of his own school create conditions for the institutional contestation of his legacy in Paris and beyond, but the animosity between the International Psychoanalytic Association and the Lacanian community fostered by the Association's delegitimization of Lacan's teaching and practice had not yet begun to abate. In the decades since Lacan's death, however, numerous facets of his longer-term impact have become easier to discern. First, surely no other psychoanalyst since Freud has met with more success attracting the interest of scholars and writers from such a wide variety of fields beyond psychoanalysis strictly speaking. As a result, the tradition unhappily inaugurated as "applied psychoanalysis" by the first generation has been exponentially enriched. Indeed, without Lacan, it is far from obvious that an entry on the history of psychoanalysis would have made its way into an early twenty-first-century English-language anthology of cultural theory.

To the established list of disciplines on which psychoanalysis had already made its presence felt – literary criticism, art history and criticism, classics, anthropology, sociology, education studies, and religious studies – Lacan created entirely new audiences, however (initially) limited to the French intellectual field, in such areas as linguistics, semiotics, and also philosophy, especially within its logical and mathematical branches. Further, mention should also be made of the peculiar fact that the earliest reception of Lacan in the English-speaking world took place significantly within the field of film theory via the work of film scholars in France such as Christian Metz (1974) and Jean-Louis Baudry (2011). Though the soundness of this reception has since (quite legitimately) been called into question, subsequent writing has reformulated the premises of film theory in a way both more faithful to Lacan's teaching and more consequential for the disciplines of film and media studies as a whole (Copjec 1994; McGowan 2008; and Penney 2010).

An even more important observation can be made from the perspective of politics. Without Lacan's rereading of Freud, it is difficult to imagine a future for psychoanalysis as something other than a bourgeois pseudo-science, one that grounds a rich but indulgent psychological exercise in individual self-exploration or self-discipline. Though it would perhaps be an overstatement to qualify it as an outright betrayal of Freud's work, it is difficult to deny that this exercise could only remain fully entrenched in the ancient and aristocratic, significantly Stoic, tradition Foucault famously identified and valorized in his last writing as the "care of the self" (Foucault 1988).

Viewed in retrospect, it is surely no coincidence that among the most faithful attendees of Lacan's seminar in the 1960s and 1970s were young, politically radical students, many affiliated with Maoist or other left political organizations and followers at the *École Normale Supérieure* of the teaching of Louis Althusser, the Marxist philosopher best known for his influential theory of ideology (Althusser 1971). To be sure, there is a curious aspect to this link, not least because Lacan, much like Freud himself, was outspokenly critical of institutional socialism, and also famously chastised some would-be revolutionaries of May '68 as unconsciously desiring the advent of a new political master to replace the tarnished icon of Charles de Gaulle (Lacan 2007). Were these admittedly strange bedfellows – immersed in a supercharged concoction of radical

politics, Freudianism, postclassical logic, and set theory – merely the unholy, idiosyncratic product of an intellectually ebullient but socially polarized moment of French cultural history? Or is there rather something inherently and fundamentally different in Lacan’s teaching that sets it apart both conceptually and ideologically from essentially all rival psychoanalytic currents of the twentieth century? For it is difficult to deny that these rival currents take on the patina of hopelessly ideological revisionisms when viewed through a Lacanian lens.

To end this chapter, I would like to suggest that Lacan’s influence on the millennial cultural-theoretical landscape, emblemized most importantly by the Slovenian school inaugurated by Slavoj Žižek’s provocative work and the extraordinary philosophical project of Alain Badiou, lends significant weight to the argument that the latter scenario is closer to the truth. It is perhaps Lacan’s concept of the Other that should be held most responsible for forcing open Freud’s still latently liberalist conceptuality to a radical understanding of history and politics. As a concept, the Other fails to register within the “individual vs. society” paradigm lying at the base of liberal thought. Defined either as the primary process that sets the rules for the linguistic trickery performed by the unconscious, or else as the fragile set of beliefs and customs that set the terms for ordinary social interaction, the Other is neither individual nor social as these terms are conventionally understood. It is not individual because it is beyond the agency of the ego and also subverts the unity of our personhood; in these respects it is precisely *transindividual*. But neither is it social, because in the second sense it can be qualified as virtual, *fictitious*. Though the Other is the necessary illusion that grounds the existence of society *as appearance*, it also obfuscates the constitutive inequalities, exploitation, and violence that form the real of the social world (Žižek 2006). This real gives the lie to society’s existence as a universal and exceptionless system of representation along the lines of the formal (juridico-legal) equality of rights so characteristic of liberal ideology.

With their comparable but distinct emphases on the category of the subject viewed through an anti-humanist lens, both Žižek and Badiou draw on the psychoanalytic tradition, and particularly on the work of Lacan, to develop the most authentically subversive elements of Freud’s legacy. Psychoanalytically defined, the subject reminds us of the irremediable disjunction between the non-psychological, transindividual core or our being and all that can be registered symbolically, and therefore socially recognized. For Žižek, this means that by tarrying with the symptom, we can confront a terrifying but also potentially emancipatory world of possibility that refuses to appear within our ordinary ideological parameters. And for Badiou, the discernment of the subject teaches us the lesson that we are collectively capable of bearing witness to disruptive events which, through our acts of fidelity, have the potential radically to change the world for the better (Badiou 2001). *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* (“Where id was, there I/ego shall be”), wrote Freud (1964, 80): No one can predict what becomes possible when we bravely decide to shift the locus of our identity from what is most familiar and edifying to what dismantles our own sense of ourselves, to what effectively tears our world down.

- see CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 10 (SUBJECTIVITY); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY)

Notes

- 1 Jean-Claude Milner (1995) develops how Freud's empirical understanding of science is transformed by Lacan into a more classical notion of science based on mathematical and logical paradigms.
- 2 "The meaning of a return to Freud is a return to Freud's meaning" (Lacan 2006a, 337).
- 3 In an instructive footnote added to the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1915, Freud (1953, 219) identifies "at least three uses" of the terms masculine and feminine, which he considers "among the most confused that occur in science." The two "sociological" and "biological" meanings he refers to are close synonyms of 'gender' and 'sex' respectively as used in the context of the sex/gender distinction still assumed in much Anglo-American feminist and gender theory. However, Freud valorizes a third meaning, which he associates with the active and passive aims of the drive. Adding that the drive actively pursues even its passive aim, Freud prevents his reader from understanding sexuality through the lens of gender stereotypes. By singling out this third, still unfamiliar, understanding of masculinity and femininity, Freud decisively severs the link between sexual difference as it manifests itself at the level of the drive and the subject's sex identity considered in either social or biological terms. With its exclusive sex–gender polarity, Anglo-American gender theory, including that part of it that misleadingly defines itself as psychoanalytic, is simply incapable of digesting this point.
- 4 Given its importance to the work of numerous French feminists in the 1970s, one should wonder about the theoretical legitimacy of their association of the pre-Oedipal with femininity. Freud clearly argues that what differentiates the sexuation of what he called the boy and the girl is the order, variously understood as temporal or logical, in which they experience the castration and Oedipus complexes. Before the Oedipus complex, specifically, the girl experiences castration; the girl has no pre-Oedipal experience *as a girl* (Freud 1961). Lacan develops the implication that she is more fully or unambiguously subjected to language and the loss that comes with it than the boy. To the extent that the pre-Oedipal is understood as a psychical stage characterized by the agency of fantasies and affects less mediated by the law of language, it is rather the psychic life of the boy that lends itself to consideration in this light.

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3

Paris 1955–1968; or, Structuralism*Sean Homer*

Structuralism was a peculiarly French phenomenon, which emerged from a very particular set of institutional debates in the 1950s, specifically in relation to epistemology and the history of science. Structuralism grew to dominate the Parisian intellectual scene of the mid-1960s and the Anglo-American academy of the 1970s. As François Dosse writes, structuralism was the *koine* – the common dialect – of an entire intellectual generation, although there was no “doctrinal solidarity” between its key figures (1997a, xxiv). As a new generation of post-World War II French intellectuals challenged the traditions of the old academy and established disciplines, structuralism was the banner under which they rallied. In this sense, structuralism was closely tied to the rise of the social sciences and the critique of the traditional humanities, especially philology and philosophy. Structuralism was not a philosophy as such, but a mode of thinking and analysis applicable to a wide diversity of disciplines, from linguistics and anthropology to literature, psychoanalysis, and political economy. While the disparate group of thinkers who are now placed under the rubric “structuralist” do not form a coherent group, Dosse identifies three broad strands of structuralist thought: the scientific structuralism associated with Claude Lévi-Strauss, A. J. Greimas, and Jacques Lacan; the semiological structuralism of Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, and Gérard Genette; and the historicized or epistemic structuralism represented by Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida (1997a, xxxiii). What these thinkers shared was a common *problématique*,¹ a *problématique* that characterizes the structuralist project as a whole: the priority of structure over agency, a profound anti-humanism, the preeminence of scientific knowledge over empirical experience, anti-historicism, and, finally, a radical reconceptualization of the human subject. I trace the contours of this *problématique* below.

Foundations

Structuralism was first and foremost a method of analysis that was seen to be applicable to all human social phenomena: the social and human sciences, as well as the humanities and arts. Whilst many of the major figures whom we now associate with structuralism – Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault – would

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later distance themselves from its main premises, one figure in particular unequivocally identified himself with the project: the cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Although he defined his work in opposition to positivism and empiricism, Lévi-Strauss never completely shed an early influence of Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim. From Comte, he adopted the perspective that valid knowledge must be scientific, and furthermore, that science always aspires to be holistic. Durkheim, on the other hand, provided him with a notion of structure, insofar as society must be seen as a whole that cannot be reduced to its parts. Lévi-Strauss's breakthrough was to combine the insights of sociology, political economy, and psychoanalysis with structural linguistics. Lévi-Strauss was introduced to the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in 1942 by Roman Jakobson, whom he met at the New School for Social Research in New York. Saussure's non-referential and anti-historical theory of language served as a model of scientificity for Lévi-Strauss and, as Dosse puts it, was "the pilot science" for structuralism as a whole (1997a, 77).

Structuralism derives from Saussure's foundational distinction between *langue* and *parole*, that is to say, the distinction between a language system itself and specific expressions or manifestations of that system as individual speech acts. Saussure rejected the traditional *diachronic* study of language, historical philology, arguing that if linguistics was to be considered a science then it could not be based upon historical principles. Scientific method requires an initial identification of the object of study and in the case of linguistics this meant the *sign* and the language system as a whole. A science of the sign, Saussure proposed, must begin by studying language as provisionally fixed at a given moment outside of time and history, or "synchronically," in order to more clearly apprehend its internal structural relations. The "diachronic," or temporal movement and historical development of language would in this way be provisionally bracketed as a project to be taken up following an established structural science of language as a system of signs. Lévi-Strauss derived from Saussure two mutually exclusive forms of understanding, scientific analysis, on the one hand, and historicism, on the other, prioritizing synchronic analysis over diachronic evolution.² This founding distinction would fuel many of the heated polemics between structuralists and proponents of historicism.

For Saussure, language is not a "nomenclature," in the sense that it is a list of terms that correspond to a set of things, or phenomena, in the world. This is what is known as a correspondence theory of language, or representational epistemology, whereby language consists as a system of symbols that doubles as a system of objects. As Fredric Jameson has pointed out:

[T]he force ... of the word "symbol" was to direct our attention towards the relationship between words and their objects or referents in the real world. Indeed, the very word "symbol" implies that the relationship between word and thing is not an arbitrary one at all [but] that there is some basic fitness in the initial association. (Jameson 1972, 31–32)

Saussure rejected this "substantive" view of language in which substantial phenomena lie behind the words we use and argued that words refer not to specific referents in the real world but to concepts in our minds. The linguistic sign consists of a word, a sound

pattern or signifier, and a concept, the signified. The relationship between signifier and signified is said to be arbitrary in the sense that there is no natural link between the two. “If words,” writes Saussure, “had the job of representing concepts fixed in advance, one would be able to find exact equivalents for them as between one language and another” (1983, 114–115). But this is not the case as different languages articulate the world in different ways and, therefore, the relation between signifier and signified is a matter of social convention. Crucially, for Saussure, these two halves of the linguistic sign, the signifier and the signified, are inextricably bound together as two sides of a sheet of paper. It will be this inextricable bond that later structuralists, such as Jacques Lacan, will draw into question. The structuralists drew two important lessons from Saussurean linguistics. First, language is a system of “signs” that relate to other signs. The notion of the “sign” serves to affirm the internal coherence and autonomy of the system itself, as signs relate to other signs within a given structure rather than pressing outwards towards what is symbolized. Second, the meaning of any given sign derives, not through any correspondence to an object or referent, but through its *difference* from all other signs. Language, therefore, is dependent upon a perception of identity and difference. It was this understanding of language as a system of values that facilitated Lévi-Strauss’s break with the naturalism of previous anthropology, eschewing assumptions about human nature and looking for the “deep structures” of identity and difference that underlie social rituals and practices. Furthermore, Saussure’s *langue/parole* distinction eliminated the speaking subject; as he writes, “language itself is not a function of the speaker. It is the product passively registered by an individual” (1983, 14). The prioritization of the synchronic structure, the differential nature of signs and the elimination of the conscious subject constitute the defining characteristics of structuralism.

Structure

Following Saussure, structuralism was not concerned with the individual manifestations of a given sign system but with describing the overall organization of the sign system or structure itself. While linguistics provided the model for this form of analysis, structuralism’s privileged objects of study were very often non-verbal sign systems, such as Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of kinship systems (1971) and food preparation (1966a) or Roland Barthes’s seminal study of fashion (1967). It was Jakobson’s study of phonology, however, that provided the model for the later study of complex social phenomena:

Phonology sought to go beyond the stages of conscious linguistic phenomena. Considering the specificity of the terms was not enough, the goal was to understand them in their interrelationships, and phonology therefore introduces the notion of system in an effort to construct general laws. The entire structuralist method is embodied in this project. (Dosse 1997a, 21)

From Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss formulated his two guiding principles of structural anthropology: (1) the search for constants beyond the multitude of identifiable variations and

(2) avoiding all recourse to the consciousness of a speaking subject. Thus, in his influential essay “The Structural Study of Myth” (1972a) Lévi-Strauss demonstrated how myths could be broken down into their constituent units or “mythemes” and these remained constant across a wide variety of myths. The purpose of myth, according to Lévi-Strauss, “is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a [real] contradiction” (1972a, 229), and this model could theoretically generate an infinite number of structural variations. As he would later put it in the first volume of his monumental study of world mythology, *The Raw and the Cooked*, the purpose of such an analysis is not to show “how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact” (1969, 12). Thus, the enabling premise of structuralism is that all manifestations of social activity – whether it be ancient myths, systems of kinship and marriage, the clothes that are worn or books that are written – constitute languages in a formal sense. Moreover, it is the general law or “code” that precedes and is independent of the content or message; the subject, too, is subjected to the code or law of the signifier.³ To put it another way, we do not understand individual acts in their own right but rather against an unconscious background of social relations and conventions; isolated social activities gain meaning from this background of wider social conventions.

With the publication of *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1971) Lévi-Strauss achieved his aim of establishing anthropology as an autonomous “scientific” discipline. Through the analyses of the marriage and kinship systems of so-called “primitive” societies, Lévi-Strauss postulated that the marriage relations of these societies represented nothing less than the basic underlying structure of the society itself – the elementary structure upon which all subsequent systems are based. Lévi-Strauss was concerned not with the exchange of actual people, but with the way in which those bodies had become transformed into signs and operated as a system of symbolic exchange. That is to say, the exchange of women operated like a language, a formal system with its own rules and regulations, which could not be infringed but at the same time remained unconscious to the individual system users. Furthermore, he identified in one particular form of relationship the elementary structure of all kinship relations and of all symbolic exchange. This particular relationship is called the avuncular, or avunculate, the relations between a son and his maternal uncle, or mother’s brother. The unconscious aspect of this relation, Lévi-Strauss postulated, was the inhibition of incest or the universality of the incest taboo. The incest taboo marks the passage from nature to culture:

[W]hat confers upon kinship its socio-cultural character is not what it retains from nature, but, rather, the essential way in which it diverges from nature. A kinship system does not consist in the objective ties of descent or consanguinity between individuals. It exists only in human consciousness; it is an arbitrary system of representations, not the spontaneous development of a real situation. (Lévi-Strauss 1972b, 50)

By breaking with the analysis of blood-ties, Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that marriage relations are socially regulated transactions, i.e., they are social and cultural facts. At a stroke he “freed anthropology from the natural sciences and placed it immediately and exclusively on cultural grounds” (Dosse 1997a, 21).

Theoretical Anti-Humanism

While *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* can retrospectively be seen as the founding text of structuralism, it was Lévi-Strauss's critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential humanism that gained him a wider audience and marked a turning point in postwar French philosophy. Under the influence of the three H's – Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger – French philosophy of the 1940s and 1950s was dominated by varieties of existential phenomenology that all shared a concern with individual consciousness and the “lived experience” of concrete individuals (Descombes 1980, 3–4). Phenomenology was concerned with the return to “things themselves” and stressed the intentional consciousness towards things, prioritizing the description of experience and subjectivity. For Lévi-Strauss, however, “the transition between one order and the other is discontinuous; ... to reach reality one has first to reject experience, and then subsequently to reintegrate it into an objective synthesis devoid of any sentimentality” (1973, 58). In short, there could be no given immediate experience of reality. Our access to reality is always mediated by the symbolic; as Marcel Mauss revealed, social life is “a world of symbolic relationships” (Lévi-Strauss 1987, 10). It is the symbolic system that mediates between the individual and the collective and, crucially for Lévi-Strauss, individual behaviors are never symbolic in their own right, they are merely the elements out of which a collective symbolic system is built. In 1946 Sartre delivered a famous lecture, “Existentialism is a Humanism” (1975), which served to popularize his ideas, especially the notion that there is no such thing as human nature in the sense of a universal essence of man; “man” is what he makes of himself, there is nothing before or after that. Sartre summed this up in his well-known slogan “existence precedes essence.” At the same time, Sartre argued that the *cogito*, the self-illuminating clarity of consciousness, is the starting point for all critical reflection (1975, 360–361). It was this prioritization of the *cogito* and intentionality that would be the target of Lévi-Strauss's critique.

Lévi-Strauss dismissed existentialism as “shop-girl metaphysics” that raised personal preoccupations to the dignity of philosophical problems (1973, 58) and his book *Tristes Tropiques* concluded with a resounding rejection of the individual: the “self is not only hateful: there is no place for it between *us* and *nothing*” (414). It was in *The Savage Mind* (1966b), however, that Lévi-Strauss unleashed a full attack on Sartre's existential historicism. Sartre sought, in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), to elaborate a theory of collectivities or groups through which individuals experience history. He aspired to make history intelligible and give an account of the emergence of social structures in terms of human praxis. However, Sartre's *magnum opus* came too late: the tide had already turned against existentialism. Jacques Rancière described an introduction to the *Critique* Sartre delivered at the École Normale Supérieure in 1961 as “more like a burial than a celebration” (2012, 263), while Louis Althusser commented in a 1966 lecture that “Sartre is alive and kicking, combative and generous, but he does not teach us anything about anything” and “will not have any posterity whatsoever: he is already philosophically dead” (qtd in Hallward and Peden 2012a, 5). The problem with existential historicism, according to Lévi-Strauss, is that it views history as essentially a relationship between an individual subject in the present and a cultural object in the past; to put it another way, it views history as an essentially aesthetic experience. The subject attempts to understand history by immersing him/herself in that history, by putting themselves “in the place of the men living there, to understand

the principle and pattern of their intentions, and to perceive a period or culture as a significant set” (1966b, 249). Existential historicism thus posits history as a form of self-validating truth; historical facts are simply given and capable of being experienced or known in their own right. From a structuralist perspective, historical facts are no more given than any other, they are constructed by the historian in the act of writing history. Lévi-Strauss distinguished between “low-power” histories (the biological and anecdotal) and “high-power” histories (those that aspire to greater levels of abstraction), arguing that history is tied to neither man nor a specific object but consists solely in its method:

We need recognize that history is a method with no distinct object corresponding to it to reject the equivalence between the notion of history and humanity which some have tried to foist on us with the unavowed aim of making historicity the last refuge of a transcendental humanism: as if men could regain the illusion of liberty on the plane of the “we” merely by giving up the “I”s that are too obviously wanting in consistency. (1966b, 262)

Lévi-Strauss’s critique targeted Sartre’s appeal to history as “given” as well as the primacy of the *cogito*. As we will see below, what was at stake here was more than an abstract question of method but one of what goes to the heart of how we understand history and the process of political transformation. By prioritizing the *cogito* as the primary site for understanding history, Sartre was practicing a form of cultural imperialism through which a European consciousness and subjectivity imposes its own structure and understanding upon a disparate and heterogeneous past. For Lévi-Strauss the ultimate goal of the human sciences was not to constitute “man” but to dissolve him.

The Scientific Turn

Lévi-Strauss’s critique of existential phenomenology was part of a broader scientific turn in French philosophy and the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the aspiration to *scientificity* or scientific rigor – from Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of kinship systems to Barthes’s study of contemporary mythology, and from Althusser’s symptomatic reading of Marx and Foucault’s epistemes, through to Lacan’s mathemes of the unconscious – was one of the defining characteristics of structuralism. The notion of science advocated by structuralists, however, is far from the familiar Anglo-American tradition of empiricism and positivism. Drawing upon the work of Jean Cavaillès, Gaston Bachelard, Alexandre Koyré, and George Canguilhem, French epistemology sought to construct an anti-empirical, anti-positivist, science of problems. Bachelard characterized science as an autonomous discipline that has no object outside of its own activity: “Science is only installed by breaking with, by cutting itself off from its own past; ... the object of a science is therefore not an immediate given and does not pre-exist the process of its production” (Lecourt 1975, 7). Science produces its own norms and criterion of validation and does not require external verification (26). In other words, science is not directly concerned with the object itself, with immediate empirical reality, but with the production of knowledge of the object. Science does not direct us towards the examination of everyday lived experience but calls into

question the givenness of lived experience, breaking with the very notion of a direct apprehension of the thing itself.

Bachelard rejected the idea that science progresses through the gradual accumulation of knowledge, insisting that science is discontinuous, progressing through *error* and conceptual rectification. In other words, science proceeds through a break with common knowledge – *rupture épistémologique*; scientific discoveries emerge as novelties through these ruptures or breaks (32). The notion of the epistemological break conceptualizes science as a series of ruptures or breaks between *doxa* or common knowledge and scientific knowledge or, as Althusser would formulate it, the movement from pre-scientific (ideological) ideas to the construction of a new (scientific) paradigm. Science involves the production of knowledge, knowledge as truth; thus, Bachelard would claim, “the truth of a scientific truth ‘imposes itself’ by itself” (12). The truth seeks no external guarantee in the phenomenal world but is its own measure in terms of its conceptual coherence, its formalization as a consistent theory. For Bachelard, mathematical physics is the paradigmatic science in this sense: it operates at a very high level of abstraction and does not require external validation for its truths. Mathematics is thus the language of science and is fundamental to the construction of any scientific truth. Canguilhem added to Bachelard’s valorization of science a much sharper distinction between concepts and theories: a “concept emerges as a problem that invites competing theoretical solutions, and from one explanation to another ‘the problem itself persists’”; the theories that attempt to explain the problem only come after it (Hallward and Peden 2012a, 12–13). A philosophy of the concept, therefore, would have a history of its own, a relative autonomy that would progress through a series of conceptual rectifications regardless of specific solutions to the problems posed. Bachelard’s epistemology not only provided the grounds for Lévi-Strauss’s critique of existential phenomenology but also for Althusser’s reconstruction of the *science* of historical materialism in the mid-1960s.

History as Structure without a Subject

Following the “secret” Twentieth Communist International Party Congress in 1956 and the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Communist Party under Khrushchev, humanism became the doctrine of the international communist movement. Under the slogan “All for Man,” the Soviet Party displaced the traditional notion of class in Marxist theory and refocused their politics on issues such as the freedom of the individual, the respect for law, and the dignity of the person (Althusser 1969, 221). In France, under the leadership of Roger Garaudy, the French Communist Party (PCF) followed the Soviet line and, “reflecting the apparent dissipation in affluent post-war Europe of the proletariat’s revolutionary vocation, French Marxist theory also tended to embrace a version of the humanist priorities that dominated philosophical reflection more generally” (Hallward and Peden 2012a, 4–5). For Althusser, this newfound sympathy for humanism and individual rights was merely a cover, Stalinism with a human face, and a way once again to betray Marx’s insight into history and class struggle. For Althusser, humanism is a form of ideology that obfuscates the full significance of the epistemological break of Marx’s *Capital*, impeding the development of historical materialism as the “science of history.” Humanist categories, such as alienation and reification, are certainly to be found in the early Marx, but these were replaced in *Capital* with new

scientific concepts, including mode of production and relations of production. For Althusser, humanism entails the twin philosophical errors of empiricism and idealism: “If the essence of man is to be a universal attribute, it is essential that *concrete subjects* exist as absolute givens; this implies an *empiricism of the subject*. If these empirical individuals are to be men, it is essential that each carries in himself the whole human essence, if not in fact, at least in principle; this implies an *idealism of the essence*” (1969, 228). Idealism rests upon a conception of human nature or essence that is transparent to itself and is simply given. Marx, according to Althusser, replaced this empiricism/idealism of the subject with a theory of specific and differentiated levels of human practice (economic, political, ideological, scientific etc.) and, therefore, we must accept *Marx’s theoretical anti-humanism* (1969, 229, emphasis in the original) as the precondition for positive knowledge of the human world and for its transformation.

Following Marx’s observation that it “is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (1975, 425), Althusser argued that the structuring principles that determine people’s everyday lives are not directly accessible to lived experience. What is “lived” is the ideological misrepresentation of these structuring principles, in the sense that ideology is the imaginary (lived) relation of subjects to their real (unconscious) conditions of existence (1969, 234). As Althusser later formulates it, there are no subjects except for and by their subjection within ideology. “It is impossible to know anything about men,” writes Althusser, “except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes” (1969, 229).

Although Althusser would later be critical of his “flirtation” with structuralism, he remained throughout his life firmly in the structuralist camp in his rejection of humanist subjectivity and of history (Dosse 1997a, 290). Contrary to Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectic Reason* and the prevailing view within the PCF that man makes history, Althusser described history as a process without a subject; subjects were merely placeholders or supports for the process itself:

The structure of the relations of production determines the *places* and *functions* occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, insofar as they are ‘supports’ (*Träger*) of these functions. The true ‘subjects’ (in the sense of constitutive subjects of the process) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries, are not, despite all appearances, the ‘obviousnesses’ of the ‘given’ of naive anthropology, ‘concrete individuals,’ ‘real men’ – but *the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true ‘subjects’ are these definers and distributors: the relations of production* (and political and ideological social relations).⁴ (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 180; emphasis in the original)

The problem with seeing Marxism as a historicism is that it conflates the various distinct levels of society (the economic, the political, the ideological), reducing and flattening the social totality into a Hegelian form of expressive totality that elides their real differences. For Althusser, the two essential characteristics, or errors, of the Hegelian conception of history are its positing of a *homogeneous continuity* of time and its *contemporaneity*. As history, in the Hegelian sense, constitutes itself as the *absolute horizon*

of all knowing, it effectively rules out any anticipation of an alternative future. It is Marxism's capacity to entertain just such alternative futures that sets it apart from other theories of history.

Althusser's second critique is directed against Hegel's conception of totality as an *expressive whole*, in other words, a totality that "presupposes in principle that the whole in question be reducible to an *inner essence*, of which the elements of the whole are then no more than phenomenal forms of expression, the inner principle of the essence being present at each point in the whole" (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 186). The Althusserian conception, on the other hand, involves the existence of subordinate or regional structures within a structural totality – for example, the economic structure exists as one level or region of the structure as a whole. Each regional structure coexists in a relatively autonomous relation with other regional structures in the social totality, albeit determined "in the last instance by the economy." Such a conception of a complex structural unity presented Althusser with a number of theoretical problems, specifically the lack of concepts with which to think the determination of phenomena by a structure or how to think the determination of one structure upon another. In short, *how is it possible to define the concept of structural causality?* How is it possible to think the transformation of one structure to another? This proved to be one of the great stumbling blocks of all structuralisms and received its most elaborate theoretical articulation in Jacques-Alain Miller's notion of metonymic causality, to which we will return below.

Althusser's answer to the problem of structural transformation was to propose a theory of "overdetermination," or multiple causality. He opposed what he saw as the simple contradiction of the Hegelian dialectic and its Marxian variant – that is, the reduction of all contingent contradictions to a generalized contradiction between the forces and relations of production – with a new conception of overdetermination, or, *Darstellung* (presentation). *Darstellung* refers to "the mode of *presence* of the structure in its *effects*, and therefore ... designate[s] structural causality itself" (1970, 188). Thus, "the structure is immanent in its effects, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that *the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects*, in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects" (1970, 189; emphasis in the original). History, therefore, is what Althusser calls an "absent cause," something that we know, never as the thing-in-itself, but only through its effects; indeed the very notion of the concrete is the product of thought and not empirical existence itself. We cannot know history itself, but only have knowledge of it as the concept of history, and must therefore maintain at all times the distinction between the object of Knowledge (the concept of history) and the real object (the empirical events of history).

Althusser's critique of Hegelianism, we should note, was not simply a philosophical dispute but a specific political intervention. It was a coded critique of Stalinist tendencies within the PCF and more specifically of Stalin's version of dialectical materialism, which produced a unilinear vision of history as the evolution in fixed sequence of progressive modes of production inevitably leading to a communist future. In contrast, Althusser's Marx was the father of a new science of history, historical materialism, and, following Bachelard, this science is anti-empiricist and autonomous. Historical materialism, therefore, must be governed "solely by the exigencies of the pursuit of objective knowledge, yet possessing its own theory, method and object" (Elliot 1987, 52). As Fredric Jameson observes, if Althusserian Marxism is to be classified as a structuralism

then it must be with the proviso “that it is a structuralism for which only *one* structure exists” (1981, 36), that is to say, the mode of production. Althusser effectively discredited all teleological views of history and, at the same time, he restored the concept of mode of production as the central organizational category of Marxism. However, the concept of mode of production took on something of an eternal character within his theory and left unresolved the problem of how to think the transformation from one mode of production to another.

The Split Subject

Like so many of his generation the young Jacques Lacan attended Alexandre Kojève’s lectures on Hegel’s phenomenology in the 1930s, and his influence is evident in Lacan’s early papers. In “Beyond the ‘Reality Principle’” (2006), Lacan observed that the analytical experience exists within language and requires not only a speaking subject but also an interlocutor, an analyst who listens. While the words of the speaking subject may have no meaning they will have a meaning to the analyst within the analytic situation. Very much in tune with the times, the young Lacan was a phenomenologist trying to elaborate an intersubjective theory of psychoanalysis. However, he did not, as yet, have the language or vocabulary with which to do so, this would require an account of the symbolic order and a theory of language that did not derive from the *cogito*. It was from Lévi-Strauss that Lacan derived the notion of a single elementary structure, a process of symbolic exchange, that underlies all kinship and social relations and, more importantly, that this structure remains unconscious to social agents. Lévi-Strauss always acknowledged the Freudian unconscious as one of his major influences and early in his career he insisted upon a fundamental affinity between anthropology and psychoanalysis, as both are sciences of the symbolic.

In “The Sorcerer and His Magic” (1972c) Lévi-Strauss compared shamanistic practice to psychoanalysis, suggesting that the shaman was a “professional abreactor” (181).⁵ Through reliving traumatic events the shaman symbolically induces an abreaction in his patients, facilitating their overcoming. Magic, according to Lévi-Strauss, provides a new system of reference, completely divorced from reality, which allows the patient to reconcile the contradictory elements of their experience. Magic works because both the patient and the wider community believe in it. Lévi-Strauss returned to this analogy between shamanism and psychoanalysis in “The Effectiveness of Symbols” (1972d), but here he went even further to suggest that what we call the unconscious is a structure, or more precisely an aggregate of neurotic and psychotic structures governed by atemporal structural laws: “The unconscious ceases to be the ultimate haven of individual peculiarities – the repository of a unique history which makes each of us an irreplaceable being. It is reducible to a function – the symbolic function, which no doubt is specifically human, and which is carried out according to the same laws among all men, and actually corresponds to an aggregate of these laws” (1972d, 202–203). The unconscious is “always empty” (203) and imposes structural laws upon unarticulated elements – emotions, representations, and memories – that originate elsewhere. In this sense, the unconscious is a structuring principle that transforms these elements into a language – the specific content or vocabulary matters less than the structure itself. The unconscious is a space in which the symbolic function achieves autonomy, a space

where symbols are more real than what they symbolize and where the signifier precedes the signified (Lévi-Strauss 1987, 37). What characterizes the human world, argued Lévi-Strauss, is the *symbolic function*, a function that mediates all aspects of our lives and experience. The unconscious is the mediating term between self and other, and not a faculty of individual subjects.

Lévi-Strauss thus provided Lacan with the conceptual armory and, in the example of structural anthropology, a model of scientificity to which he could appeal in his reconstruction of psychoanalysis as the science of the unconscious. Lacan combined Lévi-Strauss's conception of the symbolic function with a rereading of Saussurean linguistics, interpreting Saussure's bar binding the two halves of the linguistic sign as the barrier of Freudian repression, the boundary between consciousness and the unconscious. The bar between signifier and signified represents the separation between signification and meaning; one can never attain the ultimate meaning of the signifier because all we are presented with is another signifier, and another, in an almost endless chain of signification. Lacan prioritized the now capitalized Signifier over the unobtainable signified. From Jakobson, Lacan also took the idea of metaphor and metonymy as functions of substitution and contiguity respectively and mapped these onto Freud's unconscious processes of condensation and displacement. Lacan was now in a position to declare that *the unconscious is structured like a language*.

For Lacan, the unconscious is essentially linguistic in nature and functions *like* a language, according to its own rules and grammar. Thus we can read the unconscious just as Freud taught us how to read dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue. In one of his few reflections on this famous slogan Lacan remarked that the statement is tautological in the sense that "the unconscious is structured like a language" simply means that "the unconscious is structured." For Lacan, "man" dwells within language; man is not only born into language but is born through language. We are born into a circuit of discourse that marks us before our birth and will continue after our death. To be human we are subjected to this symbolic order, the order of language; we cannot escape it, although its structure escapes us. What distinguishes Lacan from other structuralists, however, is his concern with "speech" and the subject. Lacan was strictly anti-humanist and anti-historicist but, at the same time, his primary interest lay in the constitution of the subject, the subject of the unconscious.

Whilst Lévi-Strauss and Althusser had remorselessly critiqued the humanist subject and dissolved the category of "man" as the center of philosophical reflection, they had not elaborated their own coherent theory of the subject in relation to structure. Althusser's account of ideological interpellation was a first step in this direction but, problematically, the theory always presupposed the existence of "concrete individuals" who were subsequently interpellated into ideological subjects (1971, 1–60). It was Lacan who provided the most compelling theory of the subject as the subject of the signifier. The subject is constituted in the symbolic realm of language but always as a divided subject, split between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the utterance, that is to say, the subject that speaks and the subject in speech. The subject emerges at the point at which it is able to symbolize itself as an "I" in the symbolic order – the point at which it can *separate* the "me" as ego from the "I" as subject in relation to others. The subject, therefore, is split and decentered in relation to the ego or individual: it is not self-identical with itself, or as Lacan puts it, *I is an other*. Lacan's 1955 seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Purloined Letter* illustrates this conception of

the subject as the subject of the Signifier, or, as that which *one Signifier represents to another Signifier*. The seminar placed at the beginning of the *Écrits* demonstrates Lacan's central thesis: *the insistence of the signifying chain and the determination of the subject by the Signifier*. The term "insistence" refers to the bar separating the Signifier and the signified and hence Lacan's contention that meaning no longer "consists" in the signifying chain but is excluded and continually "insists" on expression. It also emphasizes that the subject of the unconscious is continually "pressing" or "insisting" on manifesting itself in the symbolic. In relation to Poe's tale, Lacan showed how each character in the story was unknowingly displaced and repositioned depending on their relationship to an incriminating letter. The letter functions as a floating signifier that passes along the signifying chain with each person unconscious of the full import of what is taking place and how it subjectivizes them. This early structuralist Lacan provides us with one definition of the subject, the subject as *precipitate*, as the retroactive effect of one signifier upon another.

High Structuralism

Lacan remained within the structuralist paradigm to the extent that he acknowledged the totalizing nature of the symbolic order and the determination of the subject by the Signifier. He also shared structuralism's anti-humanism and anti-historicism. He diverged from structuralism, however, in one key respect. For Lacan, the structure was never *complete*. Following his move to the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in 1964, Lacan increasingly focused on what falls outside of structure. Lacan moved to the ENS at the invitation of Althusser, who encouraged his students to attend his seminar. A precocious group of students grouped around Althusser, including Jacques-Alain Miller, Robert Linhart, Jean-Claude Milner, and Jacques Rancière, enthusiastically embraced Lacan and the possibility of a unified theory of Marxism and psychoanalysis to address the aporias of Althusserian structuralism. The group established the journal *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes* in 1965 to disseminate Marxist theory as science and promote the theoretical training of political militants. A split in the journal in 1966, over whether or not to produce an issue on literature, led Miller, Milner, and Yves Duroux to form the Cercle d'Épistémologie and the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* (Hallward and Peden 2012a, 1–55). While both journals pursued the Althusserian project of theoretical training and a rigorous scientific break with humanism and historicism, the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* had a broader range of reference and can be seen to signal an intellectual shift from Althusserian Marxism to Lacanian psychoanalysis. The *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*'s stated aim of developing a general "theory of discourse" also registers the impact of Michel Foucault's work on the young *normaliens*.

Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1970) had been an instant, albeit improbable, bestseller on publication and marked a significant shift in the structuralist paradigm, opening up the possibility of historicizing structuralism in ways inconceivable in the "weak" structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and the semiologists. Through the concept of the episteme, or configurations of knowledge, Foucault sought to excavate the foundations of the human sciences culminating in the production of "man" as an object of knowledge. Foucault famously concluded that if "man" was a recent invention then surely he would soon be erased "like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea" (1970, 387).

The editors of the *Cahiers* recognized the importance of Foucault's intervention in terms of putting the structure in motion and in 1968 posed a series of questions to him on the conceptualization of the episteme, the progress of science, its concept and discourse. Foucault's response would provide the template for the introduction to his subsequent book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). The notion of the episteme facilitated Foucault's engagement with history but only in the broadest possible terms and, as with the Althusserian notion of structure, it could not account for the transition from one episteme to another. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* thus replaced the episteme with the concept of discourse, that is to say, discourse as a practice. Discourse is inseparable from the site and time of its production and therefore cannot be taken outside of the material relations that structure and constitute it. The immediate task, therefore, was not to investigate deep underlying structures but to elaborate a theory of discursive relations, or the laws of distinct discursive formations that produce specific forms of knowledge. In short, the conception of discourse as a material practice enabled Foucault to cast off the more structuralist aspects of the episteme without falling back into the old humanist or historicist paradigm and this is precisely what attracted the editors of the *Cahiers*. As Hallward and Peden write: "The grand effort of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* was to develop, on the basis of an Althusserian conception of structure and a Lacanian 'logic of the signifier,' a general theory of discourse that includes a place for the subject in [an] implacably evanescent and in-substantial sense" (2012a, 35). The Cercle d'Épistémologie sought to address the two central aporias of structuralism: the mechanism of transition from one structure to another and the place of the subject within the structure. In the theoretically dense pages of the *Cahiers*, structuralism reached the apex of its scientific aspirations whilst simultaneously anticipating many of the subsequent critiques from what we now define as deconstruction and poststructuralism.

The journal commenced with Lacan's paper "Science and Truth," and it also contained Jacques-Alain Miller's seminal article, "Suture." Lacan shared the prevailing Bachelardian view of science, specifically that science is only possible on the basis of mathematical formalization. However, Lacan had one important proviso, that psychoanalysis is a science insofar as it completely undermines traditional views of science, as psychoanalysis distinguishes science from truth. For Lacan, modern science commenced in the seventeenth century with the foundation of modern physics and, "as an essential correlate of science" (2006, 727), Descartes's *cogito* in the field of philosophy. Modern science emerged at the same time that philosophy grounded the subject in a radical skepticism; consequently, science is founded on a fundamental division between our knowledge of the world and truth as ultimate cause, the cause that produces the subject. Descartes sought to anchor the subject in certainty but in doing so had to set aside the whole question of truth; as the subject can be certain of nothing except "I think," the guarantee of truth is delegated to God. Modern science, therefore, is characterized by a specific relation to truth. As Lacan puts it, "science does-not-want-to-know-anything about truth as cause" (742): truth is foreclosed from knowledge. For Lacan, science is a discourse concerned with the production of knowledge about the world. Knowledge is produced through the chain of signifiers, in the symbolic and, as such, is transmissible. As truth emerges from the encounter with the real, the gaps and aporia in the symbolic, it is not transmissible. The truth cannot be communicated in the sense that there is no knowledge or discourse of truth; truth is its own guarantee. There is no metalanguage of truth,

insofar as there is “no language being able to say the truth about the truth, since truth is grounded in the fact that truth speaks, and that it has no other means by which to become grounded” (737). Psychoanalysis is a science in the sense that it is addressed to the subject of science but it is distinct from other sciences insofar as it takes truth to be its fundamental point of reference. The fundamental paradox of the Lacanian subject is that it must assume its own causality. The subject is divided between knowledge and truth and, as Lacan writes, this is precisely “why the unconscious, which tells the truth, is structured like a language.” The unconscious speaks; it speaks the truth.

It was around the paradoxical status of the subject that the cadres of the *Cahiers* began to take their distance from Althusser. For Althusser, the subject was always the subject of ideology; he rejected the notion of the split subject, Lacan’s subject of the unconscious. Lacan established the École Freudienne de Paris in 1964, shortly after his move to the ENS. In order to gain entry to the school, Miller, Milner, and Duroux formed a cartel (study group) on the theory of discourse. Their initial report, “Action of the Structure,” written in 1964 but only published in 1968, can retrospectively be seen to define the project of the *Cahiers* as it sets out to reincorporate the subjective back into structure. Unlike the semiotic, or “weak,” forms of structuralism deriving from Saussure, Lacanian psychoanalytic structuralism recognizes the subjective as “ineliminable.” A structure is “that which puts in place an experience for the subject that it includes” through the action of the structure and the subjection of the subject (Miller 2012a, 71). Miller et al. thus distinguished between *structuring* and *structured* structures in order to think the transition between one structure and another: “[I]f we now assume the presence of an element that turns back on reality and perceives it, reflects it and signifies it, an element capable of redoubling itself on its own account, then a general distortion ensues, one which affects the whole structured economy and recomposes it according to new laws” (72). In order to break out of the circularity of Althusserian structural causality, the subject must be reintroduced into structure, not as a substantive element but as a “placeholder,” as the element of lack within structure, its weakest link.

For Miller, “suture” names this paradoxical relationship of the subject to structure, or, as he will formulate it, the logic of the signifier. The subject is the element that is lacking in the chain of discourse, but it is not simply absent, it implies a “stand-in” or a “taking-the-place-of.” Drawing on Frege’s number theory, Miller identified this lack which takes the form of a stand-in with the number zero. The zero sutures logical discourse insofar as it designates “*the concept of not-identical-with-itself*” (Miller 2012b, 97; emphasis in the original). Similarly the subject as lack, as non-identical-to-itself, exists within discourse not as a substantive entity but as a “placeholder,” a “flickering in eclipses” (101). As the journal became increasingly mathematical and abstract, pushing towards the limits of logic and formalization, it also became increasingly divorced from everyday politics. This theoretical edifice of high structuralism would, however, be shattered the following year on the barricades of May ’68.

The Revenge of History

1966 was a watershed year for structuralism, as it saw the publication of many of the canonical structuralist works, including Althusser’s *For Marx*, Lacan’s *Écrits*, Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, Barthes’s “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,”

and Greimas's *Structural Semantics*. Many of the key figures in the movement had finally secured positions at prestigious Parisian universities, and with Lacan at the ENS, the Lacano-Althusserians briefly established political and intellectual hegemony. But the seeds of structuralism's demise were also being sown. Johns Hopkins University invited many of the leading proponents of structuralism to speak at the conference "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" (1966). There, Jacques Derrida delivered a devastating critique of Lévi-Strauss, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," attacking the logocentrism of structuralism in the name of *différance*. Derrida's critique was also aired in the pages of *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* and drew a furious response from Lévi-Strauss. The following year Derrida published his two seminal works, *Of Grammatology* (1976) and *Writing and Difference* (1978), containing critiques of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, and Foucault. Lacan gave his conference presentation in English, although he was not fluent in the language, which gave rise to an exchange with Noam Chomsky and mutual incomprehension. The following year saw the introduction of Chomsky's work into France. Chomsky was read as a critic of the structural linguistics as well as providing an alternative view of science through Popper.

Politically, the tide was also turning against structuralism. In March 1966 at a meeting of the central committee of the PCF, Althusser was condemned for his anti-humanism and "theoreticism." Althusser responded with silence and accepted Party discipline, but his young disciples reacted differently, breaking with the Party and forming the Maoist "Union of Young Communists – Marxist-Leninist." Althusser remained close to the Maoists and continued to contribute to the *Cahiers Marxist-Léninistes*, but was increasingly outflanked by the new militancy of his followers. Following the example of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the young radicals were searching for new forms of political organization and activism. While structuralism provided intricate accounts of structural causality and rigorous definitions of theoretical training, the structures remained static and failed to say anything about political practice. The strikes and student protests of May '68 "came as an event from outside – an interruption" that at once confirmed the theory and simultaneously made it redundant (Hallward and Peden 2012a, 52). The search for a rigorous science of the signifier and philosophy of the concept was jettisoned for activism and faith in the masses. One slogan from May '68 summed up the dilemma for the Lacano-Althusserians – "Althusser is Useless" (Dosse 1997b, 111). History had returned with a vengeance and sounded the death knell for structuralism. Lévi-Strauss retreated to the Collège de France to wait out the protests, Barthes left Paris for the duration, and Greimas was silent. Lacan remained in Paris and supported his daughter Judith and now son-in-law Jacques-Alain Miller who went into hiding, but his view of the protests was well known – "what you want is a new master and that is what you will get." Althusser began a series of self-criticisms that would eventually undermine his notion of structural causality. The only major intellectual who was invited to speak before the students at the Sorbonne was the old "humanist" Sartre. Sartre's previously derided theory of groups now seemed to explain more about what was happening in May '68 than any notion of structure. The intellectuals who were prominent in the protests, Henri Lefebvre, Cornelius Castoriadis, Guy Debord, and the Situationists, were all long-standing critics of structuralism. In response to the well-known slogan "Structures do not take to the streets," Lacan replied, "Yes, they do"; but the conception of structure and of theory that would emerge after the events of May '68 would be very different from anything that had gone before.

- see CHAPTER 2 (VIENNA 1899 – PARIS 1981; OR, PSYCHOANALYSIS); CHAPTER 5 (BALTIMORE – NEW HAVEN 1966–1983; OR, DECONSTRUCTION); CHAPTER 30 (HUMANISM)

Notes

- 1 The concept of the *problématique* derives from the epistemology of Gaston Bachelard and replaces the philosophical idea of data or the “given” with the idea of constructing a particular set of questions revolving around how scientific knowledge is arrived at. The notion of the *problématique* rejects the traditional subject/object relation, whereby it is the function of thought to articulate the truth about an object, in favor of establishing a matrix or perspective from which it will be possible to construct, and solve, a set of problems (Bachelard 2012).
- 2 Saussure described language as a “system.” It was Jakobson who introduced the term “structure” at the First International Congress of Linguists at The Hague in 1929 (Dosse 1997a, 45).
- 3 “The definition of a code is to be translatable into another code. This property defines it and is called structure” (Vincent Descombes qtd in Dosse 1997a, 29).
- 4 Marx writes, “As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as bearers [*Träger*] of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other” (1976, 179). In this passage Marx refers to subjects specifically in an economic relation and it is by no means clear that this should be extended to subjects in general.
- 5 In psychoanalysis, “abreaction” describes the process of emotional discharge by which a subject frees him/herself from the affect attached to a particularly traumatic event so that it does not become pathogenic.

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Birmingham – Urbana-Champaign 1964–1990; or, Cultural Studies

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It's sometimes hard to believe that cultural studies has been around for over fifty years – since before personal computing and the Internet, since before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the onset of globalization, neoliberalism and all kinds of austerity programs, since before gay marriage, since before the wearing down of public education in both the United Kingdom and the United States, since before many of its current practitioners were born. The field is actually old when measured by the momentous cultural changes that it has witnessed. One telling measure of this might be the sheer distance between today's ubiquitous availability of pornography of all kinds and in all kinds of places, and the prosecution of Penguin Books in the British High Court in 1960 for obscenity. The publisher, Allen Lane, and Penguin Books were put on trial for publishing D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a book about which the prosecuting counsel famously asked whether one would want one's wife or one's servant to read it. That rhetorical remark (and the mere fact that such a book could be prosecuted for obscenity) is a symptom of the moment in the cultural history of the United Kingdom that gave direct impetus to the first institutionalization of cultural studies. It will be recalled that the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded within the precincts of Birmingham University, just four years after the *Lady Chatterley* trial, by Richard Hoggart, star witness for Penguin's defense, and that the bulk of his funding came from Penguin, £2,400 a year in gratitude for his testimony.

The birth of British cultural studies endowed it with a set of genetic deficits that it has never managed to or perhaps been willing to try to surmount. Indeed, changing circumstances (changing circumstances to which cultural studies always claimed to be able to adjust) have tended to underline the fundamental weaknesses in the epistemology of British cultural studies, such that we are now looking at a compromised and enfeebled project. Ironically, many of the characteristics that I want to identify as essential weaknesses proved quite congenial and helpful to the importation of cultural studies into the United States starting in the 1980s. But the course of U.S. cultural studies, I will suggest, has been such that it is now in a much better position to confront the circumstances and conditions of contemporary culture than its British predecessor. To demonstrate what I mean, I will renarrate the story of British cultural studies, a story that has admittedly been told many times, not least by its own protagonists such as Stuart Hall. But I have taken a cue from the fact that this story gets told so many times and in so many ways,

and I've concluded that it's in the earliest iterations of British cultural studies that its essence is to be found.

This moment when one old sociocultural form (the British obscenity laws) furnishes the means for the establishment of a new field (cultural studies itself) is remarkable in all kinds of interesting ways – including, as Ted Striphas has suggested (2000), because it marks the beginning of what turns out to be the chronic symbiotic relationship cultural studies seems to have had with the book publishing industry. But it is perhaps especially significant because it exemplifies important elements of Britain's classed culture, the very culture that it was the avowed mission of CCCS to monitor and alter. In the post-World War II context, where the nature, role, and behavior of the British working classes were changing, Hoggart's personal aim – his whole social and cultural mission, really – was to reconsider and recast the connections between particular class interests and specific cultural objects. For him, both Lane's publishing aims and the aims of the CCCS were about democratizing culture and popular access to culture. Thus, for Hoggart, the logic behind institutionalizing cultural studies, both in the academy and in book publishing, lay in the potential for democratizing knowledge and learning.

But there was always a hint of a contradiction in Hoggart's posture. His own most celebrated book, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), is in many ways a deeply conservative one. While it certainly has an open and realistic view of the kinds of texts on which working classes exercised their literacy, and a well-founded suspicion of the industrial massification of popular culture, there is always a sense lurking in the background that literacy should really be used for moral and intellectual betterment, as well as for the production of authentic communal identity. Hoggart often sounds as if he is guided by his own particular sense of the moral authenticity of organic class culture, a sense that is in its turn very British, tracing its heritage back to Matthew Arnold and on forward to F. R. Leavis. That kind of benevolent, pro-working-class project was always going to be impeachable somewhere along the line – as patronizing, condescending, or both.

Hoggart and CCCS did indeed end up effectively installing the working class and the popular as reified objects of study rather than as organic components of a democratizing movement. But more worryingly, this iteration of cultural studies turned out to be a project that never escaped a familiar and chronic middle-England, middle-class superciliousness about the working class and its values. The bourgeois culture that had relied heavily on Arnold and Leavis for the articulation of the logic of its values was never likely to comprehend or ultimately even empathize with the changing tastes of a class whose economic identity was shifting and whose cultural identity was being remade by the media and consumer culture around it in the decades following World War II. Some of the pitfalls of this posture towards the working class and popular culture are to be glimpsed in a book that characterizes early British cultural studies, even though it is not often noticed: Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1964). In what is essentially a school textbook, Hall and Whannel (who, as Colin MacCabe points out, dominated "the whole institutional framework in which cultural studies developed in the 60s and early 70s" [1992, 29]) try to take seriously cultural forms such as film and television, and they do so through the lens of a decidedly left-Leavisite position on mass culture, similar to Hoggart's, that insists on the validity of the cultural texts they study, while at the same time betraying a faith in not just the democratizing function of cultural objects, but their humanizing function as well. Their analysis of the depiction of

sex on screen seems especially quaint at this juncture: theirs is an almost prudish approach, calling for the need for a positive depiction of sex and love, and evoking the working-class morality of a D. H. Lawrence.

In the early days of cultural studies, Hoggart, Hall, and Whannel thus confront what is by now an essentially outdated question about the place of “low” culture, and they tendentiously champion such “low” culture in the name of democratizing what has been an entrenched class-based culture. In some ways, the most surprising thing about this strand of cultural studies is how little it seemed to know about the similar kinds of work in other contexts; notably absent is the work of the Frankfurt School with its stress on both the industrial and the ideological aspects of mass culture. If Hall and Whannel define “the popular arts” as work that derives from specific class experience and is produced by people who have been privy to such experience, the Frankfurt School’s understanding of mass culture is far less based in individual experience or agency and recognizes instead the implication of mass culture in the totality of social relations. The early cultural studies approach is in many ways much more crude and simplistic, to the point that it is perhaps rather dignified when MacCabe calls the CCCS project “an ethnography of the working class” (29). To be sure, however, early cultural studies did attempt to turn working-class experience into an object of study, and if there is an ethnographic project it is a rather piecemeal one that nonetheless leads later to some of the Centre’s most notable works, such as the collectively written *Resistance Through Rituals* in 1976 and Paul Willis’s *Learning to Labour* (1977).

Cultural studies as a field begins with a dissatisfaction with, and suspicion of, the existing disciplines, and especially the disciplines of English and sociology. As Fredric Jameson notes, “whatever it [cultural studies] may be, it came into the world as the result of dissatisfaction with other disciplines, not merely their contents but also their very limits as such” (1993, 18). It is all the more surprising, then, that in regard to the whole question of mass culture and the low/high divide, British scholars knew little about the fields and disciplines they were dissatisfied with, except for what they saw immediately around them: in English, a Leavisite tradition of close reading and promotion of canonical value; in sociology, a discipline still trying to find its way away from its complicity with literary and philosophical study. Critical theory of the sort represented by the Frankfurt School was not in their purview. Indeed, the lack of reference to, and apparent absence of knowledge of, the Frankfurt School in early British cultural studies has still not been rectified in any substantial way. This is an oversight that many have noted and bemoaned, not least Douglas Kellner, who calls the absence of an overt relationship between cultural studies and critical theory “the missed articulation.” Kellner notes the many similarities between the projects:

Like the Frankfurt School, British cultural studies observed the integration of the working class and its decline of revolutionary consciousness, and studied the conditions of this catastrophe for the Marxian project of revolution. Like the Frankfurt School, British cultural studies concluded that mass culture was playing an important role in integrating the working class into existing capitalist societies and that a new consumer and media culture was forming a new mode of capitalist hegemony.

Both traditions focused on the intersections of culture and ideology and saw ideology critique as central to a critical cultural studies. Both saw culture as a

mode of ideological reproduction and hegemony, in which cultural forms help to shape the modes of thought and behavior that induce individuals to adapt to the social conditions of capitalist societies. (Kellner 2002, 35)

As will be made clear in a moment, I have great sympathy with Kellner's view here. I would, however, draw out a few aspects of the two "schools" which would render their articulation somewhat less of a perfect marriage than he would suggest. First, the attention of the Frankfurt School to the *longue durée* of capitalist development, and indeed to history itself, is not even remotely shared by cultural studies – and this, indeed, is one of the general weaknesses of cultural studies as it rushes to privilege purely conjunctural analyses with almost no regard for structural or organic analysis, nor anything that approaches historical analysis at all. Second, the way that the method of Frankfurt School thinkers continually aspires to dialectical expression is a matter of supreme indifference to cultural studies, and this perhaps underscores the general discomfort that cultural studies exhibits and has chronically exhibited towards "theory" in general and any theory that smells too strongly of the Marxist tradition in particular.

These two weaknesses in early cultural studies seem to me to have everything to do with the particular context of the genesis of cultural studies, in a way that is often overlooked. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the British left was undergoing a quite extensive set of changes. Stuart Hall suggests that these changes, leading to the formation of what he calls the "first new left," were initially provoked by the Soviet quelling of dissent behind the Iron Curtain, particularly with the suppression of Hungary in 1956. The relationships between Western European left parties and the Soviet Union had already been quite fungible and problematic, but the invasion caused widespread disenchantment amongst and stern condemnation from the European left and caused such splits in most of the Western European communist parties that it became common for some parts of the left to repudiate the Soviet Union, communism, and Marxist thought all in one blow. That was certainly the case for a large portion of the British left, and for Hall and many of his colleagues. As Hall himself opines,

Marxist models were far too mechanical and reductive.... On the wider political front, I was strongly critical of everything I knew about Stalinism, either as a political system or as a form of politics. I opposed it as a model for a democratic socialism and could not fathom the reluctance of the few Communists I met to acknowledge the truth of what was by then common knowledge about its disastrous consequences for Soviet society and Eastern Europe. (2010, 179)

This kind of position was not unusual and it was no doubt also subtended by recognition of other contemporaneous issues. For the British and French left, for instance, the Suez Crisis was particularly important; as was the more general perception that in the postwar years the working class, as the putative agent of radical opposition and revolution, was being weaned away from that role by postwar welfarism and lured by the increasingly consumer-oriented cultures of the capitalist nations. Hall's retrospective look is, all the same, symptomatic for the way it consigns the problems of that moment to the dustbin of history. There is, it seems, no argument to be had about "the truth." The temptation here, of course, and a danger that really hasn't been much heeded

within cultural studies over the last fifty years, is to uncritically take on the mantle of the New Left's anti-communism as if it were the state of scientific truth about the Soviet Union, communism, and Marxism generally. However, my claim is that the repudiation of Sovietism and the quasi-permanent suspicion of Marxism itself become important facets of cultural studies that will mark it throughout its British history, right up to the present. Colin Sparkes (1996) offers a rather unarguable mapping of how this suspicion manifested itself, and in regard to Stuart Hall himself points out "there is little in his other writings of the [early] period to suggest anything other than that, at this early stage in his career, Hall identified Marxism as an obsolete and reductivist system of thought" (78).

Certainly, it would be simple enough a matter to follow throughout the history of British cultural studies the antipathy to Marxism that Hall's work largely validates. What is perhaps a little more provocative is to suggest that Hall, his colleagues, and many subsequent followers have in fact suffered from an even more fundamental antipathy – an antipathy to theory itself. This is what I want to suggest by way of this retrospective of the early history of cultural studies. It has been a cultural cliché for a long while, of course, that the British intellectual hates theory and favors good old Johnsonian empiricism instead; and in the context of British cultural studies the most spectacular proof of that pudding is obviously E. P. Thompson, often credited as one of the forefathers of cultural studies, writing on Louis Althusser's "theoreticism" in *The Poverty of Theory*, in which Althusser's philosophy of history is brought firmly to the bar. Setting the tone for decades of cultural studies followers, Thompson is enraged not only by Althusser's theoretical habits, but equally by his belief in the structural (or organic) logic of historical process. In that latter sense, Thompson's diatribe is consistent with the founding logic of cultural studies: he is unwilling to countenance an objective logic of history, but engages in a form of conjunctural analysis to which cultural studies has committed itself. The move in cultural studies generally towards a conjunctural analysis that transcends Marxism and holds theory at arm's length whenever possible is normally made under the auspices of a claim about the demands of oppositional politics, where the need to move away from all and any theories of social structures and to focus instead on the analysis of specific conjunctural articulations is promoted and celebrated. The political in that perspective is always to be seen opportunistically, and is understood and treated as a function of very specific conjunctural circumstances, loosed from any logic of articulation beyond the moment, and loosed, too, from any dialectical dependency on historical or structural logic.

None of this is to say, of course, that early cultural studies never engaged in theoretical work. Quite to the contrary: it made a definite effort to do so in what Hall calls "a very un-British way." But it is certainly true to say that it struggled to cope with what was becoming an overpowering influx of theory in the first decades of the project. Hall is clear about this difficulty in an astonishing paragraph in his essay, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," which begins:

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of wrestling with the angels. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. I mean to say something later about the astonishing theoretical fluency of cultural studies

now. But my own experience of theory – and Marxism is certainly a case in point – is of wrestling with the angels – a metaphor you can take as literally as you like. (1996, 265)

This essay, as intellectually unguarded a piece as Hall ever published, continues in this vein, stressing the essential difficulty of working with theory. More recently, David Morley, looking back at his time at the CCCS, uses exactly the vocabulary of struggle to describe the Centre's dealings with theory (2013, 839). Indeed there remains a history of the Centre still to be written that would track its successive difficulties with, and misrecognitions of, various theoretical frames. It is perhaps not especially surprising that theory should be made so marginal, since a central ideology of the Birmingham School was that theory ought not to be produced, but only used, in a kind of bricolage, as and when necessary. This approach was initially celebrated by the U.S. importers of cultural studies, for whom the eclectic, tool-box approach suited perfectly their needs; as we shall see, the legacy of anti-theory even within what constitutes theory has had repercussions on the shape and form of contemporary examples of cultural studies.

One significant and even exemplary theoretical casualty of this approach is the work of Antonio Gramsci – a name that unhappily has come to be almost synonymous with cultural studies itself. The examination of Gramsci's work that Stuart Hall led in the 1980s drew mostly on Gramsci's notions of hegemonic negotiation and produced a brand of Gramscianism that was designed to suit the analysis of a particular conjuncture – namely that of an emergent Thatcherism and a British left that seemed increasingly committed to a position of fighting retreat. But this did serious injustice to Gramsci's thought. For Gramsci, conjunctural analysis could only ever be a provisional and even ephemeral strategy, and should always be seen in a dialectical relationship to what he calls "organic" movements and structures. It's important, Gramsci says, to distinguish

organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be "conjunctural" (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental). Conjunctural phenomena too depend on organic movements to be sure, but they do not have any far-reaching historical significance ... Organic phenomena on the other hand give rise to socio-historical criticism, whose subject is wider social groupings. (Gramsci 2000, 201)

As Aksikas and Andrews have pointed out (2014, 20–21), Gramsci deplores exactly the tendency that becomes a constitutive habit for cultural studies: a "common error in historic-political analysis," Gramsci says, is the "inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of 'economism'... in the second, an excess of 'ideologism'" (Gramsci 2000, 201).

The revisionist version of Gramsci's theoretical work that cultural studies has been peddling for so long is born out of the genetic weaknesses of the field and yet is commandeered into service as exactly a central theoretical guarantee within it. Aside from the cost to Gramsci's reputation, the use of his work in cultural studies as a theoretical

guarantee for a merely conjunctural politics very obviously pays the price of excess “ideologism” whilst paying little attention to (indeed, simply repudiating) any “economism.” This preference for the conjunctural is, of course, justified by the need for theory and analysis to be flexible and nimble in order to adjust to immediate conditions and concerns. In the process of importing cultural studies into the United States, this flexibility and eclecticism were major selling points. There certainly has been no shortage on either side of the Atlantic of cheerleading statements that render those characteristics as essential to cultural studies.

But this determined posture, to always be ready to adjust to immediate conditions, can easily topple over into superficiality, where the conditions and determinations of the conjuncture are no longer properly considered. Indeed, when those conditions have been produced by and for the interests of the dominant classes, then accepting them as a given in the name of reality is tantamount to ceding the field to the enemy. For instance, early cultural studies did understand the way that postwar compromises (including welfare state provisions) had defanged the working class and produced a decline of revolutionary consciousness and class solidarity. But the tendency then was to treat those conditions as done and irrecoverable. New agents, new assumptions, new questions, and new solutions had to be sought in the name of realism or of tackling the world as it is now. The problem here is not so much with the political will embodied in such a position, but more with the abandonment of any sense of a dialectical historical logic; or to put it in another way, the fetishization of the conjuncture and of the logic of contingency to the detriment of a more rigorously structural and historical analysis.

It might seem that I am flogging a dead horse to be rehearsing once again this history of British cultural studies, particularly since on one level cultural studies is fully aware of all the characteristics I am describing; Stuart Hall in particular has done much to describe and explain them (see, for instance, Hall 1980 and 1996). However, in the name of a purely conjunctural politics, most cultural studies practitioners choose to see these characteristics as strengths, whereas I am calling them weaknesses. So while it might seem a shade tedious to be rehashing these arguments, and while many of the points I have been making about it are hardly original, I am trying to lay out a set of characteristics that makes the case that cultural studies in its British cast has many intellectual and political problems, most of which were there from the beginning as what we might call genetic deficiencies and which have largely remained as permanent features. The field bears the marks of its own genesis and has significantly failed to erase some of them and drastically failed to exploit some of the others.

At the moment when cultural studies was imported into the United States, around the late 1980s, its constitutional characteristics were already quite fixed and apparent. The field had grown out of the kind of matrix I’ve been describing, producing its most significant works in the years immediately prior to its U.S. reception – the work done on youth and subcultures, like *Resistance Through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson 1976); lots of collective work on crime and the media in the 1970s, which led to the quintessential cultural studies opus, *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al. 1978); and still more collective work on media and ideology, such as *Culture/Media/Language* (Hall et al. 1980). The constitutive characteristics of this run of works can be readily enumerated: a rather vague and sometimes even condescending and class-inflected pro-popular, pro-democratizing urge; a disaffection with existing disciplines, and both their procedures and their ambit;

an emphasis on cultural texts, media, and consumption as components of dominant ideologies; a chronically anti-Soviet (or anti-communist) politics that readily carried over and/or evolved into a general suspicion of Marxism; a general distaste for theory and theoretical production; and an abhorrence of any attempt to codify a methodology for the field. All these characteristics together seem to me to have been subsequently responsible for what I have referred to elsewhere as the thematizing of cultural studies;¹ that is, the production of a field of knowledge whose relation to methodology is so loose that coherence can be lent to it only by way of some topical or thematic ordering. In the case of post-1980s cultural studies in Britain, the prevalent themes were perhaps race and ethnicity (although as the field entered the twenty-first century, the emphasis shifted to the cultural and creative industries). This topical approach stemmed from what Hall (1980, 63) called the “culturalist” strand of cultural studies. This strand, which Hall himself dubs “humanist” in its orientation, developed almost unchecked and indeed became dominant in cultural studies and both facilitated and enabled the thematizing development.

The problem here is not the fact of concentrating on this theme or that topic, on race and ethnicity or on some other theme; rather it is the abnegation that is involved in thematizing a whole field of inquiry. Once the field has defined its methodology as opportunistic, eclectic, and not only deliberately uncoded but perhaps essentially uncodifiable, then it cannot be methodology that guides the field, but only its object. That is, as an intellectual and practical project, cultural studies can only justify itself in terms of the topics that it approaches. It becomes willy-nilly a thematically organized area of study where the choice of the specific topic or theme comes to be of more importance than the choice of method or procedure.

Of course, many of the characteristics I’ve focused upon so far, along with this thematizing of cultural studies, actually proved quite congenial to the U.S. academic market in the 1980s and quite helpful for the importation of a cultural studies brand into the United States. “It is one of the ironies of history, one of Hegel’s ruses of reason,” says Colin MacCabe, “that at the moment in the early 80s when the project of the Birmingham Centre expired in the face of working class support for Thatcher, it was reborn in the United States” (1992, 25). MacCabe’s implication here is certainly not that British cultural studies suddenly rediscovered a working-class constituency in the United States! It is the case, however, that cultural studies arrived in the United States at a moment that afforded it a generally sympathetic academic hearing, as it joined a whole raft of intellectual trends across the Atlantic to the United States, most of them traveling under the flag of “theory.” It is a little ironic that cultural studies was included under that heading, given its general antipathy to theory, but it was perhaps the tendency in cultural studies to refuse to privilege any particular theory that allowed it to travel unchallenged. In his account of this moment of importation MacCabe’s suggestion about how and why cultural studies could be imported so readily into the United States is very similar to what I want to point out here. Cultural studies appeared to be appropriate grist for what was at the time fast becoming an American academic mill obsessed with “theory” of all kinds.

The importing of “theory” was done largely by way of U.S. literary departments (English, modern languages, and comparative literature), but many other disciplines also experienced a theoretical influx and a “cultural turn” driven by that theory (anthropology, sociology, history, and others). The British cultural studies that traveled with

that theory encountered very different soil to that which it had known in Britain. First of all, the British wariness of theory itself was totally absent from this wave of enthusiastic importation. In addition, the particular sociocultural contexts from which British cultural studies grew differed greatly from the U.S. context. The experience of class, for instance, was not replicated, nor indeed was the history of race and ethnicity the same for the two countries. Perhaps the only shared conditioning was a certain anti-Marxism, or at least a suspicion of Marxism. Though it could be argued that Marxism was in fact much less of a bugbear to the U.S. academy than it appeared to be for British cultural studies (having found its way in to American academic discourse in many guises and forms), nonetheless a suspicious and skeptical view of Marx and Marxism has chronically characterized U.S. intellectual life.

The appearance of British cultural studies in the American academy actually begins as an open assault on Marxism, as we can see by taking a particular snapshot of how cultural studies was imported. The most significant events in the importation were the publication of two mammoth anthologies, both products of conferences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in 1983 and 1990 and both edited by Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (joined by Paula Treichler for the second), who were to become prominent figures in the initial formation of the cultural studies landscape in the United States. The gist of the first of these anthologies, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Grossberg and Nelson 1988), is given in the title, but it comes as no surprise that the burden of both the conference and anthology is to depict a Marxism in definitional and indeed existential difficulty, inadequate for the task of confronting contemporary realities: “the problem for Marxism is...on the one hand to deterritorialize its own discourse in response to changing historical realities; and on the other hand to reterritorialize itself in order to constitute that very response” (11). This challenge to Marxism apparently appears by way of the need provoked by the cultural realm, the need to address immediate realities, and to jettison outmoded ways of thinking. On cue, the collection proceeds to sketch out the failure of Marxist theory to meet the challenge it supposedly faced.

If this first conference anthology does the job of clearing the ground, it is left to the second anthology to displace Marxism from prominence and replace it with a smorgasbord of “theory” and theoretical speculation on culture. This second volume properly announces the achieved arrival of cultural studies into the United States, and its ambit and cast of characters went a long way to defining the field itself and what it stood for. The version of cultural studies heralded by this second anthology seems to be entirely happy with all the characteristics of British cultural studies that I have been pointing to, and the editors’ introduction dutifully repeats all the shibboleths, as do many of the individual contributions. But especially congenial to both the editors and many of their contributors is the uncodified methodological posture of cultural studies, a characteristic that quickly becomes an article of faith for American cultural studies: “Cultural studies has no guarantees about what questions are important to ask within given contexts or how to answer them; hence no methodology can be privileged or even temporarily employed with total security and confidence, yet none can be eliminated out of hand” (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992, 2). The future of American cultural studies as a field is thus absolved from elementary intellectual tasks and obligations in one fell swoop.

If we think of this moment in Urbana-Champaign as the moment when cultural studies actually arrives into the United States, it’s clear that its crystallization forms around

one of the principal elements of what I have been calling the genetic deficiencies of British cultural studies – namely, its agnostic posture towards theory. That version of cultural studies has found plenty of cheerleaders and mouthpieces over the years since 1990 in the United States, many of them leaning almost hagiographically on the word of Stuart Hall. But, as I've already suggested, the context of American cultural life, and indeed of the intellectual climate in the United States, was and is fundamentally different from the British matrix. In my view there are two essential critiques with which cultural studies was faced after its entry into the United States which both underscore those differences and allow American cultural studies to become more fungible and less intellectually simplistic.

First, the wave of theoretical importation of which cultural studies was a part actually enabled a questioning of cultural studies that, in my view, the British branch still has not heard, even today. That questioning was essentially about the role of critique and the positions from which an intellectual and political project could be launched. This kind of critique is exemplified for me by Adam Katz's book, *Postmodernism and the Politics of Culture* (2000), where cultural studies is put to the sword for the way that its logic of inquiry is limited to a mimicry of its object. Katz argues that cultural studies eschews the possibility of producing a politically accurate critique of contemporary culture because as a practice it is modeled on its object (in this case, postmodern culture, in Katz's language) and because it agrees in advance to share the values and logics of its object. Katz's argument, conducted by way of a series of brilliant assaults on the logics of a whole array of cultural studies texts, readily aligns with what I suggested earlier about conjunctural analysis and the tendency of such analysis to accept as a given the conditions of the conjuncture. The result is that cultural studies cannot in the end subject its object, however opportunistically it is chosen, to a structural critique and is therefore doomed to be an ideological variant of its own object.

Second, once it was imported into the United States, cultural studies had immediately to grapple with the question of institutionalization. For a very long time, just as American cultural studies kept on constituting itself by prolonging the very question "what is cultural studies?"; the field was nevertheless becoming institutionalized – evidenced by a whole array of academic programs at both graduate and (importantly) undergraduate levels; by the establishment of a professional organization, the Cultural Studies Association; and by the continued symbiosis with the book publishing trade. The very fact of U.S. institutionalization seemed to infuriate the disciples of the British branch and was condemned by Hall himself a number of times. The grounds for that kind of disapproval are related to the antipathy of British cultural studies to theoretical or methodological "codification," which an American cultural studies has tended on the whole to retain, even as U.S. cultural studies degree programs and national organizations have proliferated. Embedded in this anxiety about institutionalization, I would suggest, is a kind of malfunction of the cultural studies imaginary. If, the argument goes, cultural studies is institutionalized, it will lose its flexibility, its eclecticism, its free-form engagement with the conjuncture. But of course, the other side of institutionalization is empowerment and scholarly legitimation. The anti-institutional posture of British cultural studies is nothing more than a kind of anarchic narcissism that, if successful, condemns cultural studies to the status of ephemerality and opportunism. In any case, by now the question of institutionalization has been settled by default: there are now all manner of cultural studies programs all over the world. Even some of the major figures

in the field have now come around to suggesting that the fact of institutionalization and disciplinarity is both a given and a boon. Graeme Turner, for example, having once avowed his attachment to the free-form and anti-disciplinary version of cultural studies, now says that that position's "flimsiness is revealed...and the affectation is not without significant, and I would argue deleterious, consequences" (2012, 8).

These two critiques are not the only signs that American cultural studies has transcended its British ancestry and is now in a position to be the more viable enterprise of the two. British cultural studies has been turned, first, into a casualty of the British government's cultural and educational policies when the iconic Birmingham program was forced to close down; and subsequently, it has also been transformed into something like an instrument of those same policies, as the field has been retooled as an attractor for overseas student tuition fees and blackmailed into providing quasi-vocational training for the cultural and creative industries. It certainly seems at the moment that the American context holds the greater promise as the site for the emergence of a renewed version of cultural studies, one not bathed in the old-fashioned homilies of the British "New Left" of the 1950s and, ironically enough, one more attuned to the realities of today's sociocultural context! Even if the scenarios in which American cultural studies finds itself right now are not entirely auspicious (the price of austerity is being deeply felt pretty much everywhere in the American academy right now), that fact should be taken as a call to arms rather than as a sign of defeat.

Indeed, in this moment of neoliberal austerity and neoconservative ignorance, I frequently have cause to recall the appeal that I and three colleagues made even before cultural studies had been fully imported into the United States, at a time of another seemingly intractable political situation – the Reagan years. Our article, "The Need for Cultural Studies" (Giroux et al. 1984), thought to see in cultural studies a way of recognizing and clarifying the material struggles within universities and colleges over the stakes of knowledge and knowledge production. Facing what was then the still incipient or inchoate regime of neoliberalism, we saw cultural studies as the proper vehicle for resistance to the enclosure of the university as a site for the reproduction of capital, as well as the entrepreneurial logic of research and education that we find so thoroughly entrenched in higher education today. While those kinds of struggles have arguably become harder in the ensuing years, the university remains a crucial site of struggle; indeed, its importance increases all the time. What I have called before the "phantom limb" of cultural studies (Ross and Smith 2011, 246) – its desire to be politically activist – must surely be made more substantial, but there are signs that American cultural studies is beginning to define its political stakes better than it has before, and certainly beyond the identity politics with which it was associated in the past. Some of those stakes are necessarily in the university as such, but cultural studies is now also quite closely allied and aligned with many oppositional social movements, from Occupy to the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement. And there are signs, as Marcus Breen has pointed out (2015), that cultural studies may be becoming the preferred institutional and intellectual home of the increasingly large and important teaching precariat in the United States, and more and more of a venue for scholars whose interdisciplinary effort is not necessarily in the van of identity politics or hobbled by the standard disciplines.

My general claim here, that cultural studies in its U.S. variation is now in a position to do things that the genetic deficiencies of British cultural studies actually inhibited from

the start, will not please everybody. Stuart Hall frequently expressed his disapproval of what cultural studies had become in the United States and even some of his last work continues with that complaint (see Hall 2013). And that tradition is carried on when David Morley suggests that the kinds of arguments I have put forward before and am now making here “point towards [what] would be the death, rather than any kind of renewal of what I think cultural studies ought to be” (2013, 839).² But for the reasons I have sketched out here, the trajectory of cultural studies in the specific context of the United States allows it to move beyond the weaknesses of British cultural studies and it should not be afraid to expel the somewhat stuffy air of its British forebears.

Morley’s comment above, and Hall’s complaints, are to be found in a special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* which offers a series of interviews from 2011 with people who attended the CCCS in Birmingham or were closely associated with it – from Hall himself and well-known figures such as Paul Gilroy and John Clarke, to other less well-known but important contributors. There are, of course, many different views expressed amongst these interviewees as they look back at the Centre, but the image of cultural studies that emerges is not far from the one I have been painting in this argument. The incessant carping about the dangers of “theory,” in particular, is well represented. Amidst this tiresome repetition, however, is also a salutary reminder of the Centre’s commitment to, and cultivation of, collaborative writing and research. Almost everyone who is interviewed stresses how much of the work done at the Centre was done collectively. This is one characteristic quality of British cultural studies that has not fared very well in the intervening years, and it is certainly something that did not survive its importation to the United States, where scholarship is most frequently an individualized endeavor. This is perhaps one aspect of the Centre’s work that it would be good to revive in the American context, as part of an effort to set a new agenda that extends and surpasses British work.³

But a much more important part of mapping out such a new agenda would be a comprehensive reconsideration of the commitment to purely conjunctural analysis that cultural studies has chronically made. It seems to me that such a reconsideration would also entail adopting a much less sniffy, much less censorious attitude towards “theory.” The conjunctural approach that cultural studies has tethered itself to has to be seen for what it is: anti-theoretical (maybe even anti-intellectual) and, as I have suggested, also anti-Marxist in motivation.

One can perhaps see how to move beyond this intellectual impoverishment by trying to make up for the lost or missed articulation with the Frankfurt School that I mentioned earlier. There is no room here to elaborate much on this, but it is worth noting that the agenda that Max Horkheimer set out for the Frankfurt School at the very start of its life, back in 1930, not only expresses the best aspirations of cultural studies but has both a sharpness of focus and a breadth of vision that cultural studies should share. The task for a critical project, he says, takes up “the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychological development of its individuals and the changes within specific areas of culture to which belong not only the intellectual legacy of the sciences, art and religion, but also law, customs, fashion, public opinion, sports, entertainments, lifestyles, and so on” (1989, 33).

There are ways in which a contemporary cultural studies might want to thicken that agenda, add to it, or adjust its terms here and there; but most importantly Horkheimer is proposing that it is a necessary project to investigate the fundamental connection

between political economy and all the epiphenomena of sociocultural life. Far from a simple conjunctural analysis, this would necessarily be a dialectical analysis – one that recognizes the necessary conditioning of any conjunctural element by structural and historical forces. One of the first places to begin the articulation of this missed connection is through the kind of work I’ve done here, which explores the historical forces which have given us the forms and modes of cultural studies we currently have today. A different account of cultural studies than the one I have offered here would be needed to track this dialectical encounter of structure and history across the various other national contexts within which it has taken root over the past thirty years. To attend to the movement from British to U.S. academies is not to ignore the way cultural studies in Canada, or Australia, for example, has generated distinct *foci* and modes of critical practice, refracted through the particularities of their political economies, colonial histories, racial and ethnic differences, and so on. Rather, the narrative I’ve offered of the transition of cultural studies from the United Kingdom to the United States constitutes an account of the dominant trajectory of the field and a trajectory that, by virtue of the hegemonic power of the Anglo-American university system, continues to shape development in academic systems far afield.

- see CHAPTER 1 (FRANKFURT – NEW YORK – SAN DIEGO 1924–1968; OR, CRITICAL THEORY); CHAPTER 8 (PETROGRAD/LENINGRAD – HAVANA – BEIJING 1917–1991; OR, MARXIST THEORY AND SOCIALIST PRACTICE); CHAPTER 20 (THE EVERYDAY, TASTE, CLASS)

Notes

- 1 This paragraph draws on and quotes from a longer argument about Hall’s work that I develop (Smith 2001) around an essay of his (Hall 1992).
- 2 In the course of this interview Morley discusses the past and future of cultural studies, and his views present many of the characteristics of British cultural studies that I have been calling weaknesses. He shows himself especially dubious about “theory.” Interestingly, he discusses the anthology I edited, *The Renewal of Cultural Studies* (2011), rubbishing its call for more methodological (theoretical) coherence in cultural studies. He does not appear to notice, however, that the anthology argues primarily for the use of the *Marxist* tradition; no doubt symptomatically, he neglects to mention Marx at all.
- 3 One of the few collaborative efforts I know of in American cultural studies was a project run by graduate students in the Cultural Studies PhD program at George Mason University, where I work. Their project on the Hummer vehicle was published as a book of essays (Cardenas and Gorman 2007).

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5

Baltimore – New Haven 1966–1983; or, Deconstruction*Michael O’Driscoll***Deconstruction, Without Limit... (Introduction)**

Deconstruction does not exist somewhere, pure, proper, self-identical, outside of its inscriptions in conflictual and differentiated contexts; it ‘is’ only what it does and what is done with it, there where it takes place.

—Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (141)

An account of deconstruction that assumes as its primary geographic and temporal coordinates the cities of Baltimore, Maryland and New Haven, Connecticut between the years 1966 and 1983 understands itself to be a history of *deconstruction in America*, and very explicitly so. The year 1966, on the one hand, takes us to Jacques Derrida’s first lecture in the United States, his delivery of “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (Derrida 1978) at a now legendary conference titled “The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” at Johns Hopkins University. While deconstruction is typically associated with Derrida, who coined the term, the conference, often understood as the introduction of “French Theory” to a North American audience, was focused on the prevailing intellectual paradigm of structuralism and included other notable speakers such as Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Jean Hyppolite, and Paul de Man. In that context, then, deconstruction might be regarded as chief among a series of European imports, both structuralist and poststructuralist, that have had lasting effects on the late twentieth-century American academy. 1983, New Haven, on the other hand, signals the death of de Man, a close associate of Derrida’s and a key figure in the so-called “Yale School” of deconstruction whose development of the rhetorical or tropological analysis of literary texts had a profound, albeit controversial, influence on an entire generation of scholars. De Man’s death does not, in and of itself, signal a particular turning point in the fortunes of deconstruction in America, but is indeed coextensive with a number of significant developments in deconstruction’s intellectual history – such as the diversification of its theoretical influence concomitant with the serious and formative challenges posed to its American versioning as articulated by the “theory wars” of the 1980s.

Of course, deconstruction's "taking place" extends far beyond the boundaries of the eastern seaboard of the United States, and far beyond the temporal limits of the survey of its occurrences that follows. In keeping with his challenge to our feverish desire for origins and endings, for the scene of the *archē* or the site of the *telos*, Derrida himself would accept no such phantasmatic limits. Indeed, in the immediate wake of Paul de Man's death, Derrida argued that to "make 'deconstruction in America' a theme or the object of an exhaustive definition is precisely, by definition, what defines the enemy of deconstruction – someone who (at the very least out of ambivalence) would like to wear deconstruction out, exhaust it, turn the page" (1986, 17). Furthermore, his career-long challenge to what he would come to call "limitrophy" – or the generation, maintenance, and complications of the limit (2008, 29–30) – and the barest facts of intellectual history alone would together militate against such boundaries. Indeed, deconstruction's genealogy refers us back to its complex emergence in European discourse and, then again, to an ever receding, duplicitous, and unstable series of pretexts that constitute the discourse of western metaphysics in philosophy, literature, aesthetics, psychoanalysis, political theory, theology, and elsewhere. And, of course, after 1983 Derrida would, in addition to participating regularly in the activities of leading American universities (particularly the University of California, Irvine), go on to publish prolifically for another twenty years (until his death in 2004) in an ever-more compelling articulation of what Derrida understood to be the always evident ethico-political program of deconstruction gathered around the key concepts of forgiveness, hospitality, spectrality, cosmopolitanism, sovereignty, and the unconditional. After 1983, too, deconstruction in its various second- and third-generation guises would (and still does) underwrite many of the most powerful critical strategies of postcolonialism, gender studies, queer theory, and other forms of ideological critique (including studies in posthumanism, globalization, affect, the archive, animality, new materialism, etc.) that developed in a worldwide context of critical and cultural theory. Indeed, with "The Seminars of Jacques Derrida" now in the process of development, and projected to result in some forty-three volumes of posthumous publication (to date the two volumes on *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2009, 2011; and two on *The Death Penalty*, 2013, 2017), Derrida's impact on the course of intellectual and academic dialogue will continue to develop and shift for many, many decades to come.

Any responsible intellectual history of deconstruction in America fifty years after its "arrival" in the United States (and I'll return to the question of the *arrivant* at the conclusion of this chapter) must emphasize that the definition of this concept (or, just as problematically, this movement, school, strategy, style, operation, hermeneutic, aesthetic, position, practice, paradigm) can only ever be understood as constrained by a reception narrative constituted by its own ideological, institutional, and historical limits. In other words, deconstruction across these seventeen years of American academic history is variously (and often contradictorily) construed according to the critical obsessions and theoretical contests of the moment. For example, the very standard account of Derridean deconstruction as a critique of logocentrism formulated in the challenge to structuralism at the height of its European dominance – and also in the now classic volumes of 1967, *Of Grammatology*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Writing and Difference*, as well as Derrida's delivery of the essay "Différance" to the Société Française de Philosophie in January 1968 (Derrida 1976, 1973, 1978, and 1982, respectively) – tells only a limited tale that emerged to prominence in the middle period of the short time span described here.

In that account, Derrida's engagement with Lévi-Strauss, Rousseau, Saussure, Plato, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, and others critiques the phonocentric priority of

speech over writing. We presume, Derrida demonstrates, the spoken word to be more proximate to the immediacy of the idea it represents than its written counterpart. Phonocentrism, as a key example of the unremarked logocentric foundation of western philosophy, licenses thereby not only a whole series of related and violent hierarchies (presence/absence, light/dark, man/woman, center/periphery) but also underwrites presumptions to the unmediated presence of a transcendental signified (consciousness, truth, God, Man, ipseity, sovereignty) that governs any text's production of values and meaning while closing off the process of interpretation or definition. Derrida's rejoinder to the authority and power of logocentrism is to develop, over a long series of texts, a deconstructive lexicon (*différance*, supplement, trace, spacing, dissemination, *pharmakon*, etc.) that destabilizes the hierarchical priority of binary terms in favor of an interminable and irresolvable condition of undecidability. When transferred to the practice of textual criticism more generally, the mere and rote operation of deconstructive criticism, understood on these terms alone and applied to any number of such hierarchical binaries, requires a demonstration of the first term's dependence on the second, the inversion of the binary in question, and a destabilizing (non-)resolution in regard to the undecidability of their conceptual priority. Summary presentations of Derrida that follow this conventional account – and that would include most of those teachings relayed through institutions of higher learning in the United States from that time until at least the end of the century – are, however, only narrowly accurate and all too reductive. What results from such summaries is a rather dull and depoliticized emphasis on problems of referentiality and a seemingly ahistoric attention to linguistic instability for its own sake. These emphases tend to elide what Mark Currie so admirably describes in *The Invention of Deconstruction* (2013) as an ongoing process of invested retrospection, invention, and revisionism confounded by the exigencies of belated translation and variable and constitutive modes of circulation.

As an alternative, then, the following survey suggests three “phases” that might serve to demarcate the historical period under scrutiny, but will in no sense attempt to define what deconstruction is, or for that matter what it was, in any monolithic, stable fashion, so much as it will work to historicize deconstruction as circulated within its American context from 1966 to 1983. At the same time, this excursion will attempt to push against those heuristic limits in order to counter what unfortunately remain popular and hegemonic narratives of deconstruction in America – that is, oft told tales of either a hermetic ahistoricism or a hedonistic romp in the fields of an irresponsible interpretive freeplay. Such tales forego attention to what has always been most emphatic in Derrida's work: a historicism of strange temporalities, a politics of undecidability, an ethics of the unconditional, a critique of sovereignty, and an unbridled commitment to the affirmative that together remain, as an intellectual complex we *might* call “deconstruction” *today*, decidedly vibrant, dynamically resistant, and deeply engaged in the political, ethical, and cultural issues of the twenty-first century.

DerridAmerica (Phase I)

One might well begin at the terminal point of this survey, and with Derrida's own ambivalence regarding the relationship between deconstruction and the United States. In his Wellek Library Lectures at UC Irvine in 1984, and again in his *Memoires for Paul*

de Man (1986), Derrida famously both offers, and withdraws, the hypothesis that “America is deconstruction.” On the one hand, Derrida says, America is that “historical space which today, in all its dimensions and through all its power plays, reveals itself as being undeniably the most sensitive, receptive, or responsive space of all to the themes and effects of deconstruction”; on the other hand, he counters, both “America” and “Deconstruction” are “two open sets” that resist such easy formulations and, as figures of the proper name – and thus capitalized and hypostatized – underwrite a myth of hegemonic power and sovereignty against which deconstruction already aligns itself (1986, 18). Indeed, to say that America is responsive or receptive to deconstruction is not to say that these two tropological constructs are equitable, but rather that America serves, perhaps, as a limit case that exemplifies the cultural, political, and ethical stakes of deconstruction’s engagements. Attempts to negotiate and question this relationship are many and varied (one might trace an illuminating arc across, for example, Arac, Godzich, and Martin 1983, Berman 1988, Haverkamp 1995, Kamuf 2002, Thomas 2006, Naas 2008, and Currie 2013), but what these all face, *as histories*, is the strange time and shifting terrain of a cultural transposition of deconstruction to America that was, in the very moment of its happening, already interpretive and performative. Furthermore, as Derrida points out in that same lecture series, “Deconstructive discourses have sufficiently questioned, among other things, the classical assurances of history, the genealogical narrative, and periodizations of all sorts, and we can no longer ingenuously propose a tableau or history of deconstruction” (1986, 15). Still in process, resistant to the presumptions of positivistic historiography, and always subject to the effects of transference, a narrative of deconstruction – told as a totalizing, coherent story – could only be in contradiction to itself.

Nonetheless, in more practical terms there are, indeed, relevant facts or details that bear upon this history: for example, that for the first six years of this survey, English-only readers of Derrida had direct interpretive access to just three short published translations of his work: “Structure, Sign, and Play” as it appeared first in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy* (Macksey and Donato 1970); “The Ends of Man,” delivered in New York in 1968 and relayed in a 1969 issue of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (Derrida 1982); and “Freud and the Scene of Writing” as published in a 1972 issue of *Yale French Studies* (Derrida 1978). Meanwhile, by 1972 Derrida’s published writing in French had extended the work of the inaugural texts of 1967 with the publication of the key monograph *Dissemination* (1981a), the essays collected in *Margins of Philosophy* (1982), and the helpfully illuminating interviews included in *Positions* (1981b), none of which would undergo translation into English in book form for another decade. Translations of three major texts of 1967 emerged in slow succession: *Speech and Phenomena* in 1973, *Of Grammatology* in 1976, and *Writing and Difference* in 1978. As a number of commentators have argued (Helmling 1994; Thomas 2006; Currie 2013), this lag in translation reflected a broader temporal discontinuity that saw a high-water European structuralism arrive in America at the same time as its post-structuralist critique. This temporal discontinuity had a potent effect on the reception of Derrida’s thought in the Anglo-American academy, restricting timely access to the full extent of Derrida’s writings, obscuring the chronology of his developing corpus, and limiting perceptions of Derrida’s ideas to the framings of a small coterie of

French-speaking American academics and to the inflections of translation in the context of a precarious cultural transposition.

What emerges at this early point, then, is most often characterized as confusion, typified by a series of varying and conflicting estimations of Derrida's promise or threat. Indeed, Jonathan Culler's influentially retrospective publication *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (1982) begins with an extended meditation on exactly that preliminary confusion as the volume's motivating problematic. However, this notion of "confusion" and its implication that in translating Derrida's ideas into an Anglo-American context his readers got something wrong that was originally pure and proper to itself, works against what a deconstructive history might describe, rather, as a multiplication of differences emerging in relation to what is already a non-originary discourse. Nonetheless, the complexity and self-contradictions of the early dissemination of Derrida in America are evident enough: deconstruction was seen, at once, as a hyper-structuralism, a post-structuralism, a critique of metaphysics, a variant on philosophical pragmatism, a materialist philosophy, and, above all else, a formalism *at odds with* the ahistoricism of New Critical practice dominant at the time in the study of literature.

Indeed, deconstruction, as a practice of textual exegesis, found its most ardent American supporters, and its initial stabilization, in the discipline of literary criticism, and particularly through the administrations of comparative literature and French departments. As one of the first and certainly the preeminent mediator of Derrida's texts to an English-speaking audience, Paul de Man promised as much in his 1971 volume *Blindness and Insight*:

Jacques Derrida makes the movements of his own reading an integral part of a major statement about the nature of language in general. His knowledge stems from the actual encounter with texts, with a full awareness of the complexities involved in such an encounter. The discrepancy implicitly present in the other critics here becomes the explicit center of the reflection. This means that Derrida's work is one of the places where the future possibility of literary criticism is being decided, although he is not a literary critic in the professional sense of the term and deals with hybrid texts. (1983, 110–111)

Importantly, this determining force of Derrida's deconstructive philosophy applied to the critical procedures of literary analysis was initially felt most keenly in scholarly journals such as *New Literary History* and *Diacritics*, where the central ordinates of that "taking place" (to draw again from the epigraph to this chapter) were the ongoing skirmishes of American critics around the competing paradigms of formalism and historicism. Indeed, as Currie argues, these journals functioned both to promote and bond Derrida and de Man together in common cause, and to do so in a manner that emphasized "that Derrida was some new species of historian or historicist" (Currie 2013, 41). Without a doubt, Derrida has always foregrounded questions of temporality and historicity, but not at all on terms that would be recognizable to conventional conceptions of American cultural historians of this period. History, as a totalizing, metaphysical concept, was precisely the location of some of Derrida's most engaged thinking, including the early and important statement in the essay "Différance" that if "the word 'history'

did not in and of itself convey the motif of a final repression of difference, one could say that only differences can be 'historical' from the outset and in each of their aspects" (Derrida 1982, 11). Indeed, while Derrida defers a full encounter with the concept of history in that particular essay, his use of the term "history" in scare quotes throughout, and his insistence on that concept's complicity with the object of his critique (which, one might say, is conceptuality itself), suggests not an ahistorical approach *per se*, but rather a complex attention to difference as both prior to, and an effect of, the historical. That his writings were mediated in and through the already existing preoccupations of the American academy skewed understandings of both deconstruction and of Derrida's larger *oeuvre*, both of which challenged many of the core presuppositions on which those debates themselves were being carried out. The reception of de Man's work is a case in point.

For his part, de Man's deconstruction of the literary text as a self-present, unified verbal icon – as in his focus on the manner in which the figural presuppositions of a text undermine its literal claims to truth and referentiality, thereby rendering the text undecidable or, in his words, "unreadable" – helped to secure the place of one version of deconstruction in the American academy, or at least situate it at the center of one important phase of poststructuralist academic contest. The result of de Man's emphasis on the formal analysis and referential problematics of the literary text was the perception that this translated form of deconstruction amounted to, in the words of Frank Lentricchia, "a New Criticism denied its ontological supports and cultural goals" (Lentricchia 1980, 169). However, to claim (as is often the case) that de Man's approach was void of historical or political engagement is inconsistent with the evidence. Even while, as Norris notes, the early de Man is "heavily 'stacked' against Marxism and against any form of critical thinking that would privilege history as the ultimate ground of interpretative method" (1988, 4), the essays collected in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (which includes publications from 1956–1983) explicitly describe a shift in his approach to literary criticism and politics. That shift, Norris tells us, moves "from an attitude of political quietism – one that reads poetry expressly *against* all forms of delusive activist involvement – to a stance that finally equates right reading with the power to demystify forms of aesthetic ideology" (1988, 13). Indeed, at the very height of his career, in volumes such as *Blindness and Insight* (1971) and *Allegories of Reading* (1979), de Man makes temporality most central to his conception of rhetorical analyses (his famous essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" is a case in point), while the late texts of de Man's career (1977–1983), as posthumously collected in *Aesthetic Ideology*, adopt an ongoing position from which the challenge to claims of textual unity, the unseating of textual mastery, and the deconstruction of those totalizing systems discoverable in our presumptions about metaphor and symbol are together a challenge to that aesthetic ideology which would naturalize illegitimate figures of interpretive (that is, political) authority. It is in light of such historical engagements and political commitments, in particular, that the revelation of de Man's youthful wartime writings (with the resulting accusations of anti-Semitism and collaboration now infamously known as "the de Man affair" of 1987) should be understood. And, at the same time, as Martin McQuillan urges, following Derrida's own pronouncements in his essay "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep Within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," deconstruction should be understood to stand in asymmetrical relation (that is, neither unrelated nor comparable) to de Man's 1940s journalism (Derrida 1988a; McQuillan 2001, 71–72).

“Boa-Deconstructors” (Phase II)

If this initial period of the circulation, or translation, or invention of deconstruction – from the late 1960s to early 1970s – is typically characterized as one of confusion, then what follows in the middle of its second decade in America is a period of what has often been described as a phase of diminution, or narrowing of deconstruction’s capacious critical potential. Rodolphe Gasché’s 1979 essay “Deconstruction as Criticism” most famously captures this attitude. In assessing the misreading of deconstruction that both makes its adaptation to the American academy possible, and “transforms it into a mechanical exercise,” Gasché (importantly, as a strong proponent of Derrida’s philosophy who would echo these comments in his landmark 1986 volume *The Tain of the Mirror*) laments the “ridiculous *application* of the *results* of philosophical debates to the literary field” (1979, 178). The criticism thereby generated, or what Gasché derisively refers to as “The Newer Criticism,” exacerbates the purely aesthetic and ahistorical tendencies of New Criticism, blurs or neutralizes important differences between forms of discourse, and constitutes a reduction of its philosophical impetus:

This naive and intuitive reception of Derrida’s debate with philosophy, its reduction to a few sturdy devices for the critic’s use, represents nothing less than an extraordinary blurring and toning-down of the critical implications of this philosopher’s work. (1979, 180)

Such taming of a radical philosopher results in an emphasis on textual play and *mise en abyme*, the infinitely recursive structures by which the text turns in on itself, and away from the world, empirical or referential. As Derrida remarks in a 1985 interview, specifically on the subject of “deconstruction in America,” “something has happened in the United States which is not a simple translation or importation of something European. I believe it has an absolutely new and original dimension in the United States, and therefore [is] all the more difficult to put together” (Derrida 1985, 4).

Lentricchia’s *After the New Criticism* also iterates what is now typically referred to as “the domestication argument” – that deconstruction in America effectively diminished the political and historical engagements of Derrida’s writings in favor of engagements with a text cut off from the world, an argument also echoed by Richard Beardsworth in claiming that “the literary reception of Derrida’s thought overplayed its rhetorical side and, at its institutional worst, made it into a practice of literary criticism, the political orientation of which was easily advertised but poorly elaborated” (Beardsworth 1996, 3). At the center of such reduction narratives is the formation, or better yet formulation, of what became known as “The Yale School” or “The Yale Critics” or “Yale Deconstruction” – with the membership of Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, and Harold Bloom – a formulation that has proven more of a hindrance than a help in understanding the vicissitudes of deconstruction in America, in part because of the somewhat fantastical and strategic nature of this allegiance (strategic, that is, on both sides of the debate over the role of deconstruction in the American academy), and in part because of the very specific set of distortions its recapitulations produce.

In 1976, it was Miller who described “a new group of critics gathered at Yale” (1976c, 336) thereby creating “a fictional school through resort to metonymy” (Arac et al. 1983,

xxxiii). Despite the fact that numerous histories would describe this group as such, even its own members (all, in their own ways, brilliant and influential thinkers) were reticent about claims to any sort of cohesiveness. In *Deconstruction and Criticism*, the 1979 volume that could be said to have confirmed the Yale School's existence, Geoffrey Hartman suggests in his preface that their shared concerns include the almost unremarkable and generic abstractions of "the situation of criticism itself" and "the force of literature," while deconstruction in this instance denotes the non-coincidence of meaning and language; a "new rigor when it comes to the discipline of close reading"; a focus on the problematics of difference and intertextuality; and a reliance on the discourse of poetics, semiotics, and philosophical speculation. Nonetheless, Hartman reminds us, the allegiance itself is fictitious:

It should be repeated, in conclusion, that the critics amicably if not quite convincingly held together by the covers of this book differ considerably in their approach to literature and literary theory. *Caveat lector*. Derrida, de Man, and Miller are certainly boa-deconstructors, merciless and consequent, though each enjoys his own style of disclosing again and again the "abysm" of words. But Bloom and Hartman are barely deconstructionists. They even write against it on occasion. (Bloom et al. 1979, vi–viii)

One would certainly have to point within that group to J. Hillis Miller as among the most outstanding, and outspoken, of those critics engaged in a more narrowly defined practice of literary deconstruction during this period and as the single critic most central to the polemical fortune of "American deconstruction." Landmark essays such as "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure" (1976b) and "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line" (1976a) provided the model for engagement with literary texts, while "The Critic as Host" (as published first in *Critical Inquiry* in 1977 and only later in *Deconstruction and Criticism*) was itself the focal point of what Currie describes as the defining moment in intellectual history that would serve to confirm the "linguistic turn" in the American academy, or at least the temporary and imagined priority of questions of language over questions of history in the field of literary studies (2013, 47–48). (One might justifiably also point to Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* [1975] as itself a key player in deconstruction's early fortunes and, at that, an enabling publication in the critical invention of the linguistic turn in literary studies.) Miller's essay, his counterpart to M. H. Abrams's "The Deconstructive Angel" (1977) – both delivered at a staged and legendary panel organized by Wayne Booth at the 1976 meeting of the Modern Language Association – challenges the presumed stability of textual meaning and critical authority through the historical example of etymology, demonstrating in effect the tendency of the text to undermine its declared intentions in a manner that at least seems to prioritize the historical. Abrams, for his part, understands himself to be defending the authority of historical interpretation, albeit through a remarkable form of hyperbole that seems oblivious to Miller's actual critical practice: "what it comes to is that no text," Abrams claims as the upshot of Miller's deconstructive criticism, "in part or whole, can mean anything in particular, and that we can never say just what anyone means in anything he writes" (Abrams 1977, 434). Miller would, of course, make no such claim, and such overstated caricature (of which this is only one example among many) did more to

determine the antagonistic reception of deconstruction than anything else. On these terms alone – and these became the preeminent terms of its popular circulation – American deconstruction was widely understood as anti-Marxist, anti-populist, anti-historicist, anti-amateur, and anti-materialist: in sum, an elitist and nihilist withdrawal from politics, from the world, and from the common concerns and experiences of readers everywhere.

A second, and equally formative, debate took place in the pages of *Glyph*, which we've already encountered as the site of Gasché's scathing critique of a diminished deconstruction. The journal, launched in 1977 and given over to the contest of American and Continental intellectual traditions, immediately lived up to its mandate with the publication of the first English translation of Derrida's "Signature, Event, Context," initially delivered in Montreal in 1971 and published both in the conference proceedings and in *Marges de la philosophie* in 1972 (*Margins of Philosophy* [1982]). Here, Derrida both praises and challenges J. L. Austin's theory of the perlocutionary and illocutionary functions of language as articulated in his *How to Do Things With Words* (1962). Austin famously argues for a distinction between utterances that make constative statements of fact about the world and performative utterances that produce or transform situations in the world (such as making promises, declaring marriage vows, etc.). In doing so, however, Derrida notes that Austin brackets those performative instances (ironic, non-serious, or theatrically staged) that are "parasitic" or "etiolated" in that they merely cite their more serious and purposeful originals. Derrida's point is that seeming infelicities of iterability or citation are not secondary, but rather structurally necessary, to all acts of language. To substantiate that point, he invokes the concept of the signature as an exemplary performative. In order for a signature to attest to the presence of the signer, it must be repeatable, iterable, and detachable from "the present and singular intention of its production" (1982, 328); that is, the possibility of the signature's singularity and presence is predicated on its repeatability and absence. Austin's bracketing of citation, therefore, results in what only appears to be an "ordinary" or "normal" state of language that Derrida says is actually a "teleological and ethical determination" (325), one that requires a false pretension to the univocality of the statement, the self-presence of total context, a transparency of intentions, and the presence of meaning.

In response to this critique, John Searle (a former student of Austin) published "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida" in the following issue of *Glyph*, not refuting Derrida so much as reaffirming the tenets of conventional speech act theory. Searle does take up the crucial issue of iterability, claiming Derrida overstates its importance, but also seems to understand Derrida "as a philosopher who denies the ability of language to communicate, which can only be wrong" (Currie 2013, 180). Derrida, for his part, responded in a lengthy article in the same issue (subsequently published in 1988 as *Limited Inc*) that has generally been understood as a devastating rebuttal to Searle's intervention. Regardless of the outcome, what is most apparent, and what is oft-remarked in this regard, is that Derrida and Searle were largely speaking at cross-purposes, generally misconstruing each other's intentions. As Currie remarks, while "Searle assumes his direct access to the actual properties of language, Derrida finds no existence for it other than as the invention of classical and contemporary analytical discourses, and in this sense they are never talking about the same thing" (2013, 182). Interestingly, the most significant gesture of this otherwise strangely famous exchange occurred not in the space of an academic journal, but in the more widely read pages of

The New York Review of Books. Here, in a 1983 review of Culler's *On Deconstruction*, Searle moves quickly beyond Culler's volume to focus on Derrida's work as "misinformed," "breathtakingly implausible," "dreadful," and "superficial" (Searle 1983). In a subsequent *NYRB* exchange with Louis Mackey, Searle would go on to decry deconstruction more generally for its "low level of philosophical argumentation, the deliberate obscurantism of the prose, the wildly exaggerated claims, and the constant striving to give the appearance of profundity by making claims that seem paradoxical, but under analysis often turn out to be silly or trivial....There is an atmosphere of bluff and fakery that pervades much (not all, of course) deconstructive writing" (Searle 1984).

Unfortunately, these were to become the standard, and superficial, criticisms of deconstruction in America. What this debate did – particularly as it continued to unfold in the popular press and amongst critics with little to no knowledge of Derrida's larger corpus – was to solidify lines of dissent between American analytic philosophy and Continental poststructuralist philosophy that would serve to characterize deconstruction as a kind of frivolous sideshow, the doctrine of a foreign charlatan who had taken in the naïve occupants of American literature departments. More seriously, however, what such characterizations also failed to foreground, or even to recognize vaguely, were the political engagements of a Derridean text such as "Signature, Event, Context," which gave powerful shape to a theory of writing that presumes the priority of otherness, difference, or alterity over "meaning that is one" (or sameness, unity, self-presence) and challenges the violence of ill-formed concepts of language and writing that are "destined to ensure the authority and force of a certain historical discourse" (315). Deconstruction was, it might be said, the victim of precisely that which it sought to contest: the violence of the One. "Signature, Event, Context" is, as its concluding section so aptly demonstrates, ultimately about relations of domination and subordination, and a general logic of the predication of power on procedures of hierarchy and exclusion; the essay articulates a functional, important, and political strategy for the critique of power that follows from a keen understanding of the operation of language in the world.

Deconstruction, Engaged (Phase III)

Given the prominence, and obvious political and historical engagements of texts such as "Signature," one might say that it was really the reduction, or domestication, of Derrida's deconstructive project at the hands of the Yale School and its critics that was the proper target of a range of Marxist critiques emerging primarily in the early 1980s, and taking one important stage in what is often named as the "theory wars" of that period. Terry Eagleton, in a scathing and insightful example, remarks that the "Yale deconstructionists have been able to effect a more fruitful commerce between North American bourgeois liberalism and a certain selective reading of Derrida – one which, most glaringly, eradicates all traces of the political from his work" (Eagleton 1984, 101). What Eagleton stages here is a version of the domestication argument that seeks critical ground by way of a distinction between Derrida's writings and those of his American adherents – a distinction that is often lost in the midst of the skirmishes that characterized this period. Godzich and Lentricchia are here further exceptions to that tendency to conflate philosophical deconstruction and its domesticated American versions: the former in making the case that de Man leaves behind both the virulent critique of metaphysics and potential Marxist

connections around the concept of “production,” the latter in understanding de Man as treating the text as “an autonomous fiction severed from social, political, and economic forces” (Lentricchia 1980, 308; Currie 2013, 74–78).

Yet, at the same time, Derrida’s work itself was also the direct object of an ideological critique that understood his work to be both ahistorical and depoliticized. Fredric Jameson’s historicist imperative, articulated so influentially in his 1981 *The Political Unconscious*, is motivated by the search for what he describes as a “more adequate, immanent or antitranscendent hermeneutic model” (23) that moves away from the concerns of decentering the autonomous subject characteristic of poststructuralist thought generally and towards a collective sense of a political unconscious (and political action). While Jameson relies at times on some of Derrida’s basic gestures, he nonetheless makes a point of eschewing the contradictions of what he identifies as a textualist critical practice in which “ideological positions can be identified by the identification of intertextual or purely formal features,” thereby projecting “the ahistorical view that the formal features in question always and everywhere bear the same ideological charge” (283). Such accusations of ahistoricism reiterate what by this point had become a standard negative response to Derrida’s thought, one that assumes that attention to the signifier precludes an engagement with history, or, for that matter, with politics. As Edward Said notes in his 1978 essay “The Problem of Textuality,” “Derrida does not seem willing to treat a text as a series of discursive events ruled not by a sovereign author but by a set of constraints imposed on the author by the kind of text he is writing, by historical conditions, and so forth” (702–703). The result is “an extremely pronounced self-limitation, an ascesis of a very inhibiting and crippling sort” in which Derrida neglects attention to matters of power and ethnocentrism, and foregoes questions of “freedom, oppression, or injustice” (703). Derrida’s critique, Said would have us understand, takes us further and further into the depths of the text without, as his Foucault achieves, reemerging periodically to engage with the world.

Despite the force and brilliance of such critiques, this characterization of Derrida appears a strange thing from a retrospective position; indeed, such a Derrida seems almost unrecognizable outside of that historic moment of pure academic contest. As Currie notes,

Derrida’s work is represented primarily as an investigation into the signifier, and secondarily as a challenge to historical discourse. It is baffling, from the twenty-first century, to read Derrida’s early work alongside these representations of it, or to understand how a context of reception could so drastically distort the content of his writings. (2013, 50)

In part, the unrecognizability of a depoliticized deconstruction stems from the highly engaged work to which Derrida’s texts have been put in the wake of the early 1980s. One thinks, first and foremost, of Houston Baker’s work on race, blues music, and the vernacular (1984); or the discipline defining postcolonial theories of Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; or foundational gender and queer theory studies such as Judith Butler’s 1990 *Gender Trouble*, 1993 *Bodies that Matter*, and 1997 *Excitable Speech*, and Lee Edelman’s 1994 *Homographesis*; or the ideological critiques of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Michael Hardt. While none of these thinkers offers an unproblematized relationship to deconstruction, their influential bodies of work are

largely unthinkable outside of an intellectual history that includes Derrida's contributions to theoretical discourse. The furthering, and challenge, to those questions Derrida asked of difference, alterity, the remainder, the center, the proper, and the performative (to name only a few key conceptual folds) itself describes a politics, and a historical sensibility, already at work in deconstruction.

And, of course, at the very moment that this survey concludes, Derrida was himself emerging more explicitly, and more emphatically, as a serious thinker of ethico-political concepts, indeed of the ethical and political valences of conceptuality itself. The years 1983 and 1984 brought Derrida's work to bear on questions of nuclear war in "No Apocalypse, Not Now" (2007), gender politics in "Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference" (1983a), and the academic institution in "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils" (1983b), amongst others. At the same time, Derrida's political activism began to reach from Czechoslovakia to South Africa to Palestine, resulting in sorties that would form the basis for his more careful articulation of a deconstructive politics. That articulation found its formulation in powerful essays such as "Force of Law" (1992a) and "The University Without Condition" (2002), as well as the volumes *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (1992b), *Specters of Marx* (1994), *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), *Of Hospitality* (2000), *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2005), *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), and (drawing from the last years of his seminar teaching) both volumes of *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009, 2011) and *The Death Penalty* (2013, 2017). Here, Derrida's thinking comes to bear on matters such as violence, justice, democracy, state power, sovereignty, hospitality, globalization, forgiveness, reconciliation, animal rights, and the death penalty. This emphasis on the political (as well as his many texts on ethics and religion) should be understood less as a *turn* in Derrida's theoretical program than an articulation of those tendencies that were at best already evident, and at worst merely latent, in his earliest published work.

Momentous Inconclusions

By the mid-1980s, the period that closes this survey, the dominant historical narrative at work was that deconstruction had effectively displaced the critical consensus and institutional hegemony of New Critical practice, subverting its tendencies to positivist, ahistorical closure with a set of close reading practices that, although still formalist in character, opened up the text to a subversion of authority both textual and cultural. The story told, then, was of a calm zone of literary complacency disrupted by the turbulent ideas of a charismatic and untamed European influence. However, what actually awaited deconstruction's "arrival" was an already vibrant set of critical antagonisms, antagonisms that came, in fact, to shape deconstruction at the moment of that arrival. As a result, what we see here is a history of deconstruction's arrival in America that follows at least three distinctive phases: the first, of introductory confusion and a slow uptake of Derrida's ideas on terms familiar to the current U.S. academic scene (1966–1972); the second, a narrowing constraint of the deconstructive project in a manner given to the needs and desires of literary criticism as its primary host (1972–1979); and third, a series of engagements (1980–1983) that would see deconstruction seriously contested in its academic prominence and, at the same time, tenaciously permeate the critical activity and theoretical positions of the humanities and human sciences. Derrida often

resisted the notion that “Deconstruction” might be capitalized as if some monolithic entity, insisting rather on its multiplicity and, importantly, difference from itself. Nonetheless, deconstruction’s period of stabilization as an object of contest produced, effectively, a definable Deconstruction, or a series of definable deconstructions, and the years following the “theory wars” of the 1980s saw the diffusion or dissemination of deconstruction as taken up across a variety of critical projects focused on the more properly political or ethical engagement of Derrida’s publications.

Despite such confusions, variants, and contestations of deconstruction’s status, Derrida can be said, as Michael Naas argues, “to have as much notoriety and influence in the American academic scene as any single intellectual, whether American or not, from the mid-1970s through the 1990s” (Naas 2008, 99). In his brilliant account of “Derrida’s America,” Naas understands this receptivity and responsiveness to be the result of a variety of academic conditions – including a growing interdisciplinarity; a strong theological tradition; the formalist preoccupations of New Criticism; already established engagements with phenomenology and German romanticism; a tightly networked university system; and a robust academic publishing industry – but one should also point to a variety of other cultural and demographic factors. As a national space constituted by dynamic cultural difference, as a commercial society susceptible to any hint of fad or fashion, as a melancholy culture enjoying a nostalgic fascination with things French, America was ready for such a thing as deconstruction.

This could be a history, then, of translation or transposition, a history of infusion or insemination in which a powerful body of European ideas and writings is the object of transnational and cross-cultural circulation. Deconstruction would be constituted, on those terms, as a form of viral meme, a kind of paternal colonialism, or perhaps a diasporic entity that takes up residence, that finds its new home, in a space wherein it is marked in advance as a foreign body, at best a figure of difference, at worst a figure of parasitism. Such a narrative would invoke, unwittingly or not, a broad spectrum of those conceptual and figural challenges that will have become some of deconstruction’s most powerful initial critical gestures – spacing, difference, translation, dissemination, etc. – a lexicon of Derrida’s most compelling engagements with the philosophy of signs as recognized in the humanist disciplines. At the same time, that narrative also invokes the ethical and political program of deconstruction which will have become, in the aftermath of those heady moments of its arrival in America, the most salient and enduring promises of the critique of the metaphysics of presence. For this becomes, then, a story of precisely the themes that preoccupy Derrida from the late 1980s until his death: of hospitality, friendship, globalization, cosmopolitanism, citizenship, and sovereignty. Most importantly, in the account presented here, the tale of deconstruction in America is a story of the *arrivant*, that figure of monstrous alterity that arrives unexpected at the door, or that reaches the shore of a homeland it did not know existed, unknown and undocumented:

All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant*, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture. Texts and discourses that provoke at the outset reactions of rejection, that are denounced precisely as anomalies or monstrosities are often texts that, before being in

turn appropriated, assimilated, acculturated, transform the nature of the field of reception, transform the nature of social and cultural experience, historical experience. (1995, 387)

But the *arrivant* is not simply a figure of history or a determinant of historical experience; it is a figure of futurity. To say that deconstruction will have been a kind of *arrivant* is to insist on a strange temporality of historical events whose meaning or value can only ever return from the future. It is to resist the writing of history as an act of closure and to open that writing onto a non-programmable or incalculable future – what Derrida calls *l'avenir*, or the future-to-come.

The very strategy of this survey is given over to the accentuation of difference and the performative as the modulating structures of historical accounts of deconstruction. The epistemological relativism (or, one might say, openness to the future) that results from this strategy is not so much an abdication of the responsibilities of historiography as it is, first and foremost, a political disposition that insists that one can only ever take full responsibility for the *construction* of such an account. Interpretation for Derrida is neither limitless, nor unrestricted, nor a question of indeterminacy: rather, it is always a matter of undecidability. That is, to occupy the space of undecidability is to insist on the fact that the question of historical judgment in the face of the undecidable is the very political ethos of deconstruction. A differential history that takes that mad leap into storytelling – that self-consciously risks choosing *this* or *that* – serves as an active testament to the argument that “deconstruction is justice” (1992a, 15).

The facile understanding of deconstruction as a primarily negative gesture – a philosophical or critical enterprise entirely given over to destruction, to dismantling, to displacement, to overturning – fails to account for the central role that *affirmation* has always played in Derrida's writings. That affirmation is the *engagement* – that is *l'engage* as pledge, or promise, or wager – which is at the heart of all textual and cultural encounters. The *gage* is the unconditional horizon of all human relationships and discourse – the “yes” that anticipates everything we do as humans. It is, as Derrida tells us, “a sort of promise of originary alliance to which we must have in some sense already acquiesced, already said *yes*, given a pledge [*gage*], whatever may be the negativity or problematicity of the discourse which may follow” (1991, 129). So, then, we would best conclude by returning from the future to the moment of arrival. Derrida's 1966 lecture “Structure, Sign, and Play” famously challenges the discourse of structuralism, at the very apex of its intellectual dominance, for its reliance on a metaphysics of presence as expressed through a desire for the center, origin, and purity, while also celebrating the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss for his attention to the structurality of structures and the dynamics of supplementarity. This undecidable work of Lévi-Strauss, we are told, opens on to “the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation” (Derrida 1978, 292). That affirmation remains, and that interpretation remains active.

- see CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY); CHAPTER 19 (INDIGENOUS EPISTEMES); CHAPTER 29 (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

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6

Paris – Boston – Berkeley – the Mexico/Texas Borderlands 1949–1990; or, Gender and Sexuality

Sarah Brophy

On the Times of Gender and Sexuality

Political and theoretical work on gender and sexuality began to flourish in the late 1960s and early 1970s, building on hard-won fights for women's suffrage in the first three decades of the twentieth century and in tandem with the partial decriminalization of homosexuality and abortion and the availability of the birth control pill. According to this dominant narrative, feminist and queer activism then lost focus in the 1980s, splintering into special interests and attempts to correct "second-wave" feminists' naïve and narrow focus on "the patriarchy." Tracing the diversity of feminist and queer voices, along with their deep and intricate connections to other key social movements of the 1960s, not only challenges this negative caricature of feminist theories and aims, but also brings into view the remarkable heterogeneity of the mid-century and its legacies. As historian Becky Thompson has suggested, "The term 'radical' was itself contested" (Thompson 2002, 346) in the 1960s and 1970s. Certainly, "second-wave" feminist voices included the high-profile critic and educator Kate Millett and poet and essayist Adrienne Rich, who are often positioned as radical in contrast to the advocacy agendas adopted by liberal feminists such as Betty Friedan. Lobby groups such as NOW (National Organization for Women) and predominantly white "anti-patriarchy" organizations like the Redstockings, WITCH (acronym of the guerilla theater troupe Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), and Radicalesbians – the latter associated with Millett – were far from being the only scenes of radical theory and political activism. The plethora of activist groups with critical agendas that articulated social justice demands, sovereignty movements, and critiques of gender-based violence and oppression in this period included WARN (Women of All Red Nations), Hijas de Cuauthmoc, Asian Sisters, the National Black Feminist Organization, Third World Women's Alliance, and the Combahee River Collective (Thompson 2002, 338–340).¹ Consider, for instance, the position of revolutionary, activist, philosopher, and scholar Angela Davis. Davis was charged in 1970 for abetting an act of terrorism against the state and acquitted in 1972 after an international campaign to free her, demonstrating that radical feminism could take the form of theory, action, and coalition-building against structural racism and, as Davis later specified, the "prison industrial complex" (Davis 1997). The Black Power

movement called for prison reform, health care justice, and also for women's and for gay rights, within the context of black communisms and black nationalisms, exemplifying a "radicalism" [that] included attention to race, gender, and imperialism and a belief that revolution might require literally laying their lives on the line" (Thompson 2002, 345; see also Hesford 2013; Davis 1998).

I begin with this sketch of the diversity of feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s and the example of Davis's radicalism because a primary objective of this chapter is to intervene in the limited narrative of the turn towards radicalizing gender and sexuality that circulates across press and academic accounts – a narrative that significantly constrains political imagination. As Victoria Hesford argues in *Feeling Women's Liberation* (2013), the varied webs of political mobilizing and theorizing in this period tend not to be well remembered. By intensively examining media coverage of "women's liberation" as it reached a crescendo in 1970, Hesford shows how the figure of the "feminist-as-lesbian" surfaced as a dominant image of the second-wave feminist, a figure in whom is encoded a longing for the respectable, relatively innocuous white "lady protestor" set against the specter of a more disruptive militant, even pathological, "guerilla" fighter (Hesford 2013, 52–53). The repeated figuring of who feminists are and what they want in terms of the "feminist-as-lesbian" has at least two major stabilizing and limiting effects (Hesford 2013, 14–16). First, Kate Millett's public outing as a lesbian in a 1970 issue of *Time* magazine was used to delegitimize the scathing insights of her 1969 manifesto, *Sexual Politics* (Hesford 2013, 79), and the logic of demonization and dismissal has only grown stronger and more broadly consequential since. Extrapolating from Hesford, we can see how "feminist-as-lesbian" reappeared in 1990s backlash writing, in which the militant feminist is repeatedly described as a throwback that feminists must do our mightiest not to resemble, as we are called to move forward by embracing a more enlightened, less strident politics of gender and sexuality (Moi 2006; Ahmed 2014; McRobbie 2009). While backlash writers are often conspicuously right-wing, backlash shows up on the left as well; the aspersion "feminist-as-lesbian" operates in the background of outcries on the part of some left-wing men, for instance, who argue that feminists who continue to insist that identity matters are effectively "vampires" who lure their victims into intellectually stifling "castles," and are hence reactionary rather than radical (Filar 2013). It's crucial, then, to reckon with the work that this figure does to position feminism as insular, deluded, and threatening, and to consider how it deflects attention away from questions of gendered and racialized oppression and exploitation. Second, the "feminist-as-lesbian" trope identified by Hesford contributes to the displacement of women-of-color feminisms, because this figure is coded as predominantly white, American, and middle class. As Leela Fernandes points out, "The disciplinary impetus to classify discrete waves of feminism in effect ended up drawing boundaries that displaced the substantive interventions of second-wave feminists about race into a different temporal space," creating the erroneous impression that concerted work to think about race, gender, and sexuality together only happened much later, with the aid of – or as a reaction to – poststructuralism's unsettling of the humanist subject's identity and agency in the 1980s (Fernandes 2010, 110).

By reiterating the figure of the "feminist-as-lesbian," mainstream press and academic narratives alike establish a seemingly stable origin point that in turn facilitates a linear progress narrative: if the (white) lesbian feminist defines "second-wave" feminism, then she is also positioned as retrograde and in need of being superseded or corrected

(Hesford 2013, 14–17, 77–80). Spectacularly amnesiac but also a “remnant” that reminds us of radical “possibilities” (17), this figure and the progress imperative she is used to enforce serve to filter out complexity, undermine coalitional politics, create scapegoats, and pull some (privileged and “respectable”) voices into positions of authority. Thus, while it may be difficult to dislodge the dominant stabilizing narratives that organize how feminism is remembered and imagined, it is politically imperative to make an attempt to complicate the idea of a single coherent narrative of progress and a single set of representative figures. Telling a more multifaceted, less linear story about the theories of gender and sexuality that emerged in the twentieth century is not an academic exercise, but a necessary maneuver. This chapter thus revisits the broadly defined era of the second wave, with a focus on the multiple pathways laid for thought and politics during these years. Its aim is to bring into view coexisting politics and networks, underacknowledged reciprocal influences, and ongoing legacies. I posit that the legacies of 1949–1990 are incendiary – desiring, passion-infused, world-transforming. Characterized by their determination to generate powerfully erotic and angry counter-knowledges, thinkers in this period imagined ways of collectively and individually resisting gender and sexual oppression and rethought the very constitution of gender and sexuality.

This chapter endeavors to provide a dynamic mapping of the field’s lineages and what is at stake in them. As a corollary to this agenda, my references in this chapter do not (and cannot) proceed in a linear sequence; sometimes they spill out of the 1949–1990 historical frame altogether, or exceed the disciplinary boundaries of philosophy and critical theory. Moreover, the sections of this chapter are organized around the task of mapping intellectual and institutional linkages, clustering together dates that mark resonant occasions of inheritance and contestation. This emphasis on tracing heterogeneous lines of connection and the alternative, non-linear structure it entails are informed by feminist historiography, specifically Clare Hemmings’s investigation into the political “grammar” of feminist theory and Audre Lorde’s reflections on the political stakes of looking back at the recent past. For Hemmings, citation is what secures dominant theoretical narratives; critical recitation is “not the telling of a new story, but the re-narration of the same story from a different perspective” (Hemmings 2011, 182). While Hemmings focuses on feminist journals of the 1990s and early 2000s, I build on her method in order to reflect on the citational chains – and elisions – that shape our understandings of the mid-to-late twentieth century. Recitation can convey the field as plural and contested, not only telling new stories alongside or against received accounts, but also, I would add, re-siting theories of gender and sexuality – that is, changing our sense of the social relations and locations in which new thinking comes to exist and to matter. In a speech entitled “Learning from the 60s,” delivered at Harvard on Malcolm X Day in February 1982, Lorde puts her finger precisely on the importance of returning critically to the past with the express purpose of rethinking the present and nourishing a just future. Lorde approaches genealogy by calling those who have been “forged in the crucibles of difference” to engage in the work of “rekindling”: “We forget that the necessary ingredient needed to make the past work for the future is our energy in the present, metabolizing one into the other” (Lorde 1984, 136). In declining to rehearse a progress narrative, and in tracing the manifold connections that comprise the field, a critical genealogy might make new sparks fly.

1979/1949/1989: Situating Consciousness

Delivered at a 1979 conference organized by psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin and devoted to the legacy of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Audre Lorde's speech, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," questions the conference's last-minute, minimal gestures of inclusion: "Why weren't other women of Color found to participate in this conference? Why were two phone calls to me considered a consultation? Am I the only possible source of names of Black feminists?" (Lorde 1984, 113). More than three decades later, the Twitter conversation #solidarityisforwhitewomen points out that white feminist citing of Lorde covers over differences and is often superficial. @NewBlackWoman writes that #solidarityisforwhitewomen "when the only thing you know from black academia is some Audre Lorde quote you saw on a meme" and @sara-vibes extends the point, referring to white feminists "who quote Audre Lorde, yet fail to prioritize paid internships at feminist organizations." Such critiques are possible because Lorde has taught her legateses so well about the power of citation and about gaps and absences in feminist theory. Her archive of speeches, poems, essays, and autobiographical narration itself creates the conditions for critically examining how it has been appropriated and put to work within academic women's studies: "Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that *survival is not an academic skill*" (Lorde 1984, 112; emphasis in original). Commenting on the struggles within civil rights and Black Power movements from the vantage point of the 1980s, Lorde elaborates that "self-definition" is a necessary but not sufficient condition for imagining "new paths to our survival" (Lorde 1984, 123). There is an ever-present risk, warns Lorde, that "self-awareness and liberation" will be hollowed out by being turned into projects of individual advancement (138). When consciousness is only thought of in individual terms, the causes of oppression remain sedimented. On this poisoned ground, hopelessness – which Lorde imagines metaphorically as the seed of our mutual "self-destruction" – takes root (142).

In the context of Lorde's critique of white feminist institution-making and of consciousness as a conflicted project, what does it mean to position French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir as the founding "mother-figure" (Moi 2008, 98) of feminist theory? One problem, as Chicana intellectual Norma Alarcón writes, is that Beauvoir's emphasis on a conscious embrace of subjecthood aligns with an elitist project: it seems that for Beauvoir "[v]ery few women, indeed, can escape the cycle of indoctrination except perhaps the writer/intellectual" (Alarcón 1994, 146). Alarcón goes on to ask: "But what of those women who are not so privileged, who neither have the political freedom nor the education? Do they now, then, occupy the place of the Other (the 'Brave') while some women become subjects? Or do we have to make a subject of the whole world?" (Alarcón 1994, 146). In 1984, Italian-born, New York-based thinker Silvia Federici drew on European and British Marxist feminism to articulate a critique of the centrality of consciousness to the women's movement. Federici insists that some of the most significant interventions and venues of critical feminist socialist thought in the 1970s occurred in movements such as "Wages for Housework" (Federici 2012, 56–58) and, in the early 1980s, through the "revolt of women against all types of wars": "from [the women's anti-nuclear protest] at Greenham Common to

[the peace camp at] Seneca Falls, from Argentina, where the mothers of the *desaparecidos* have been in the forefront of the resistance to military repression, to Ethiopia, where this summer [1984] women have taken to the streets to reclaim their children the government has drafted” (Federici 2012, 62). However, the foregrounding of the awakened or self-aware mind, she cautions, has led to an emphasis on overcoming oppression through “acts of will,” with the result that “increasingly, feminism has operated in a framework in which the system – its goals, its priorities, its productivity deals – is not questioned and sexual discrimination can appear as the malfunctioning of otherwise perfectible institutions” (Federici 2012, 55–56). As Federici’s critique of the institutional incorporation of feminism implies, universities’ creation of interdisciplinary programs in women’s and gender studies as well as in ethnic studies and cultural studies since the late 1960s has been double-edged. According to Roderick A. Ferguson’s analysis, since the 1960s the higher-education sector has served the interests of nation-states and global capital by appearing to valorize minority differences and the claims of equity-seeking groups and by interpellating intellectuals into systems of “legitimacy and recognition,” thus preempting revolutionary rupture (Ferguson 2012: 13).

What is still galvanizing in Alarcón’s and Federici’s critiques of consciousness – and in Lorde’s fiery, mobilizing call to resistance – is the insight that subjectivity, as an erotic-political framework, is not the exclusive property of western liberalism and its philosophers – nor of the academy. The problems of self and of consciousness flash up in sites and discourses born out of, for instance, settler-indigenous contestations and racial oppression and resistance. These manifestations of consciousness often exceed or push against the desire for recognition (the granting of formal rights and representation) within western liberal philosophical or nation-state terms. As argued by Andrea Smith in her contribution to the book *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited by Joyce Green, Indigenous women intellectuals have debated both the difficulties and the political importance of identifying as feminist in a context where feminism has been constructed as a project of white women’s emancipation (and thus potentially disparaged as a sign of assimilation). But as evidenced in the archives of WARN, in oral histories with Native feminists, and in the 1980s writings of Paula Gunn Allen and Lee Maracle, Indigenous women activists and writers have been developing a powerful theoretical and applied understanding that “attacks on Native women’s status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty” (A. Smith 2007, 99). Contributions to the same volume by Verna St. Denis, who emphasizes that feminism is “neither static nor homogeneous” (St. Denis 2007, 43), Emma LaRocque, who offers “ethical reflections” on being “Métis and Feminist,” and by Makere Stewart-Harawira, who highlights Indigenous feminism as an ongoing, anti-imperialist kinship practice, claim a powerful role for scholarship, but also show that academia is far from being the sole site in which transformative consciousness-raising occurs, for it is about sovereignty over body, land, and soul, in both individual and communal registers. As Stewart-Harawira puts it, drawing on teachings of her Waitaha (Maori) matriarchy and reflecting on her own role as grandmother, “The most fundamental principle in the search for a new political ontology for being together in the world is the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’”; from this principle of responsible interconnectedness, “alternative models of governance” can be imagined (Stewart-Harawira 2007, 134).

An especially important implication of thinking with Indigenous feminisms, then, is that there can be no single origin story – or set of political aims – for theories of

gender and sexuality. The irreducibility of the field to a linear story is further underscored if we think of Indigenous feminism in conjunction with the lineage represented by the Combahee River Collective's articulation of the "revolutionary task" of black feminism, its commitment "to working on struggles in which race, sex and class are simultaneous factors in oppression" and to engage in "criticism and self-criticism" (Combahee 2000, 280–281). Because Beauvoir remains widely credited with inaugurating contemporary liberal and radical feminist thought, it is all the more urgent to consider her more underemphasized commitments, especially those that foreground the *embodiedness* of consciousness. Beauvoir is most famous for the oft-cited opening pages of Part 2 of *The Second Sex*, those famous lines that lay the conceptual groundwork for social construction theory: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an Other" (Beauvoir 2009, 293). Indeed, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) pivots on Beauvoir's counterintuitive – "odd, even nonsensical" – analysis of gender as figuration rather than essence that makes it possible to start to think about the social construction of gender (Butler 1990, 111). In 1985, Toril Moi could write that "Though existentialism in general was marginalized by the shift to structuralism and post-structuralism in the 1960s, it would seem that nothing dates *The Second Sex* more, in relation to the new women's movement in France, than Beauvoir's rejection of psychoanalysis" (Moi 1985, 98); in 2013, conversely, it appears that it may be Beauvoir's trajectory from existentialism and socialism to participation in feminism as a social movement that makes her text and precepts durable, making it possible to bring into view fresh connections between intellectual projects of the postwar period and subsequent strands of feminist, critical race, and lesbian theorizing.²

Beauvoir's debt to African American thought – particularly W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness – is a case in point. In her criticisms of the thirtieth-anniversary conference of *The Second Sex*, Audre Lorde briefly but powerfully cites the following passage from Beauvoir: "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting" (Lorde 1984, 113; Beauvoir 1948). It is perhaps not accidental that this formulation resonated for Lorde, for by 1946 Beauvoir had entered into a friendship with the African American novelist Richard Wright, who was responsible for introducing Beauvoir, in the mid-1940s, to Du Bois's insight into the counter-knowledge that can issue from the "peculiar sensation" of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois 1989, 3; Simons 1999, 177–178). Wright also facilitated Beauvoir's 1947 tour of the United States, including Harlem and several of the segregated states. The influence of African American thought is strongly apparent in the introduction to *The Second Sex*, where Beauvoir cites Wright's *Native Son* (1940), arguing for "deep analogies between the situations of women and blacks" (Beauvoir 2009, 12). While the analogy risks being interpreted as a glib totalizing equation, it is necessary to pause over the concept of "situation," or what in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* she calls "the genuine conditions of our lives" (Lorde 1984, 113). Citing the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir posits the body as a worldly entity as well as agent: "the body is not a *thing*,

it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects” (Beauvoir 2009, 46; emphasis in original). Via “situation,” Beauvoir draws attention to a structural likeness between oppressed groups, attempting to think and mobilize against oppressive structures:

The same vicious cycle can be found in all analogous circumstances: when an individual or a group of individuals is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he or they *are* inferior. But the scope of the verb to be must be understood; bad faith means giving it a substantive value, when in fact it has the sense of the Hegelian dynamic: *to be* is to have become, to have been made as one manifests oneself. Yes, women in general are today inferior to men, that is, their situation provides them with fewer possibilities: the question is whether this state of affairs must be perpetuated. (Beauvoir 2009, 12–13; emphasis in original)

As Margaret Simons documents in *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism*, Richard Wright’s influence on Beauvoir’s thought included “his subjectivist approach, his critical analysis of the limitations of Marxist ideology in understanding racism and black experience, his rejection of essentialism, and his militant engagement in the black struggle” (Simons 1999, 176).³

Citational chains from the 1950s through the 1980s reveal, moreover, that Beauvoir’s writing has been taken up in ways that exceed a liberal white feminist or elite framing. For example, Cheryl Higashida has shown the influence of Beauvoir on African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry. Written for a socialist and Communist Party readership, Hansberry’s 1957 essay, “Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*: An American Commentary,” endeavored to introduce a gender analysis into the American left and black radical circles. For this cultural practitioner, Beauvoir’s distinctive amalgam of existentialism and socialism “presented [...] a model that could contest the solipsism that marred Wright’s novel and that Hansberry would continue to attack in the work of Mailer and absurdist playwrights such as Genet and Albee” (Higashida 2011, 65). Articulating another line of connection, Leela Fernandes, in her work of complicating feminist waves, notes that Gloria Anzaldúa “echoes Beauvoir” in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), when Anzaldúa writes that: “Woman is the stranger, the other, she is man’s recognized, nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast” (Anzaldúa 1987, 17; cf. Fernandes 2010, 107). But it could be an error to foreclose on Anzaldúa’s sources here: she might, equally, be alluding to the anti-colonial writings of Frantz Fanon, who, as Sara Ahmed insists, “taught us to watch out for what lurks, seeing himself in and as the shadow, the dark body, who is always passing by, at the edges of social experience; in some cases, we are seeing ourselves” (Ahmed 2012, 3). Alternatively, thinking with Anzaldúa might lead us to wonder about the inter-influences of Fanon and Beauvoir, influences that perhaps imply that Beauvoir had not left psychoanalysis behind completely. As Amey Victoria Adkins notes, “a close reading of Fanon’s groundbreaking analysis in *Black Skin/White Masks* (1952) reveals a pattern of analysis uncannily similar to Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*,” particularly the scenes of being hailed as the Other, with their shared emphasis on body surfaces as the medium of the “epidermalization” of difference (Adkins 2013, 698). Such an against-the-grain reading is not at odds with Anzaldúa’s project, but arguably an extension of it, for her evocation of “la conciencia de la mestiza” emphasizes generativity. Since the mestiza inhabits numerous,

crisscrossing borders, her thinking entails “habitually incompatible frames of reference,” out of which manifest “divergent” possibilities (Anzaldúa 1987, 77; cf. Sandoval 2000).

Engaging in *Gender Trouble* (1989) with Monique Wittig’s lesbian feminist gloss on Beauvoir (1981), Judith Butler highlights the nascent radical possibilities of Beauvoir’s thinking about the sexed body.⁴ “For Wittig,” Butler observes, “there is no distinction between sex and gender; the category of ‘sex’ is itself a *gendered* category, fully politically invested, naturalized but not natural” (Butler 1999, 112–113; emphasis in original). Collapsing the distinction between cultural inscription and embodiment, Wittig suggests that it is the lesbian body, in its orientation to women, which offers the greatest challenge to the naturalness of the “heterosexual matrix” (Butler 1999, 113). Butler queries Wittig’s leaning on a metaphysical notion of the body’s presence and returns to Beauvoir’s phenomenological positing of nature as “resistant materiality, a medium, surface, or an object” (Butler 1999, 125). It is the recitation of Beauvoir via Wittig, together with Michel Foucault on the constitutive role of disciplinary norms and Mary Douglas on boundary construction, that furnishes Butler with an alternative – and, since the 1990s, canonical – formulation of gender, namely that

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and discursive means. (Butler 1999, 136)

One misreading of this formulation, which Butler is at pains to clarify in the introduction to 1993’s *Bodies that Matter* and in the 1999 preface to a new edition of *Gender Trouble*, is that gender can be donned, doffed, or resignified at will. Yet, subtly evident even in the above quotation from *Gender Trouble* is the deliberate tension in Butler’s thinking between, on the one hand, the non-ontological status of the gendered body, and, on the other, the ideological and material forces that “manufacture and sustain” its “reality” in binary terms. For Butler, gender is a function of reiteration (through acts, over time). While repetition may swerve from – and may even parody – regulatory norms, the compulsory force of the “heterosexual matrix” continues to limit the play of contingencies and dissonance/dissidence. Consequently, non-normativity is as likely to be occluded, policed, or pressed into the service of the normative as it is to yield radical alternatives for living.

Nonetheless, *Gender Trouble* gestures to a utopian, revolutionary horizon, posing the provocation: “what political possibilities are the consequence of a radical critique of the categories of identity?” (Butler 1999, ix). This inquiry does not make abandoning identity imperative, but it does denaturalize identity and in so doing creates space for processes of transformation that may augur different futures. As José Esteban Muñoz suggests, “we gain a greater conceptual leverage if we see queerness as something that is not yet here,” and at the same time, in the realm of the everyday, there is nonetheless “a type of affective excess that presents the enabling force of a forward looking futurity” (Muñoz 2009, 22–23). Muñoz draws on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl to theorize these “horizons of being,” but I suggest that the feminist inheritances – and the

dissensions and differences – I have been mapping in this section draw our attention to the “grounds” that also need to be thought and felt through as we contemplate horizons. While we may not be able to transcend the “situations” that constitute our bodies’ meanings, we can and must keep working to define, grasp, claim, interact with, and revolutionize them.

1980/1995–1997/2006/2012: Presses, Anthologies, Counter-Public Spheres

In the domain of feminist literary theory and criticism, *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (1980), edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, together with Toril Moi’s *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), brought the work of French feminists Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva into wide circulation, influencing a generation of North American scholars in the 1980s and 1990s to focus on the relationship between language and power. Moi’s account begins by critiquing Anglo-American feminism’s persistent investment in the self-present rational “I,” imagined as possessing a coherent, recognizable identity which can qualify women to take up positions as author and intellectual in the public sphere. After pointing to the limitations of mimicking the masculine contours of the Enlightenment subject, Moi glosses the alternative poetics of feminine marginality developed in the linguistic and psychoanalytic explorations of French feminism of the 1970s and 1980s. Her discussion shows how these projects mobilized articulations of feminine sexual, psychological, and linguistic “otherness” to oppose the phallogocentrism of symbolic language – or the grounding of meaning and “sense” in a patriarchal social order. Evocative as they are, Cixous’s and Irigaray’s utopian visions of feminine linguistic difference and Kristeva’s emphasis on the semiotic, or pre-linguistic, pressure on the symbolic order are flawed, Moi argues, in that they slide “over the question of revolutionary agency” (Moi 1985, 170). Building on the questions that Moi had asked about the political stakes of prioritizing an essentialized aesthetics of feminine disruption, Rita Felski, in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (1989), argued for a more sociological approach to questions of feminist community and resistance. “At this point,” Felski argued, “it becomes necessary to offer a more specific account of the constitution of this oppositional community by moving outside the literary text to an examination of its actual status and significance as an ideological and social formation” (Felski 1989, 155). Taking my cue from Felski’s call to theorize “a feminist counter-public sphere” so that its “constitution” and “political implications” might be examined (Felski 1989, 155), and from African American publisher and anthologist Barbara Smith, who has emphasized the labor and collaboration that goes into building counter-publics, this section brings into view some key projects of anthology creation, institution building, and field-mapping. My aim here is not to define a new canon, but to consider the transformative aims and effects of these projects.

As Vivian May points out, intersectionality – which was developed by black feminist, Chicana, and Indigenous thinkers and which insists that gender is “non-isolatable” from other axes of oppression, especially but not limited to race – became formalized in critical discourse through the work of critical legal studies scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (May 2012, 155). Intersectionality has a much longer history than is suggested by its common association with “third-wave” feminism, and attending to the diverse times and sites of

intersectional analysis is vital in order to push against the tendency to recapitulate “single-axis” thinking or reduce intersectionality to a set of routinized gestures (May 2012, 156–157). A deep and broad historicization of intersectionality is, significantly, available in a number of publishing projects. For example, Beverley Guy-Sheftall’s 1995 anthology *Words of Fire* constructs a long narrative of black feminisms, extending into the nineteenth century and establishing, for instance, the above-discussed contribution by Lorraine Hansberry and that of fellow black Marxist feminist Claudia Jones – a 1949 essay entitled “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman Worker!” – as unfolding out of anti-slavery, anti-Jim Crow resistance networks. Further, both Hazel Carby’s essays on the need to develop black feminist analyses of education, labor, and home in order to remedy socialist feminism’s tendency to sideline race and diaspora, collected in *Cultures in Babylon* (1999), and Margaretta Jolly’s *In Love and Struggle* (2008), which documents and reflects on the role of letter-writing for feminists of the 1970s and 1980s, trace transnational networks of feminist thought, politics, and relationships.

In the U.S. context, it is important to note the citational centrality of two anthologies in particular: *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983), edited by Barbara Smith. Norma Alarcón, who published the first edition of *This Bridge Called My Back* with Persephone Press in 1981 and has republished subsequent editions in the 2000s under the imprint of Third Woman Press, writes stirring of the anthology’s aims and significance, arguing that it reworks the very concept of “consciousness”: “Consciousness as a site of multiple voicings is the theoretical subject, par excellence, of *Bridge*. Concomitantly, these voicings (or thematic threads) are not reviewed as necessarily originating with the subject but as discourses that traverse consciousness and which the subject must struggle with constantly” (Alarcón 1994, 151–152). The citational reach of these volumes – the continued circulation of their “voicings” – is a function of institution-building work. In her role as publisher, Barbara Smith has reflected on the thinking, organizing, and work of founding Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press:

at that initial meeting [in 1980] we did decide to publish all women of color, although there were only women of African American and African Caribbean descent in the room. This was one of our bravest steps; most people of color have chosen to work in their separate groups when they do media or other projects. We were saying that as women, feminists, and lesbians of color we had experiences and work to do in common, although we also had our differences. (B. Smith 1989, 11)

The dedicated collaborative labor that goes into publishing in the field of gender and sexuality can be understood as creating possibilities for working “in common” in the present, but as creating the conditions for intergenerational influence, sustenance, and change. As Sara Ahmed’s return in *The Promise of Happiness* to Lorde and to Fanon (Ahmed 1994, 67, 83, 86) elucidates, predecessors can constitute “lifelines”: if bodies usually find themselves compelled to orient themselves in relation to received heteronormative and imperialist directions, then these alternative resources offer “the gift of the unexpected line that gives us the chance for a new direction and even a chance to live again” (Ahmed 2006, 17–18).

Edited and introduced by Rosemary Hennessey and Chrys Ingraham, the 1997 volume *Materialist Feminism: A Reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* offers an archive of Marxist and socialist feminisms in a transnational frame, constituting another attempt to identify important lifelines in the mid-twentieth-century corpus of writings on gender and sexuality. Alternative archives are urgently required, Hennessey and Ingraham argue, because, "While socialist and marxist feminist thinking was never the dominant voice of feminism in the industrialized world, during the early years of feminisms' second wave and throughout the 1970s this work had a profound effect on feminist theory and practice. In the past decade or so, however, as feminism has become absorbed into the middle-class professions, these knowledges have been increasingly discredited" (Hennessey and Ingraham 1997, 4). Hennessey and Ingraham attribute this shift to "the conservative backlash of the 1980s and 1990s" (4). The archive that *Materialist Feminism* assembles emphatically does not mirror (neo)liberal versions of feminism; instead, it offers a heterogeneous set of essays encompassing black feminist, anti-racist, transgender liberation, sexuality, and ecocritical work. Hennessey and Ingraham's introductory essay outlines a genealogy that ranges from Maria Dalla Costa and Selma James's 1972 essay, "Women and the Subversion of the Community," to the radical lesbian critique of heterosexual property and relations (Charlotte Bunch [1975]), to the articulation of a "structuralist marxist view" of the oppression of women (Martha Gimenez [1978]), to rousing "revolutionary Trotskyist" (9) calls to worker solidarity in the face of labor market racism and sexism (Nellie Wong [1991]). And while the editors frame this genealogy – and their anthology as a whole – as a corrective to what they see as a "cultural turn" in feminism that mistakenly posits cultural production as the primary site of knowledge-making and intervention, in practice the anthology is more capacious than this. It also includes 1970s and 1980s feminist cultural studies work at the intersection of Marxism and psychoanalysis, essays that focus on the fantasies and affects structuring everyday life, as in the work of Annette Kuhn, Ann Marie Wolpe, Michèle Barrett, and Frigga Haug. In these many ways, *Materialist Feminism* works against cultural amnesia, reminding readers that there have long been vigorous forms of activist and intellectual resistance to feminism's conscription into the service of neoliberal capitalism (cf. Bandhar and da Silva 2013; Fraser 2013; McRobbie 2009).

Materialist feminism finds an important ally and interlocutor in trans theory and activism, which fashion new directions and important lifelines. In their 2006 *Transgender Studies Reader*, Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle offer a broad twentieth-century genealogy of the field. While the anthology brings together a range of texts across medical/clinical, activist, and cultural registers, Stryker's introduction draws attention to two key early 1990s essays that aggregated the hard-won insights of decades of trans-activisms, inaugurating the contemporary critical field. Sandy Stone's 1991 "posttranssexual manifesto" argued powerfully against Janice Raymond's trans-exclusive radical feminist characterization of trans women as inauthentic and as violent invaders of feminist spaces. Written with the mentorship of critical science studies scholar Donna Haraway, Stone's essay deploys a nuanced conceptualization of body politics and boundaries that opens onto a speculative, cyborgian imaginary. Published in 1992, Leslie Feinberg's pamphlet *Transgender Liberation* complemented Stone's manifesto by offering a history of social movements and a call for organizing around the term transgender, conceived of in broad terms. That Feinberg's essay is also anthologized in Hennessey and Ingraham's *Material Feminism*

suggests a historical alliance of long standing between trans and materialist feminisms. In another essay, Stryker compares and contrasts transgender studies to queer theory and feminism, suggesting that: “If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory’s evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual) over the gender categories (like man and woman) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim” (Stryker quoted in Jagose and Kulick 2004, 212). In this respect, trans studies, from its inception, has contributed distinctive epistemological and social justice inflections to the broader field of gender and sexuality, questions that have put pressure on the identity categories that have authorized – and been consolidated within – feminist and gay and lesbian studies. Bobby Noble’s contribution to the 2011 collection, *Rethinking Women’s and Gender Studies*, carries forward these epistemological and social justice inquiries of the early 1990s into the contemporary academy. Noble conveys the lived difficulties of trans-knowledges’ arrival. In the face of having their embodied knowledge and social needs being dismissed as untimely (it is either “too soon” to make systemic change, or the struggle for equitable inclusion is already “over”), trans scholars remain committed to putting pressure on the lingering attachments to “women” that implicitly shape and limit the critical field as well as its institutional life (Noble 2011, 286). Across these different anthologies and commentaries, then, a variety of counter-publics make the definitional grounds and the politics of women’s and gender studies a matter of political contestation.

1976/1961/1990/1983: Other Foucaults

French poststructuralist Michel Foucault’s famous 1976 critique of the “repressive hypothesis” suggests that, while we like to think that we have shed what is imagined as the Victorians’ repression, speaking about sexuality (and indeed making it the core “truth” of individual identity) does not make us free, but on the contrary further enmeshes us in power/knowledge. Foucault’s attention to the circulation of power in everyday life and in the discourses, regulations, and institutions that shape it became a pivot point for diverse projects, ranging from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s innovative work in literary studies on queer ways of knowing to historian Ann Laura Stoler’s analysis of the vexed intimacies that bind together colonial societies. It is possible, however, to describe the critical field of gender and sexuality as replete with “Other Foucaults”: that is, with critics who carry forward but also critically differ with Foucault’s epistemological and ethical interventions. This turn to thinking about the field’s Foucauldian strands does not make his body of work the destination of my argument, but aims to widen this chapter’s remit and to view the field from another angle. Certainly, the prioritization within sexuality studies of *Sexuality One*, as Lynne Huffer points out, can be regarded as having delimited the field:

Sexuality One reflects Foucault’s turn in the early 1970s toward what he calls a microphysics of power and away from the rhetoric and imagery of “representations” – precisely those aspects of *Madness* that make it thick. As the French title of *Sexuality One*, *La Volonté de savoir*, insists, modern sexuality in that volume is

nothing more than the discursive result of a “will to knowledge” that has developed over time to specify sexual “individuals” as a tantalizing array of perversion within a dispositive or cultural grid of intelligibility. (Huffer 2010, 67)

In order to counter the flattening out of erotic life, Huffer returns to *The History of Madness*, finding in it an “other” Foucault, one who offers “an alternative ethical language of eros for engaging the difference of sexual unreason” (Huffer 2010, xv). In *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), Jasbir Puar makes a move similar to that of Huffer, bringing together different Foucaults in order to intervene in what she sees as a “splitting” in the “genealogical engagements with *The History of Sexuality*,” with “scholars of race and postcoloniality taking up biopolitics, while queer scholars work with dismantling the repressive hypothesis” (Puar 2007, 34). Puar draws on Foucault’s late lectures (collected in Foucault 2003), along with the work of Achille Mbembe and Judith Butler, to argue that it is necessary to think about “bio-necro collaboration”: that is, about the simultaneous “folding” of acceptable “queer subjects” into productivity (life) and of racialized sexualities out onto destruction (death). By revisiting Foucault and querying *The History of Sexuality*’s sway, both Huffer and Puar show that his body of work is a source of ongoing insight and agitation – that Foucault’s legacy is multivalent, twisting and turning as different parts of this corpus are made to surface, written over, and recontextualized so that they may precipitate new forms of critical political work.

Picking up and twisting the possibilities opened up by the critique of the repressive hypothesis, the strand of American queer theory that emerged out of literary theory and criticism focused on teasing out the possibilities of desire and the power of irony. Integral to new forms of queer publicity and activism in the 1960s and early 1970s (think of the Stonewall protests in 1969 and the first Pride March in 1970), these rhetorical resources were renewed again in the 1980s as the escalation of HIV/AIDS amongst gay men and other marginalized groups, including IV drug users and racialized groups, under the actively neglectful eye of the state, made critique and community organizing matters of urgency. In 1976, Leo Bersani’s *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* had begun to question the necessity and wisdom of the coherent ego and to articulate an ethics out of self-fragmentation, and, in 1981, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick published *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, which attuned critics of literature and popular culture alike to the homosocial erotic dynamics of ostensibly heterosexual love triangles. In his essay marking the twentieth anniversary (and conclusion) of Duke University Press’s *Series Q*, Michael Warner posits that a decadently twisted, sustainedly ironic style was the defining and most salient feature of queer theory as it rose to prominence in the 1980s (Warner 2012). If Sedgwick’s 1990 *Epistemology of the Closet* anchored the field in Wildean and Proustian irony, then these predecessors helped her simultaneously to unground it through the elaboration of paradoxical distinctions – homosexuality as both “universal” and “minoritizing” – and seemingly simple “axioms” – “people are different from each other” (Sedgwick 2008, 1, 22).

In the 1980s, social critics, artists, and activists mobilized to intervene in the “epidemic of signification” (Treichler) around HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, which overwhelmingly conflated homosexuality with death and disease. Sharp, nuanced, tactical creative work, as exemplified by the public actions of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power),

by the contributions of visual artists such as Marlon Riggs and General Idea, and by Douglas Crimp's edited collection *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (1988), which included essays by Paula Treichler, Simon Watney, and Leo Bersani, became indispensable in the fight for effective sex education and access to essential medicines.⁵ With its asseveration that "there's a great secret about sex: most people don't like it" and its irreverent speculations that trouble identity categories ("Did Michel Foucault and Rock Hudson share the same lifestyle?"), Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave?" questions the "fantasmatic logic" of representations of HIV/AIDS – representations which imagine the epidemic "as if gay men's 'guilt' were the real agent of infection" (Bersani 1988, 210). Bersani continues by interrogating the "form of complicity that consists in accepting, even finding new ways to defend, our culture's lies about sexuality," including the lie that displaces anxieties about sexuality onto gay men as it had once been (and indeed, continues to be) associated with "insatiable, unstoppable female sexuality" (Bersani 1988, 210, 222). For these reasons, Bersani vociferously rejects "pastoral," "redemptive" images that seek to legitimize a range of "diverse" sexualities. Instead, he rereads jouissance (the pleasurable-painful dissolution of self and of meaning) as a form of asceticism that in turn yields an ethical space of both autonomy and care (Bersani 1988, 222). Irony and dissent may become resources, then, these 1980s and early 1990s texts suggest, that can be put to work against a society and a state that dreams of and pursues queer extinction (Sedgwick 1993, 164). Following advances in anti-retroviral drugs in the late 1990s, HIV/AIDS has become, albeit unevenly, a "chronic," manageable condition in the global North. This transformation, along with growing income disparity and an ideological orientation toward consumerism, means that twentieth-century struggles are at risk of being forgotten, as queer artistic and intellectual culture is increasingly gentrified (Schulman 2012).

Despite the evident political urgency that I have been mapping in the responses of Crimp, Bersani, and Sedgwick to HIV/AIDS, the relationship between queer theory and Marxism arrives to us now as a divided one. In her 1997 essay "Merely Cultural?" Judith Butler describes and contests the tendency within 1990s Marxist thought to see queer subjects not as centrally implicated in economic structures but, rather, as simply the product of cultural contingencies. She highlights in particular Gayle Rubin's repositioning of kinship – including the position of those who are imagined as transgressing kinship norms – as illustrating the inextricability of the economic and the cultural. More broadly, Butler's argument in "Merely Cultural?" gestures to socialist feminism of the 1970s and 1980s as the site of a deep and nuanced engagement, making a case for the salience of the range of work that Hennessey and Ingraham archive in their anthology. In order to reconstruct neglected Marxist–queer theory interconnections of the 1980s, we can also look to John D'Emilio's 1983 essay "Capitalism and Gay Identity" (and to its influence on contemporary thinkers such as Lisa Duggan and Kevin Floyd). D'Emilio considers "the relationship between capitalism and the family" as "fundamentally contradictory": capitalism makes it possible to live outside the family, but capitalism also needs the family to reproduce labor, resulting in a high degree of "social instability" and a need for scapegoats (D'Emilio 1993, 474). To think beyond the scapegoat role and beyond assimilation requires "defending" and "expanding" but also finding new, more equitable ways of structuring the "social terrain" of life outside of the nuclear family (D'Emilio 1993, 474–475). Yet, as Puar reminds us, one of the urgent questions bequeathed by the liberatory arc of D'Emilio's narrative is how such an expansion of

“social terrain” – and the comfort it is imagined to offer – comes at the ethical and material cost of a “pernicious” division between normative homosexual subjects and Orientalized, presumed straight, terrorist bodies (Puar 2007, 4, 32).

Incendiary Legacies

The question of “who is a philosopher,” and of how we understand when and where theoretical contributions are being made, is key to how we map the critical roots of gender and sexuality, 1949–1990. Infusing the figure of the philosopher with passion and irreverence, Foucault writes of “the masked philosopher” in terms that imbricate “curiosity” and “care” (Foucault 1988, 328). Curiosity (the speculative, questing, non-moralizing imagination) and care (ethical conduct towards others) combine, priming our senses and critical faculties not only “to look at the same things in a different way” but also to embrace an openness and a sense of responsibility towards that “which might exist” otherwise, elsewhere, or in the future (Foucault 1988, 328).⁶ The story of gender and sexuality from 1949–1990 persists not just in the debates and concepts we know and the ones we might want to reactivate; it is also affective, intimate, textually mobilized and mobilizing. Seeing writing as a form of praxis, many theorists of gender and sexuality have tested the limits of style and genre, endeavoring to challenge “epistemic violence” and make manifest “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault 2003, 6–8; cf. Stryker 2006).

For filmmaker, creative writer, and theorist Trinh Minh-ha, writing facilitates forms of escape and transformation by “tracing” the desires that take us beyond ascribed categories of being: “To write is to become. Not to become a writer (or a poet), but to become, intransitively. Not when writing adopts established keynotes or policy, but when it traces for itself lines of evasion” (Minh-ha 1989, 18–19). As Huffer suggests, Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* evacuated and stretched sexuality into a thin network of circulating forces. But the writing commitments and experiments of scholars in the field of gender and sexuality seek something fleshier. Alarcón’s contribution to *This Bridge* makes a similar point, summarizing the purpose of Chicana literature as “putting flesh back on the object,” and Robyn Wiegman sees writing-as-praxis operating in Sedgwick’s language:

so thick the reader is quite literally wading through it, caught or caught off guard by its hallucinating undertow. Her writing *evokes* as much, if not more so than it argues. And always it is contradiction that galvanizes her – between what people say and what they do, what they hope for and how they live, what they theorize and what they feel, what is done to them and what they do to themselves and to others. (Wiegman 2010, n.p.; emphasis in original)

In Wiegman’s view, there is an ethics implicit in Sedgwick’s evocative prose, “a compounding of complexity” that shows how “the work of living is always a negotiation between the possible and the intractable, which is to say between the incommensurabilities of desire and the world in which our desire must nonetheless live” (Wiegman 2010, n.p.). In drawing our attention to the messiness of living in a flawed and too-often hostile world, Wiegman elicits a crucial reminder of the limits of identity and

representation, a concern that drives her critique of “identity knowledges” and of the constraints of “legibility” in her 2012 book *Object Lessons* (Wiegman 2012, 2).

The political and ethical necessity of suspending the desire for clear “identity knowledges” is not limited to the sphere of the writerly, but has multiple histories, including histories that emerge from postcolonial studies as it encounters Marxism and subaltern studies. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s 1988 essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” seeded corrosive doubts about whether representational logics could ever admit subaltern knowledges beyond what the native informant is asked to supply in the service of the governing colonial power’s interests. Remobilizing these Spivakian questions, Eva Cherniavsky endeavors to make us curious again about a left politics of gender and sexuality for the twenty-first century: “if left solidarity – the prospect of ‘speaking with’ – beckons as the shape of our own political desire, the subaltern is not – cannot be – the place where we already know to invest it” (Cherniavsky 2011, 160). What do “subaltern tactics” look like, sound like, “at the limits of the political” (Cherniavsky 2011, 160)? At the same time, destabilizing identity knowledges and prioritizing attention to embodiment are not panaceas – indeed they can be power plays. As Ann DuCille astutely observes in her 1994 essay “The Occult of True Black Womanhood,” the 1980s and early 1990s saw a “critical stampede” towards studying black women’s texts; in the process, the texts that black feminist critics of the 1970s had worked to revive (the recovery of novelist and oral historian Zora Neale Hurston’s work is a prominent example) became appropriated as the “material” on which white feminists and male theorists could base their philosophical thinking and out of which they could accumulate cultural capital (DuCille 1994, 74, 77). DuCille’s critique is motivated by the question of who can be trusted “to handle with care the sacred text of me and mine” (87) – a query that amplifies with Audre Lorde’s insistence that “*survival is not an academic skill*” (Lorde 1984, 112; emphasis in original). The knowledge and the erotic and social relations that make survival possible derive from lived experience, and academic work that does not honor struggles for survival, along with the knowledges that they represent, is rightly to be queried.

Concurrently, autobiography studies began to critically reinvent itself in the 1980s in, for example, the work of Sidonie Smith (1987; feminist and African American studies) and Françoise Lionnet (1989; postcolonialism, métissage). After all, some of the most powerful, felt critiques of prevailing norms of gender and sexuality – of bodies as historically inscribed sites of subjugated knowledge – get written out in the form of self-portraits, autoethnographic narratives, and anecdotes that sometimes interrupt or offer alternatives to scholarly prose. As invoked in her essays and as detailed in her “biomythography” *Zami* (1982), Lorde’s politics of survival and of angry/erotic knowledge begins in her Grenadian working-class parents’ home, moves to factory work, and engages the struggles – the pleasures, learning, and losses – of black bohemian life in 1950s Greenwich Village. Lorde is not alone in imbricating life writing and cultural critique: Joan W. Scott (1992) pivots on Samuel Delany’s memoir *The Motion of Light in Water* (1988) to ask what critical possibilities risk being lost when “experience” is taken as self-evident rather than constructed; Foucault meditates on the “unrecorded, even infamous life histories”; Fanon writes his struggle against Mayotte Capecia’s autobiography of her life as a Martiniquaise, finding it excessively personal and confessional; and Butler interweaves allusions to her own education, trouble-making, and failure.

Some autobiographical contributions forcefully return us to the question of radically reorganizing the world. In a chapter from her book *I Am Woman* (1988) entitled “Another Side of Me,” Lee Maracle (Stó:lō Nation) intertwines a Marxist politic with Indigenous life and thought. While leftist movements are pervasively implicated in the settler-colonial foundations of capitalism and therefore tend to replicate a “stratified, linear, and racist” worldview that justifies appropriation of labor, value, land, and knowledge, Maracle notes that Native Marxist leaders have “courageously fought to analyze our history so that we could change it” (Maracle 1996, 109). This radical lineage generates, for Maracle, an Indigenous feminist approach to theorizing epistemic and political “revolution”: “Revolution means to turn around,” for “Every time Native people form a circle they turn around. They move forward, not backward into history. We don’t have to ‘go back to the land.’ We never left it” (Maracle 1996, 109). This profound image of continuous dwelling on the land summons up the importance of personal and communal sovereignty over spirit (and refusal to do the work of safeguarding a comfortable world for settlers), a determination that Maracle ties not only to Native Marxism but to matrilineal teachings: “I don’t remember my grandmother telling me there was any virtue in surrendering my spirit, so I don’t” (Maracle 1996, 116). Just over two decades earlier, writer and activist James Baldwin, a powerful public voice in the Civil Rights movement, made an ethical-political appeal that resonates with Maracle’s call to assemble the diverse resources needed to change the world. In 1963, writing on his Harlem youth, Baldwin foretold “the fire next time” in order to make an ethical appeal: violence and bloodshed are America’s fate, unless “we – and I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of others – do not falter in our duty now” (Baldwin 1993, 105). While Baldwin’s simile here may be read as leveraging liberal-period discourses of interracial love as social and political solvent, a deeper implication is the imperative to draw on passion – what Lorde calls our “energy in the present” – to reconstitute what it is possible to know, feel, and imagine doing differently in a shared world overdetermined by racial, sexual, and gendered histories of domination and violence.

This incomplete, multi-edged genealogy of theories of gender and sexuality, 1949–1990, provisionally concludes by thinking with Roderick Ferguson and with Sara Ahmed about the politics of inclusion and resistance. On the sobering side, Ferguson highlights how neoliberalism co-opts aspirations articulated by the civil rights, feminist, and gay liberation movements of the mid-twentieth century, pressing desires for equality and inclusion into the logics of calculation and administration. Butler anticipated some of these dangers in her 1990 preface to *Gender Trouble*:

This inquiry seeks to affirm those positions on the critical boundaries of disciplinary life. The point is not to stay marginal, but to participate in whatever network of marginal zones is spawned from other disciplinary centers and which, together, constitute a multiple displacement of those authorities. The complexity of gender requires an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary set of discourses in order to resist the domestication of gender studies or women studies within the academy and to radicalize the notion of feminist critique. (Butler 1990, xi)

Today, as we face an era of women's and gender studies and ethnic studies program cuts together with an appetite for imagery that can help to package and market the university as diverse and inclusive, it seems that *Gender Trouble* may have been underestimating the forces of "domestication." Baldwin's 1963 caveat that it makes no sense to aspire "to be integrated into a burning house" (Baldwin 1993, 94) remains resonant and sobering in this context.

Nevertheless, there is substantial – even crucial – critical nourishment to be found in revisiting this period. In her 2010 essay "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)," Ahmed revives the disavowed figure of the "feminist-as-lesbian." Drawing on Lorde and Beauvoir, as well as on Adrienne Rich's challenge to be "disloyal" to "civilization," Ahmed makes a political call for oppositional work, thought, and feeling in the face of institutions, including the family and the university, that would frame all unhappiness or dissent as individual fault or maladaptation, or as a failure to concede to neoliberal diversity-washing and to leave those angry twentieth-century battles behind (Ahmed 2010, n.p.). Willingness to voice and publicly live out dissent is a necessary ingredient if the political imagination is to be "rekindled" (Lorde 1984, 136). Theorists of gender and sexuality from 1949–1990 implore us now to imagine and attend to different kinds of "fire": the deadly, consuming force stoked by inequitable nations, institutions, and epistemological frameworks finds its double – and, we might hope, more than its match – in calls for passion, transformation, and ethical life.⁷

- see CHAPTER 13 (FEMINISM); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY)

Notes

- 1 By engaging with influential black feminist, Chicana, Indigenous, postcolonial, and queers-of-color writing, this chapter endeavors to unsettle a whitened account of theories of gender and sexuality. There is no doubt, however, that a less U.S.-centric, more fully transnational, account of feminist and queer movements is an important and multifaceted undertaking, warranting ongoing, in-depth scholarship. The work of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan and of Chandra Mohanty and M. Jacqui Alexander provides important guides.
- 2 It was in the early 1970s, more than twenty years after the publication of *The Second Sex*, that Beauvoir publicly declared her allegiance as a feminist, joined the pro-choice movement in France, revealed her abortion history, and helped to found the journal *Questions Féministes/Feminist Issues* that went on to publish much materialist feminist scholarship, including the Marxist feminist writings of Christine Delphy and the lesbian feminist essays of Monique Wittig.
- 3 There are several, ironically interconnected suppressions masking this line of influence, notes Simons, for, "[h]aving contributed to the silencing of Zora Neale Hurston, his [Wright's] own influence in France has been obscured by the sexist erasure of Beauvoir's philosophical achievement" (Simons 1999, 184).
- 4 For Shulamith Firestone (1970) and for Monique Wittig (1981), Beauvoir's text was pivotal because it limns radical possibilities for difference, i.e., for lesbian being. Firestone reads Beauvoir as authorizing a view of sexual and reproductive oppression as foundational; that is, as the universal antecedents upon which economic and racial

oppression are built. This is a view that Gloria I. Joseph contests in her 1983 review of Angela Davis's *Women, Race, and Class* (1981), which underscores Davis's point that when they claim that sexism is "the ultimate oppression," twentieth-century feminists such as Firestone and Susan Brownmiller perpetuate racism and ignore the "histories, experiences, and material needs of Black and working-class women" (Joseph 1983, 134–136). Citations of Adrienne Rich and Betty Friedan's attention to questions of racial oppression vary considerably, with Thompson reminding us of the way this work engaged, at times, in a proto-intersectional analysis, but with DuCille pointing out that whiteness remains the erotic center of Rich's work, despite her call to be "disloyal to civilization" (DuCille 1994, 83–84).

- 5 For more on ACT UP, see www.actuporalhistory.org/. For a timeline of visual art as HIV/AIDS activism, see <https://www.visualaids.org/history>.
- 6 With thanks to Janice Hladki for her vast knowledge of feminisms and "other" Foucaults.
- 7 Thanks to Daniel Coleman, Amber Dean, Janice Hladki, and Jasbir Puar for pivotal reading suggestions; to Christien Garcia, Don Goellnicht, S. Trimble, and Peter Walmsley for astute comments on earlier versions; and to Sarah Blacker and Imre Szeman for editorial finesse and patience.

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7

Delhi/Ahmednagar Fort – Washington, DC/Birmingham Jail – Pretoria/Robben Island 1947–1994; or, Race, Colonialism, Postcolonialism

Neil ten Kortenaar

Three of the most famous speeches of the twentieth century were made in English by men in different hemispheres within two decades at mid-century. The words of Jawaharlal Nehru, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela together tell an important story about how in the course of less than five decades colonialism and racism came to be irrevocably identified as a single enemy common to many and global in reach. The speeches by Nehru, King, and Mandela, one to inaugurate an assembly to draw up a new constitution, another addressed to a mass demonstration that had taken over the Mall in the capital city, and the third from the prisoner's dock at a trial for treason, all used the symbols and rituals associated with law and state to fight the colonial state and racist laws.

On August 14, 1947, at the first meeting of the new Indian Constituent Assembly, Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed the country's independence with these words:

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.

Spoken by the newly elected prime minister on the legally designated occasion, those words accomplished what they said: they performed independence, which was duly accorded at midnight when the Union Jack was lowered and a new tricolor raised. Nehru's oration was self-consciously about the capacity of words to do things: to declare independence but also to make a promise. In 1885 the members of the Indian National Congress had taken on a debt to themselves and to all their fellow would-be citizens, and made a wager on the direction of history. Their promise was to overturn almost two hundred years of British rule in India.

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., the charismatic leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, delivered a speech to 250,000 supporters of civil rights for black Americans from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Ever since the

successful Montgomery, Alabama bus boycotts of 1955, King had been accepted by people within and outside of the civil rights movement as its face and voice. His philosophy of non-violent resistance to segregation and discrimination commanded overwhelming authority among the many allied associations organizing demonstrations, boycotts, and voters registration drives. As King's speech pointed out in an echo of the Gettysburg Address, "five score years" after the Emancipation Proclamation had declared the end of slavery in the United States, blacks remained second-class citizens. The "promissory note" of the Constitution, recognizing the "inalienable rights" of all, had not been honored. King's look backward was matched by a prophetic gaze forward to equality for all Americans in the famous "I have a dream" sequence.

Less than a year later, on April 20, 1964, Nelson Mandela made a speech at his second trial for treason (the Rivonia trial) to explain why he and the African National Congress (ANC), the multiracial movement founded in 1912 to oppose the white supremacist South African state, had abandoned its philosophy of non-violence and embarked on a program of sabotage and guerilla warfare. In 1960, after the shootings by police of black demonstrators at Sharpeville, the ANC had been declared an illegal organization. In response to the ever-increasing levels of legal segregation, known as apartheid, devised by the governing National Party, the ANC founded an armed resistance movement, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). Mandela's speech, however, was not a fiery declaration of war but, like Nehru's and King's, an appeal to universal principles and the tribunal of history: "The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices – submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa."

The three speeches confirmed the institutions of the state, in particular the law, even as they contested the current regime and its racist law. Mandela declared that he admired "the British Parliament as the most democratic institution in the world" and "the independence and impartiality of its judiciary." All three speeches displayed a self-conscious sense of making history. They were in English, recorded and, in King's case, televised, and self-consciously staged. The intended audiences included those whom Nehru, King, and Mandela were mobilizing, but also the international media, the leaders and citizens of other states, and future generations. King and Mandela were urging racists in power to recognize that a global movement for decolonization and racial equality had rendered them anachronistic. The three speakers configured events into persuasive stories that have been repeated the world over, in history books, novels, films, and television series, as well as in other speeches. Most startling, in retrospect, is the truth of their presumption: the world really did change, "not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially."

Two of the three speakers were lawyers and became heads of newly constituted states. Two subsequently won Nobel Peace Prizes. All three, however, had spent time in prison and two would spend more time in prison after their speeches, one of them twenty-six years more. Time in a colonial prison was almost a job requirement for the first presidents or prime ministers of decolonized states. Nehru and King made incarceration, their own and that of the militants they organized, integral to their political strategy. The names of the penal institutions that held Nehru, King, and Mandela are as famous as their speeches. While in prison for mounting the anti-colonialist Quit India campaign, Nehru wrote *The Discovery of India*. King wrote his famous defense of civil disobedience, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," four months before his speech in Washington. The reversal from criminal to head of state, from breaking the law to making it,

epitomizes the revolution that was decolonization and the civil rights struggle. My title highlights speeches and prisons rather than, as it might have done, battles, massacres, or mass movements of peoples, because decolonization and the movement for civil rights were struggles not *against* states but *for* control of the state. Nehru, King, and Mandela fought for citizenship for colonial subjects, self-determination for colonial territories, and a law hewing closer to justice.

Colonialism

In 1945, at the end of World War II, the world map was painted in large swaths of a few colors indicating that almost all of Africa and significant parts of Asia and the Caribbean were ruled by European states, especially Britain and France, but also the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal. Within the next twenty-five years, more than a hundred new members assumed seats in the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the world map came to be divided almost without remainder into sovereign states. In 1947 India became the first non-settler colony outside Europe to win independence in the twentieth century. (Burma and Egypt had won independence earlier but had never been as integrated into the British Empire.) In 1948 Ceylon (later renamed Sri Lanka) followed. The Netherlands recognized Indonesia's independence in 1949. In 1957 the Gold Coast, renamed Ghana, became the first sub-Saharan African colony to win independence in the twentieth century, but by 1960 most of French Africa, the Belgian Congo, and Nigeria were independent. Decolonization can be regarded as complete with the release of Mandela from prison in 1990, the end of white minority rule in South Africa, and the first elections there with universal suffrage in 1994.

Here it is usual to add a footnote acknowledging the many exceptions that remain as colonies, but such territories are for the most part tiny in area or population, are occupied by their neighbors not by overseas states, or are ambivalent about political autonomy. The 500-year colonization of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas continues, but in that case the colonizers are themselves former colonies, and the quest for self-determination and justice must find solutions other than the nation-state. The decolonization of overseas empires has ceased to be a cause with which to rally the world, and the sovereign state where all are equal before the law, the goal fought for by Nehru and Mandela, has largely run its course as a solution to political injustice.

India and South Africa were both part of the *Second* British Empire, acquired around the time or just after the loss of the Thirteen Colonies. The first incarnation of European overseas empires, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, had utterly reshaped the Americas by the annihilation or radical displacement of indigenous peoples, the mass use of slave labor on plantations, the large-scale redistribution of people in the form of settlers and slaves, and the creation of new creole (native-born white) populations. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* identifies the sugar plantations in the New World as the first sites of modern labor, prototypes for industrial factories. Eric Williams, later the first prime minister of Trinidad, argued that the primitive accumulation of capital in the sugar colonies of the West Indies made possible the Industrial Revolution in England. Over centuries the trade for slaves in West and Central Africa gave rise to militarized polities and fomented war there, beginning the process that Walter Rodney has called "how Europe underdeveloped Africa," a succinct expression of what later

was known as dependency theory. Mercantilist empires established by trading companies also forged permanent sea links between European ports and trading posts in Asia.

Those first European empires changed the world utterly, but in a fifty-year period from 1776 to 1825, Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal lost vast empires in the New World, as first the Thirteen Colonies, then Haiti, and finally the continental territories of Spanish America achieved their independence by force of arms. (Brazil's case is complicated because the Portuguese monarchy moved there.) Britain and Spain lost their colonies to revolutions by creole populations, but France lost the world's wealthiest colony, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), to the only long-term successful slave revolt in world history.

C. L. R. James's 1938 biography of the Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture signals by its title, *The Black Jacobins*, the extent to which the new ideals of liberty and equality resounded back and forth across the ocean (see Scott 2004). The 1776 American Declaration of Independence and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen were heard around the world as calls to the self-determination of states and the extension of citizenship to all. The conflation by both documents of the rights of universal Man with those of the Citizen of a particular state entailed, however, a manifest contradiction. Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, owned slaves. Napoleon, whose conquests in Europe spread the Enlightenment ideals of the French Revolution, also restored slavery in Haiti after the Revolution had abolished it, though not before Haitians declared their own freedom. Benedict Anderson (1983) has attributed the origins of nationalism, a new identification by the individual with the state, to the horizontal fellow feeling that developed among Spanish American creole elites whose careers were defined by the borders and the capital of the colonial territories they were born into. That fellow feeling, however, excluded indigenous peoples or the descendants of Africans. Haiti would be shunned and demonized for the next century by its neighbors, who feared its example would inspire demands for black equality everywhere.

The new republican political ideals presumed a world scale commensurate with empire. So did a contemporary political movement that sought the abolition of slavery in the name of a common humanity, as defined by Protestant Christian principles in Britain and Enlightenment ideals in France. Bowing to political pressure, the British declared the slave trade illegal in 1807 and emancipated slaves throughout the Empire in 1838. Emancipation in the Caribbean relics of the first French Empire occurred with the Revolution of 1848. The end of slavery required civil war in the United States. Slavery was finally abolished in the remains of the Spanish Empire in 1886 and in Brazil in 1888. The abolition movement succeeded despite the economic profitability of slavery because, as David Brion Davis (2006) has argued, slavery offended against the tenets of emerging capitalism: involuntary servitude on the plantation became ideologically intolerable when the triumph of capitalism demanded wage labor, defined as free and sold in the market.

The anti-slavery movement, which mobilized ordinary citizens against legalized injustice perpetrated in other places, often overseas, was the precursor to the international human rights movements of the twentieth century. It is tempting therefore to trace a line of progress in liberty and international solidarity from the first revolutions in France and the Americas, through the abolition of slavery, to the second wave of decolonization a hundred and fifty years later. This is tempting but misleading,

for the nineteenth century also saw the rise of vast new European empires in Asia and Africa covering more square miles than the old empires ever had. These new empires, unlike the first European empires in the New World, were the creations of the same states that saw themselves at the forefront of world history *because* they had overthrown or tamed kings and *because* they had abolished slavery.

In the nineteenth century, democracy justified empire. To be sure, Britain and France conquered empires to commandeer resources and compel labor, settle surplus populations, and control trade, but the new empires also had to justify themselves to citizens in terms of democratic principles. Bourgeois Britain and France claimed a right to conquer and rule other peoples because, as democracies, they judged themselves superior to oriental or primitive despotisms. Peoples whose weak character required tyrants to rule them needed democratic conquerors, or so those conquerors argued. Uday Singh Mehta (1999) has pointed out how much the ideological justification of British imperialism in India was the work of liberal philosophers associated with the extension of democracy at home. Britain established its first West African colony, Sierra Leone, to resettle slaves rescued from slave ships. Britain and France justified their expansion into the interior of Africa from longstanding trading posts on the coast by abolishing indigenous slavery and fighting the Arab slave trade. In the name of free trade, Britain also established economic control over much of South America, a control contested by the United States asserting its own hemispheric interests.

The Second British Empire eventually included large parts of West, East, and Southern Africa, as well as South Asia, parts of Southeast Asia, Canada, and Australia. In the nineteenth century, the French invaded and conquered Algeria, and then Indo-China and the largest chunks of West and Central Africa. Germany, Belgium, and Italy, new states themselves, felt their dignity required the acquisition of overseas empires like Britain and France had, and hastened to join the Scramble for Africa in the 1880s. Portugal in Africa and the Netherlands in the East Indies also transformed their trade-based imperial networks into colonial territories with settlers, plantations, laws, and a bureaucratic administration.

The United States had no sooner won its independence than it embarked upon its own territorial expansion by conquest and settlement. Since this was across land not water, it was conceptualized as national integration – every new acquisition became a state like the original thirteen – and not as the repugnant political form of empire. Nevertheless, as in the European empires, indigenous peoples and the descendants of Africans did not have the rights of white American men.

Race

The apogee of European empire was the first decade of the twentieth century, when it appeared possible that China, having been forced to make humiliating trade concessions over the course of half a century, would be divided among the European powers. The same decade was also the highpoint of white supremacy. Ever since Columbus European colonialism had relied on ideologies of race to justify colonialism. In late medieval Spain ideas of race distinguished people by religion, not by physical appearance. The difference of Jews and Muslims from Christians was imagined as something in the blood and therefore hidden but also ineluctable. When Spain colonized the Americas, those ideas

of race informed its relation to other peoples, but in empires that crossed water differences in physical appearance became the most significant indices of a hierarchical scale of humanity. In the New World, most descendants of Africans were slaves and, after an initial period when the indigenous were enslaved, soon *only* Africans and their descendants were slaves, so race was indelibly associated with status. In the course of the nineteenth century race acquired a scientific veneer that made it a more consistent and more powerful ideology *after* the abolition of slavery. The political rights accorded former slaves in the program of Reconstruction after the American Civil War were systematically and viciously eliminated in the former slave states in the decades just before and just after 1900 and replaced with enforced segregation called Jim Crow.

The new racism, as modern as the anti-slavery struggle, supposedly explained why the colonized were not ready for democracy. The Second British and French Empires, like their predecessors, included settler colonies where Europeans and their descendants took land from peoples of other races. Where settlers formed the majority, as in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, they eventually adopted ideologies of paternalism or assimilation toward the indigenous population (though not toward the descendants of Africans). Where the proportions were reversed and settlers were the minority, as in Algeria, South Africa, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Kenya, those who ruled felt more fear than guilt, racist ideologies were more openly avowed, and violence in order to intimidate was more prevalent. The Black Belt of Alabama and Mississippi, those counties where blacks were the majority, was also where racial terror held the most sway.

The abolition of slavery by the British in 1838 deeply offended the descendants of Dutch settlers in South Africa, first called Boers and later Afrikaners, many of whom migrated into the interior to escape British laws. A forcibly unified South Africa became independent in 1910 with a franchise limited to whites and to Coloureds (mixed-race people) from the Cape Colony. Apartheid became the official government program upon the election of the National Party in 1948, the year *after* India achieved its independence. The apartheid regime set up so-called homelands (Bantustans), semi-autonomous entities reserved for black people, which were in part inspired by the Canadian colonial regime of Indian Reserves. Rather than a meagre protection for the indigenous minority, however, Bantustans were a strategy for containing the majority.

As ideas of empire and race circulated across the Atlantic, so did ideas of liberty and racial solidarity. Much of the intellectual groundwork against racism and colonialism was laid by Africans and the descendants of Africans in the United States and France, where liberty was a foundational political concept. From Frederick Douglass in the nineteenth century, through W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century, to the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, there is a long African American tradition of thinking through the concepts of race and freedom. The Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey led a Harlem-based Back to Africa movement that inspired later generations of black nationalists. In Paris in the 1930s Aimé Césaire from Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal started a creative, intellectual, and political movement called *Négritude* to affirm the dignity of Africans and African culture (see Edwards 2003). A series of five Pan-African Congresses – the first held in London in 1900 and the last in Manchester in 1945 – brought together black leaders from the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe to articulate a common vision of racial justice.

Decolonization

The second decade of the twentieth century saw a world war between the overseas empires of Britain and France and the multicultural land empires of the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans. A million Indians served in the British army, as many more came from the dominions of Canada and Australia, and half a million Africans served in the French army. World War I ended with an affirmation of the principle of national self-determination by the leaders of the world's largest empires. The peace treaty dismantled the Austrian and Turkish empires to create new states in Europe that had never existed before and new territories in the Middle East administered by Britain and France under League of Nations mandates without fixed terms. In a paradox symptomatic of colonialism, Canada and Australia each remembered the war fought in Europe as the birth of a new nationhood. Also newly independent after the war was Ireland, England's oldest colony whose experience of partition, civil war, terrorism, and military occupation foreshadowed the experience of decolonized states in Africa and Asia.

By 1919 land-based empire was universally regarded as anachronistic, but empire that crossed water could claim to be the epitome of modernity. Before the war the British and French empires had preferred to interfere as little as possible with subject peoples and to rule through traditional rulers, a policy the British called "indirect rule" and the French "*association*." After the war, by contrast, overseas colonialism was increasingly justified by a "*mission civilisatrice*" or the "development" of so-called backward peoples.

The overseas empires of Britain and France claimed modernity for themselves, but, significantly, imperial conquests in the twentieth century were unable to win legitimacy, were short-lived, and inspired near-apocalyptic wars. With the closing of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had taken over by force what remained of the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean and the Philippines yet never understood itself to be an empire. Japan, because it had never been colonized, was able to embark on a program of successful modernization along western lines, and in the first half of the twentieth century conquered an empire in Korea, then Manchuria, the rest of China, and finally Southeast Asia. In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia, the only African state never to be colonized. Césaire (1955) and Hannah Arendt (1951) have explained World War II as the rebounding of colonialism onto the colonizers: Germany, having lost its colonies in Africa in 1919, unleashed in Europe the same forces of territorial expansion and racial terror that had produced genocide against the Herero in South-West Africa (now Namibia) and unrestrained war in Tanganyika (now mainland Tanzania). Europeans who denounced Nazism, wrote Césaire, did not denounce "the crime against man" so much as "the crime against the white man" and the fact that Hitler "applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa."

Africans who served in the French army in World War I were among the first to demand the rights of citizenship. When the Allied victors in World War II claimed a moral victory over fascism and imperialism, the lesson was not lost on the British and French colonial troops. The Atlantic Charter of 1941 recognized the "right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." During the war the core of Free France lay in Equatorial Africa, a vulnerability reflected in the Brazzaville Declaration of 1944 which made France and its colonies partners. The Japanese fostered anti-European nationalists in the colonies they conquered, and their occupation in turn

inspired nationalists. Aung San in Burma, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies seized upon the retreat of Japan to proclaim independence before the expelled British, French, and Dutch vainly restored their empires.

The military violence by which the imperialists had originally conquered, which was still within living memory at mid-century in most of West, East, and Southern Africa, was unleashed anew in Madagascar, Vietnam, Algeria, Cameroon, Malaya, and Kenya in the form of counterinsurgency, mass resettlement, and slaughter. Just as in 1800 white rulers on both sides of the Atlantic had feared Haiti, so in Africa the colonizers disparaged as primitive and atavistic all resistance led by the rulers of precolonial polities, by religious figures like Ahmadou Bomba in Senegal or Simon Kimbangu in Congo, or by ethnic groups, like the Shona in Rhodesia in the 1890s, or the Gikuyu who fought the Mau Mau rebellion to recover land in Kenya in the 1950s. Long and bitter wars of liberation were required to free Indonesia, Vietnam, Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique from Dutch, French, and Portuguese rule. The wars to achieve decolonization were most protracted where there were settler populations, and the former British colonies of Rhodesia and South Africa were the last African states to achieve black majority rule.

In the majority of colonies, however, as in India, independence came after a prolonged political struggle that did not extend to war. Britain did not lose a colonial war in the twentieth century (Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army, supported by Germany and Japan, was easily defeated in Burma). France won the Battle of Algiers, the subject of the famous film by Gillo Pontecorvo, by using counterinsurgency tactics like torture. The European empires failed primarily when they lost legitimacy. In 1915, Gandhi returned to India from South Africa where he had developed new political strategies for demanding equal rights for Indians based on non-violent resistance (Gandhi 1921). In the next few decades, the Indian National Congress under Gandhi and Nehru won momentum for decolonization through non-violent mass action and a willingness to endure violence on the part of the colonized that put to the test the willingness of the oppressor to wield violence.

The men who won independence in Asia and Africa had all been, like Nehru and Gandhi, educated in Europe or America. The majority, like Nehru, Gandhi, and Mandela, were lawyers. Since the British and French proclaimed the ideals of liberty and equality, nationalists in the colonies took them at their word and demanded participation in the regimes that governed them and, when that was withheld, self-determination for the colonial territory. The contradictions of liberal empire raise important questions: was liberalism a mere ideological smokescreen for imperial power or did liberalism itself inspire empire? And can liberal democratic ideals further anti-colonial struggle or do they inevitably replicate imperial power?

Those seeking independence from the bourgeois empires often found alternative inspiration in Marxism. Lenin (1939) had identified imperialism as the latest stage of capitalism, which sought markets for its goods, and Césaire identified the colonizer with the bourgeois and the colonized with the proletariat, the universal subject of history. The Revolutions in China in 1949 and in Cuba ten years later were taken as models throughout Africa and Latin America. However, the invocation of ideology was also a choice of sides in the competition between the superpowers, as the decades of decolonization coincided with the Cold War. At first the global competition for influence speeded up the process of decolonization as the United States, impatient with the

European empires, which it regarded as anachronistic forms of power wielded by small states who had been unable to resist Nazism on their own, pushed the Netherlands, France, Portugal, and even Britain to cede power to nationalist leaders they trusted. Later, however, the Cold War retarded the process of independence, as Portugal and the white settler regimes branded their opponents communists. Nehru and Egypt's Gamal Nasser each sought a "third way" between the two superpowers, and, along with Tito from Yugoslavia, and Sukarno from Indonesia, founded the Non-Aligned Movement. Representatives of twenty-nine African and Asian states met in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, the first transnational conference of people of color. New African and Asian states, as well as Latin American states, tried to play the superpowers against each other, but that game could be risky and ended in devastating proxy wars in Asia in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and in Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The contradictions of race and citizenship that characterized empire shaped anti-colonialism as well. The self that sought national self-determination was defined primarily by the race and the continent, but independence when it came was for the colonial territory. Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister and later president of Ghana, regarded independence as heralding a United States of Africa. Self-determination was only ever accorded to states upon which the colonizer had already bestowed an administration and laws. (The two exceptions are Pakistan and Israel, where groups defined by religion demanded new states that did not correspond to colonial borders.) In the twentieth century, empire was not so much abolished as turned inside out, as the sovereign nation-state, the political form that had been at the center of worldwide empires, became instead the forum and goal of the struggle for decolonization and civil rights. The nation-state, seemingly rational, easily translatable and replicable, and identified with the ends of history itself, triumphed at the expense of all other political options once considered worthy and viable ideals by anti-colonial activists, such as democratic multicultural empires, Pan-African or Pan-Arab federations, or transnational caliphates (Cooper 2005).

The history of civil rights in the United States also highlighted the tension between race and citizenship. Gandhi's strategy of proving the morality of a political end by adhering to superior moral means directly inspired King and the civil rights movement. In Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, Alabama non-violent challenges to racist institutions elicited violent responses by white authorities that made oppression transparent. By contrast, the later race riots of Newark, Detroit, and Los Angeles (Watts) responded more viscerally to violence at the risk of making the sources and direction of violence more opaque. King saw himself as an American who pursued the rights enjoyed by other Americans. He successfully appealed to the Federal government to put pressure on Southern states, and brought test cases to the Supreme Court in order to overturn discriminatory laws. Other African Americans, however, despaired of integration in a racist world. Malcolm X, the charismatic spokesperson for the Nation of Islam and the ideological heir of the Garveyites, saw himself as a black man who happened to be a citizen of the United States (Marable 2011). The Black Panther Party began in the 1960s in Alabama as a political party contesting elections in black-majority constituencies. Their goal was Black Power, real clout by defying a white supremacist world.

In South Africa, the African National Congress, an explicitly interracial movement, joined the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Organization, and the Congress of Democrats (dominated by the Communist Party) in adopting a Freedom Charter in 1955.

Robert Sobukwe, leader of the ANC Youth League, feared, however, that black Africans would never take charge of their own struggle if aligned with whites, however progressive, and broke away to form the Pan African Congress in 1959. It was the PAC that organized the demonstrations against the hated pass laws that were met with shootings by police in Sharpeville. Sobukwe was kept in preventive detention in near solitary confinement on Robben Island and only released when ill health had reduced him as a threat. The legacy of black nationalism then passed to the Black Consciousness movement led by Steve Biko, who was killed by apartheid police in 1976.

The demise of the overseas empires created new nations everywhere, not least in the former imperial metropolises. In 1950 Algeria was constitutionally an integral part of France the way that Alaska and Hawaii are part of the United States: it elected deputies to the National Assembly. French politicians of left and right shared the conception of a trans-Mediterranean republic, ignoring the legalized racial inequality within Algeria. Faced with an unwinnable war, however, President De Gaulle justified decolonization as adhering to the principles of national self-determination and the Rights of Man, as if France and Algeria had always been two separate nations (Shepard 2006). Algerians, it was now accepted, could never be Frenchmen, and Europeans could never be Algerians. The *pieds-noirs* settlers, many of whose ancestors came from Spain, Italy, and Greece, were “repatriated” to France. Everywhere in the decolonizing world (with the exception thus far of South Africa), those who considered that crossing water gave them the right to rule “natives” found that, after decolonization, the act of having crossed water made them foreigners and unwelcome (Mamdani 2001).

In France and Portugal revolts by the colonial army brought down metropolitan regimes and forced new constitutions. For Britain, France, and the Netherlands, the loss of empire required a painful reevaluation of identity. Yet the decades of decolonization also coincided with a tremendous migration from South to North, made possible by the abolition in North America and Western Europe of racist laws that had curtailed immigration. The influx of non-white migrants changed the self-definition of settler colonies like the United States, Canada, and Australia, but also those of the European countries that had formerly held empires. The citizens of the former imperial states had disavowed their empires so thoroughly that they regarded the newcomers from the former colonies as foreigners. The sea change in self-conception fed both new ethnic nationalist and racist movements among the white populations, and new solidarities and claims on the state by immigrants of color.

Postcolonialism

The anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle of Nehru, King, and Mandela persuaded the world that history had a direction and made the world go there. In appealing to historical inevitability, they turned on its head the sense of history propagated by the European empires, which had believed themselves at the forefront of history and thus destined to endure. The centers of capitalism in Europe and the Northern United States increasingly disavowed Rhodesians, Afrikaners, *pieds-noirs*, and Southern segregationists in the United States. The civil rights movement in the United States made racism a charge of immorality that politicians and others dreaded to have leveled against them. Race, of course, continues as much as ever to divide societies, to determine who gets work,

who gets killed or goes to prison, and who makes political decisions and wields economic power, but racial injustice is now less likely to be defended than to have its existence denied. The struggle for justice has largely shifted from the letter of the law to the methods of its enforcement.

No sooner had the European overseas empires withdrawn from most of the globe than the theorizing of colonialism began. The experience of national self-determination was unable to satisfy the hopes it had raised and in many cases bitterly betrayed them. Across the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the new states manifested both a great weakness – they were unable to provide education, housing, and health care – and a concomitant authoritarianism, usually in the form of charismatic or military dictatorships. The economic weakness of former colonies made possible their manipulation by powerful outsiders, whether states or corporations, through a phenomenon called neocolonialism. The second half of the twentieth century saw the world's superpowers engage in new wars of imperial conquest without engaging in imperial rule. The United States and France applied a form of indirect rule, now not to traditional rulers but to sovereign states, whose rulers were sometimes directly installed by the superpowers.

The liberal understanding of history unfolding linearly and producing ever greater freedom and participation by all peoples, the understanding that had once justified empire and later inspired decolonization, was hard put to account for the many ways that inequality among states and within states – especially economic, race-based, and gender-based inequality – persisted after independence. Postcolonialism, the intellectual project to understand colonialism and better resist its effects, considers decolonization not as an event in the past but as a goal projected into the future and brings a powerful critique inspired by Marxism to bear on the economic and political structures within states and among states.

To account for the continuation of inequality and domination, postcolonial theorists point to the psychological and cultural impact of being colonized. Frantz Fanon, born, like Césaire, in Martinique, wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*, a Lacanian-inspired examination of the deformations wrought in the psyche of the black man in racist colonial society. Edward Said, an American literary scholar originally from Palestine, argued that colonialism was accompanied by a discourse that named the cultural other, and in particular, the Arab Muslim other, in debilitating ways that shaped the imaginative conception and the very perception of the world. Said's notion of Orientalism located power in words and invited scholars to regard the entire cultural output of Europe as complicit with colonialism. Colonialism was thus as much the truth of Europe as of Asia and Africa. After Fanon and Said, the task of decolonization could no longer be limited to achieving independence for a state or equality before the law, but required challenging and changing language and thought, image and narrative.

Not least among colonialism's effects had been the spread of European languages around the world: almost all the newly independent states retained English, French, or Portuguese as official languages for purposes of law, education, and administration. Postcolonialism itself arose in university literature and history departments especially in the English-speaking world, including India and Australia, and therefore shared the contradiction built into decolonization: that the theorizing of how to resist empire was conducted in the imperial language. Gayatri Spivak (1999) has argued that the subaltern, the figure at once dominated and excluded by colonial rule, "cannot speak"

because by definition she can only be heard if her speech is translated into terms that those with power can hear and therefore confirms those terms. Spivak's argument is larger than the question of imperial or vernacular languages, but the hegemony of European languages in Africa and the Americas especially, but also in South Asia, cannot be separated from the domination of subalterns (Ngũgĩ 1986).

Since the demise of imperialism was also the triumph of the sovereign state on the world stage, postcolonialism has been preoccupied with the continuities between empire and nation. Achille Mbembe calls the independent colonial territory the "post-colony" with the emphasis not on "post" but on "colony." As early as 1917 Rabindranath Tagore had drawn attention to the pitfalls of the nation-state as a political organization, and in the decades since independence many, including Ranajit Guha, Ashis Nandy, and Partha Chatterjee, have expressed similar skepticism. Not only was the sovereign state inherited from colonialism, but so were intellectual fields such as history or literature. How, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has asked, could Europe be provincialized, i.e., become just one part of the world among many? On the one hand, history as the story of the world made by humans had to be expanded to include more than Europe. But, on the other hand, the very forms of historiography, which emphasized literacy, the coming of the nation-state, and a teleology of modernity, reinforced the centrality of Europe and its political organization. The radical Indian historians known as the Subaltern Studies group focused on alternative archives including oral narrative, the political interests and activities of peasants below the notice of the state, and the deconstruction of the intellectual categories underlying the discipline of history, in particular, the notion that only the nationalist elites who inherited the colonial state made history, the belatedness of India with respect to European states, and the assumption that the sovereign state was the goal of history.

Other intellectuals, however, have feared that the anti-national bent of postcolonialism was doing the border-dissolving work of global capital. Neil Lazarus (2011) argues that the state remains the strongest forum for political resistance in a world where transnational economic and political power is wielded by capital. Fanon, later active as a psychiatrist in Algeria, where he supported the independence war led by the FLN (National Liberation Front), saw the new states as political projects whose realization in violence would forge new people. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he argued that violence was necessary not just to wrest control from settlers and the complicit national bourgeoisie, but also to liberate the psyches of the colonized.

Pace Fanon, it is not certain that those states that won their independence through arms are now better off than those given their independence without war. The people's wars in Vietnam, Algeria, Portuguese Africa, and Zimbabwe were especially cruel because of the obsession on both sides with securing civilian loyalties. Violence has its own dynamic not easily turned on and off, and anti-colonial war has often mutated into civil war or state terror. Many movements for social change around the world now rely on the non-violent strategies of mass action originally developed by the anti-colonial and civil rights struggles. Non-violence, however, has also lost some of its lustre as a philosophy. South Africa, which negotiated the transition to majority rule without a war, is rightly regarded as a miracle, but there is also deep disappointment at how inequality persists. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which operated on the assumption that making the truth public was a value transcending justice and was necessary to approach justice at all, has inspired many similar

commissions around the world, especially in the Americas and Africa. However, the TRC model has also generated skepticism about the capacity of what is called transitional justice to effect change (Sitze 2013).

The academic movement of postcolonial studies coincided with the large-scale human migration from the former colonies to Western Europe and North America. Much of the intellectual work concerning colonialism was done by intellectuals in Britain and the United States born in India, Africa, or the Middle East. Not surprisingly, therefore, postcolonial studies emphasized diaspora and transnationalism and valued notions such as hybridity and ambivalence.

Postcolonialism and critical race theory have addressed the persistence of racism and of race-based inequality after the repeal of racist laws in the United States and the end of apartheid in South Africa. The first task was to discredit race as an intellectual category. Anti-racist critical theory has deconstructed essentialism, the notion that identity corresponded to something internal and inherited, in favor of ideas of social construction or performativity, which understand that identity evolves through human interactions, and is located in language and images and institutions. But, while the knowledge that race is a human construct helped to imagine the abolition of racism, it did not actually destabilize systemic racism. Moreover, racism must be challenged by appealing to race itself as a powerful and attractive force for solidarity and inspiration.

It can appear as if postcolonialism is coming to the end of its energies as an intellectual movement. It had usefully insisted that colonialism was not in the past, but, in attributing tremendous explanatory power to the European empires, it risked making them too powerful to ever be overthrown. Although critical of nation and race, postcolonialism has reinforced both by viewing everything in terms of empire and colony, white and black. Many new phenomena – for example, transnational capital, the environmental crisis, religion's demand for political attention, the rise of China, the Rwanda genocide, and the proliferation of stateless migrants – cannot be accounted for by postcolonialism except reductively. These blind spots do not, however, mean that we have left colonialism behind. Colonialism was not a single all-powerful thing that deformed the world forever; it was complex and multifaceted, and met with many different kinds of reaction. If we are to understand sovereign states today, we still need to understand the empires that established them and the resistance that both empires and states have generated.

- see CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 11 (DIASPORA AND MIGRATION); CHAPTER 19 (INDIGENOUS EPISTEMES); CHAPTER 28 (DECOLONIZATION); CHAPTER 29 (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

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8

Petrograd/Leningrad – Havana – Beijing 1917–1991; or, Marxist Theory and Socialist Practice

Peter Hitchcock

If we were to imagine a place for Marxist theory, Petrograd in February 1917 would offer a tantalizing prospect, although the Bolshevik triumph of October that year over the Alexander Kerensky-led Provisional Government understandably takes precedence. We must be careful not to over-emphasize the fine lines of praxis discernible in the earlier weeklong crucible of revolutionary fervor, in which the last vestiges of the Russian imperial system were defeated and Tsar Nicholas II would have cause to abdicate. Indeed, in some respects the real value of beginning with this extraordinary moment in social change would be to understand its disjunct nature in relation to Marxism, a symptomatic schism between theoretical precepts and the materiality of the event that Marxism itself, in all of its declensions, has never lost (and particularly when it comes to culture, as Marx points out in *The German Ideology*).

Think of this in terms of Lenin's own predicament as he learned of the unfolding crisis in Petrograd while he lived in Zurich. One day after lunch as Lenin sets off for the library, M. G. Bronski arrives to tell him the revolution against the Romanovs has succeeded. The telegrams had been arriving all morning, according to Bronski. "Don't you know anything?" Lenin would confirm the substance of Bronski's claims by consulting local display boards where current newspapers were pinned. True, Lenin had hardly been inactive in the processes manifest in the Petrograd uprising and he would quickly become embroiled in the direct aftermath of the fall of Tsar Nicholas II (redolent in the April Theses and particularly *State and Revolution*), but this instance of dislocation and asynchrony is still powerfully suggestive of the creative and sometimes contradictory tension of theory and practice in Marxist thinking. When Leon Trotsky writes of the "peculiarities of Russia's development" in his *History of the Russian Revolution* he has a similar dialectical sense of non-alignment in mind, particularly since the class interests of a self-conscious proletariat were not the only basis of the Petrograd insurrection (it was substantially more than food riots, of course, and the role of Bolshevism cannot be minimized, but the demonstrations around International Women's Day were just as crucial). From here, it might seem to some a relatively easy jump to the argument that the Soviet period as a whole was premised on a grand coincidence or more harshly a hoax, and that 1917–1991 might now be better viewed as an interregnum in the formation of a hegemonic and properly globalized bourgeoisie (or its abstract

equivalent, now somehow squeezed into the “1%”). While this is a massive evasion of another kind, it too underlines how the history of Marxism and socialism has almost impossibly tangled and contradictory lineaments that give one pause about any putatively standard history.

The answer is not to dispense of such histories via some speculative frenzy or tenacious theoretical bluster, for Marxism is a project rather than a reified instant or event of wild theorization. While these brief notes cannot possibly do justice to the radical implications of a seventy-four-year insurgency in thought and practice (not least because it both exceeds those years and requires an expansive list of names), I want at least to remark upon its mediatory function in the life of Marxist theory, a difference in materialist differentiation that is always and everywhere a challenge about the conditions of social transformation, the very meaning of politics for Marxism, whether in relation to art or to anything else. Rather than being a description or history, for instance, of “Marxist literary criticism” or “Marxist theory” (whose long form is readily and expertly available elsewhere), I offer only a punctum of their radical possibility, one that for me appears, *dissecta membra*, both a provocation and a horizon in the present.

It is one of the great ironies of modern thought that a critique bound to demythologizing is linked historically to a period of mythologization (“the Soviet era”) ostensibly based on the same materialist principles. Perhaps this just proves an ideology cannot adjudicate itself, but the more pertinent issue is about reflexivity between Marxist history, Marxism, and Marxist cultural critique. They can never solve each other’s deficits, but neither can they assume their methodological nuance assures the substance of their truth. When Marx famously declares himself not to be a Marxist he offers a basic acknowledgment that Marxism’s theory and practice are not the substance of individual essence, and never more so than when that individual imagines a world of radical collectivity. Clearly one can ascertain such antinomies in other genealogies of thought, but it is in this period, that of actually existing socialism, where necessary theoretical divergence nevertheless articulates the contours of a material force. This would seem to militate against the idea that a body of theory is best read for its associative effects and yet, since Marxism preexists Marx (a dialectician of materiality cannot simply settle for revolutionary thought, *ex nihilo*) and every social experiment has its vestiges, the lineages of “Marxist theory and socialist practice from Petrograd to Beijing” may best be thought of as a heuristic rather than as a temporal or geographical passage. Such a reading strategy resists the temptation to reconstruct a trajectory as eulogy as if, to borrow from Raymond Williams, one can now sift artifacts because Marxist culture is not in itself being lived (Williams 1968, 310). That the persistence of anti-capitalism in various forms does not necessarily pivot on Marxist principles is a conceptual space that has broadened in the wake of the collapse of “actually existing socialism,” but we are far from saying this signals the foreclosure of socialist practice in what challenges to capitalism can become. Göran Therborn has used the phrase “defiant humility” (Therborn 2010, 180) to describe Marxism’s intellectual stance at this juncture: the first word emphasizes the continued importance of struggle to any putatively Marxist position against socioeconomic forces of oppression and injustice; the second word is less a remark on Marxism’s defeat across the world stage and more a reflection on what future liberation movements must draw from or discard for history to be made.

Taking this route, which bears the impress of a Venn diagram or the crossed paths of a Greimasian square, one is reminded of a classic text of Anglophone Marxist critique,

Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (1974). Within our "lineage," Anderson's book, and much of his work at that time, falls broadly within "the peculiarities of English Marxism," a Marxism then struggling mightily to reconcile its empiricist traditions with the deep divisions of radical German and French thought, and harboring a passionate incredulity towards Althusserian "theoretical practice." Anderson prefaces his project by noting the argument will attempt to negotiate the sharp differences between Marxist historiographers and those of a more explicitly theoretical persuasion, and this, I would argue, has corresponding implications for how we understand constellations of Marxist cultural critique:

The conventional dichotomy between these procedures derives, doubtless, from the widespread belief that an intelligible necessity only inhabits the broadest and most general trends in history, which operate so to speak "above" the multiple empirical circumstances of specific events and institutions, whose actual course or shape becomes by comparison largely the outcome of chance. Scientific laws – if the notion of them is accepted at all – are held to obtain only for universal categories: singular objects are deemed the domain of the fortuitous. (Anderson 1974, 8)

By contrast, Anderson begins with the presupposition there is no "plumb-line between necessity and contingency" (Anderson 1974, 8) and this informs his sense of "lineage" throughout the study. We have to remember, however, the scale and location that to an important degree situate the methodology attempted. The absolutism tracked is principally European and the scale of its impress is pinned to forms of European statehood. The tension in absolutism itself is measured by degree between Western and Eastern Europe (the "plumb-line" that divides the book itself). What is pertinent, therefore, in understanding a particular logic of European state formation is necessarily at odds with the meanings of actually existing socialism, whose lineages are of a more complex and less distinctly European dynamic. This is not Anderson's subject, but it hovers at the edge of Marxist historiography, just as Anderson himself is concerned to signal the efflorescence of absolutism elsewhere (the extended note on Japanese feudalism, followed by the commentary on the rightly contentious Asiatic mode of production, probably the weakest lineage in Marx's thinking but one to which Anderson brings an irrepressible erudite flair). Here we register Anderson's sensitivity to temporal divergence and unevenness that significantly overdetermines all attempts to sharply define critical and cultural theory as *periods* (a *longue durée* perhaps, but one of spaces, long spaces). Anderson ends by underlining a core notion of any self-declared Marxist criticism: "secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the political – not at the economic or cultural – level of society" (Anderson 1974, 11). How one assesses the fate of socialist experiments in the twentieth century is at once bound to an understanding of such political antagonism, while also cleaving to a belief that culture and the economic remain crucially active in that knowledge. It is also an acknowledgment that the reason we can now measure "Petrograd to Beijing" in the first place is the formal and political constituents of class war have become a global abstraction by comparison, one that paradoxically affirms the tenets of the *Communist Manifesto* while obfuscating the means of its materialization. Under "actually existing" globalization, are the workers of the world uniting?

Chapter 6 of *Lineages of the Absolutist State* begins, “We now come to the last, and most durable Absolutism in Europe” (Anderson 1974, 328), by which Anderson means Russia. In the early 1970s this can hardly be an innocent critique, even as it is primarily a deeply historical one. Anderson notes there is a lively discussion among Soviet historians at the time about the formations of Russian absolutism, “the state above the state,” as it was termed and, although an inquiry into its tsarist forms is foregrounded, a conversation about its meaning for Soviet power lurks in the margins. The New Left itself was born in part to address the stark divisions between socialist theory and practice, while at the same time being an extension of its central dilemma. The story is necessarily different within actually existing socialist states, but even after Nikolai Khrushchev’s bold attempts at de-Stalinization, all thinking on practical solutions was articulated through the ideological matrix of the Cold War. Thus, even if we assert that the Russian Revolution dominates political events in the twentieth century, the dialectical problem remains the consonance or consequence of Marxism in that trajectory, a problem that mediates the central dynamic of Marxist cultural theory to the present day.

Anderson’s intervention in *Lineages* (which also informs a contemporaneous project in *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*) was to show that Marxist history could be meticulous and materialist without necessarily giving up on the primary tension between a history of pure forms of government and the ineluctable variations or “impurities” of specific political structures. Not surprisingly, this is symptomatic of the New Left that Anderson himself helped to foster, and marks his text as both timely and essentially out of time, for while *Lineages* is essential reading in the history of Marxist historiography, it also stands at a specific moment in the radical furor that characterized Marxist theory during the political cataclysms of Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. In many ways, these years represent the high point of Marxist criticism in the West, not least because it appeared to be woven into more general socialist logics in society as a whole (over civil rights, anti-capitalism, and the anti-war movement). Yet the tumult also indicated the limits to such imbrication and synergy, as if the “peculiarities” of western Marxism (that Anderson would consider in book form in 1976) were crucially out of step with global capitalism (the oil crisis of 1973 is the usual marker) and the precise contours of decolonizing nationalism (these are not absolute divisions, but even the engagement with Maoism at the time could appear stunningly naïve or, at base, orientalist – we will return to Mao below). Indeed, Terry Eagleton among others has noted how western Marxism seemed to flourish in direct proportion to its relevancy or worldliness (Eagleton and Milne 1996, 2): why argue with such Marxism if it made no difference? Yes, it could vitally invigorate discourses of social change but it could also be seen to be increasingly donned, like a tweed jacket, to indicate staid conformity. Because the Marxism of the barricades had been largely defeated, nothing could be more intellectually edgy than being an unofficial member of the (well-) read brigades or comrades in armchairs. Class struggle in institutions of learning is real struggle but gains its social significance in struggle as a whole. If the oil crisis presaged a shift to the right in western democracies that would mean rethinking the confluence of party and state in revolutionary practice, however, the academic institutionalization of Marxism in the West that flourished into the 1980s seemed to render such thinking precious, or mildly amusing (epitomized in the very idea of a “tenured radical”).

On the one hand, I am attempting to register the kind of discontinuity that Anderson has been read to elicit; on the other hand, this moment in the 1970s presents us with a

crisis that is now more deeply redolent of contradictions in the way political economy is articulated or concretely located. True, there may well be Marxists who are quite content to see only knowledge workers rather than worker knowledge in their endeavors, but it is always more interesting to see how that difference might be materially determined over and above individual volition or the occasional resurgence of “trending red.” Marx understood that the agon between forces and relations of production were moving contradictions and that the hallmark of Marxism was not only coming to terms with such struggle but also understanding how it was immanent to the moment of theorization itself. This indeed is how Anderson articulates “lineage” in his study, but how might such process be conceived within more directly cultural concerns and what is its inspiration?

The thinking on this topic within Marxism is vast because it forms something of its rational kernel. One of its central figures is György Lukács, the Hungarian philosopher and literary critic. Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) remains a towering work of Marxist theory, and its elaborations of immanence, totality, mediation, and reification are indispensable to materialist reading practices (whether as “western Marxism” or as Marxist dialectics more generally construed). One of the projects that was incomplete at the time of Lukács’s death in 1971 was *The Ontology of Social Being* (*Zür Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Sein*), here another piece of our *disjecta membra* as temporal inscription. As André Tosel usefully points out, if by the early 1970s much Marxism had calcified in the distillation processes of the state form, this late work of Lukács and new publications from Ernst Bloch, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser testified to a continuing vitality, albeit one with contradictory conceptual emphases. Western Marxism insistently drifted from traditional revolutionary prerogatives and allegiances, yet it could still offer a new and radical footing, with or without a world historical mission. Thus, the last of Lukács can also be read to highlight his lasting influence on other Marxist thinkers of the time.

Fredric Jameson’s *Marxism and Form* (1971), for instance, theorizes the literary not simply as an effect of its socioeconomic context but as a cultural expression that produces its own modes of dynamic temporal engagement. It is not a question of “this is the mode of production, this is the form” but of how their distinctive logics interrogate and influence each other without being reducible to one another. This, we might say, has always been the hallmark of a properly Marxist dialectical literary criticism and yet in Jameson’s American context such a project seems again at once discrepant and strangely anachronistic, as if what was radical in the civil rights movement or anti-war protests in the 1960s couldn’t possibly be connected to any deep structures of Marxist thinking or practice (a more or less submerged text in Jameson’s essay, “Periodizing the Sixties”). It is tempting to think of this as the “peculiarities” of American Marxism, but if I am focusing more on this moment it is to highlight its general significance for understanding the paths of Marxist critique. Jameson rightly suggests that part of the problem is the difference from those halcyon days of socialist pronouncement in the 1930s when Marxist statements seemed not just analogous but coterminous with radical change. He also notes that in the Anglo-American tradition dialectical critique remained in the shadow of liberalism, empiricism, and positivism, a condition that, while not precisely consonant with challenges faced by Marxism today, nevertheless informs its intellectual marginalization. Yet in marked contrast to Anderson’s sense of the historiographic, Jameson’s approach is avowedly discursive and asserts that dialectical thought is the

elaboration of “dialectical sentences” (Jameson 1971, 12). Indeed, this offers another way to read the problem of materialist periodization. What if socialism is, whatever else it is, a lineage of “actually existing” dialectical sentences? I do not mean to suggest that one writes socialism into existence but that dialectical sentences are the living texture of socialism – in its instantiation – in the possibility of its being. A death sentence on socialism can be announced (and has demonstrably been performed from time to time) but the dialectical procedures of cultural expression accentuate a necessary persistence, as if the ends of Marxism are subject to an entirely different logic of denouement. It is this singularly materialist *sur-vivre* to which Jameson’s writing has been devoted.

In *Marxism and Form* we read the full panoply of tropes, rhetorics, figures, and signifiers that will come to define much of what is outstanding in Anglo-American materialist critique since. There are other indications, to be sure (several of which I will detail below), but if one were to bracket the impact of Jameson’s dialectical sentences, then the remainder would lack arguable or adequate foundation. Since detailed exegeses of Jameson’s work are available elsewhere, I will restrict myself to a few points about the polemical pivot *Marxism and Form* represents in understanding the contours of materialist critique.

The dialectical sentences Jameson has in mind are only partly those of Lukács and more insistently those of the Frankfurt School, and Theodor Adorno in particular (although Auerbachian philologism is also evident in pushing back the dominance of New Criticism). Adorno would be the subject of another book by Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno or the Persistence of the Dialectic*, which, not coincidentally, would feature some of Jameson’s own most abstruse sentencings. Another obvious figure in Jameson’s study of Marxist dialectics and dialecticians is Jean-Paul Sartre (the focus of his dissertation and first book), who is commended more for his attention to mediation rather than for any specific elaboration of economic relations and social classes in the transformation of life. That Sartre reveals techniques (a little less than the “ultra-Bolshevism” Maurice Merleau-Ponty sees [Merleau-Ponty 1973]) vital to a properly Marxist hermeneutics is more debatable now than it was then, when Sartrean philosophy was alive to radical leftist thinking, but in general Sartre’s Marxism is undervalued in contemporary critique. Of course, the dialectic that persists in Jameson’s oeuvre, even more than Adorno’s, is that of Hegel in what is, since Marx, a necessary though rarely fashionable engagement with his logic. The Marxist idea was not to extend Hegel’s idealism but to make his dialectic a contradiction to itself by beginning in processes of materialization that include rather than reverse thinking as such. Not all Marxist theorists in the 1960s and 1970s devoted themselves to Hegelianism (indeed, Althusserianism explicitly rejects its nostrums), yet this accentuates why Jameson’s title is *Marxism and Form* rather than *Marxist Forms*: the former means the hermeneutical is at stake; the latter, the material world translated into forms of thought. The dialectical edge in Jameson’s distinction is no less important than Marx’s in his “Afterword” to the second German edition of *Capital*, and both resist the tendency to reduce radical materialism to formalism.

Jameson’s book, prefaced as a “preparation for literary criticism,” has not lost its capacity for intimidation over the years, which in part means its dialectical sentencings remains its deepest challenge; but again, this is also symptomatic of its exceptional and exemplary positioning, “reading in situation” (the relation of one reading context to another) as Jameson says of Adorno, in the veritable history at issue. Jameson

immediately reminds us that just as the reality Marxism confronted in the 1930s no longer obtains, so what persists of Jameson's hermeneutics is its reality out of time, a kind of synchronic array only possible, paradoxically, in the temporal coordinates produced in the wake of 1968 (and to some extent the McCarthyism of the 1950s). This does not diminish in the slightest that Jameson's work has had profound effects on critical thinking about modernism, postmodernism, science fiction and utopia, Hegel and dialectics, globalization, and so on; but as a model of Marxist literary criticism it bears witness to a singular concreteness and expression of the same. On one level, we could say the "occultation of the class structure" (Jameson 1971, xvii) Jameson identifies is an altogether accurate assessment of the ideological weight American Marxism must address. On another level, one can argue that this is not what Jameson's critique is primarily about, since its first circle is to articulate what remains for cultural critique if this sense of class is a given, as if style begins at the very moment the meaning of class in modernity becomes a matter of linguistic preference, sumptuous clauses, breathless reference and the poetry of performance. If it elaborates an ideology of class, it is only to the extent it reads this as an ideology of form. Jameson does not vaunt culture over political economy, but crucially understands the ways in which the latter can be represented or not, "the all but forgotten code" that is revolution's presence if not its present. The passion of Marxist cultural criticism is not that it equates the cultural with the political, but that it undoes the idea that either term is self-evident or simply expresses social being. The problem is that the radical possibilities of one do not line up with the activities of the other; indeed, the further socialist states and parties recede, the more politics becomes its political unconscious, the culture of radical desire.

This aspect of Marxist thinking must be affirmed, not as an excuse, but as a key to the immanence of theory to reality itself. If there is a constitutive gap between theory and practice discernible in any declared Marxist critique, the distance is overdetermined not so much by practiced or detached elitism (although the qualification cannot simply be dismissed where mass politics is at stake), but by the material conditions of practical change. The imagination can certainly shrink that gap (hence my invocation of desire) but this is not quite what Marx means by the forces and relations of production. Jameson theorizes the necessity and nuance of the gap itself as an instance of dialectical method in which critique performs the realization of this shortfall without assuming such reflexivity itself is its primary material ground. When material conditions pull Marxist theory closer, it becomes revolutionary not in name but in substance. The passion of dialectical sentences must await the terms of concretization. Indeed, in dialectical writing this is the true measure between revolution and involution, between articulating transformation and assuming it is simply taking place.

Unfortunately, as Jameson explains, even if theoretical abstraction appears to arrive at its sublation in the real, there exists the possibility of the illusion of causality, which is as true for the meaning of Petrograd where we began as it is for San Diego where Jameson worked while writing *Marxism and Form*. How does the synchronic stretch these connections even at the risk of illusion? In addition to what Eagleton describes of Jameson as a "turbulent linguistic energy" (Eagleton 2009, 124), Jameson himself argues for the prescience of "limited" or "diachronic sequences," "modified by the addition of a new term" that flies in the face of totality as a unified (and representable) whole (Jameson 1971, 315). The initial examples, however, are fractal and Anglo-French versions of Leavis-like great traditions: Richardson, Fielding, Sterne – Balzac,

Flaubert, Zola – Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Flaubert is no longer Balzac but not quite Zola, etc. Jameson is interested in the effect of the isolated technique, structure, component, or category as a means to establish the sequence. Yet the invocation of diachrony here only serves to highlight the necessity of the synchronic once more, an intervention of the moment in timelessness where the isolated element becomes prescient as profound contradiction. The moment of choice permits a history, but the concretization of it arrives from elsewhere, as if what is isolated can only achieve sequential significance by what is excluded in that choice. Jameson notes, “The diachronic sequence or construct may of course be extended to whatever dimensions are desired” (Jameson 1971, 318), which is similar to what Bakhtin once described as “adventure time” (Bakhtin 1982, 98) in the Greek romance, a temporal telescope that does not alter the time frame of the plot as a whole yet in fact marks the form in its singularity. If I am employing this dialectical method here it does not come without its contradictory impulse, especially in light of my earlier comments (and one must note the period also sees the rise of Foucauldian synchrony, a counterpoint to Jameson’s admonition to “always historicize!” [Jameson 1981, 9]). Could it be, for instance, that in the absence of a Marxist revolutionary movement, even the most coruscating Marxist cultural critique is sequentially *synchronic*, condemned to the stylistic pleasures of adventure time as dialectical diversion, like “art for art’s sake” in G. V. Plekhanov’s classic statement of the aesthetic correlative?

An inverse romanticism would seem to be a bizarre way to characterize the flowering of Marxist theory after 1968, for which *Literární listy* (a key journal of the Prague Spring) was a more likely political exigency. My point here, however, is that Jamesonian critique is not only a model of Marxist dialectical criticism, but also a means to measure its own singularity, like some Auerbachian *figura* of materialist means. But just as dialectical sentences pile up in ever-dense liberatory locutions, so their scale-shifting needs not just temporal but spatial coordinates, for Marxism must also cognitively map distillations of the social. Jameson, of course, is justly revered for his concept of cognitive mapping, which has allowed for a materialist elaboration of mental *and* structural space while simultaneously enhancing his readings of the urban, the architectural, the cinematic, and the painterly. In *Marxism and Form*, space appears as its least privileged idea and yet, just as content is fully present in the book’s dialectical sentencing (Marxism itself is its most persistent surrogate in the book’s title), it insinuates itself in the life of class (“the expansion or contraction of historical limits” – the temporal cannot measure itself [Jameson 1971, 386]). This process finally comes to rest on production, not as a last instance, but as the very thought in which the process can be grasped (one of the many lessons from a contemporaneous work of Marxist critique by Henri Lefebvre, whose career is yet another way to think Marxism beyond 1968).

I have focused briefly on *Lineages of the Absolutist State* and *Marxism and Form* not simply to mark the contributions of two outstanding thinkers to what Marxism might possibly mean as theories of political, social, economic, and cultural change, but to indicate some of the limits to that variegated project when conceptual components are measured against the material contradictions of which they are a symptom. Marxism, outside the socialist practices of party and state, is not to be viewed as inauthentic in comparison to the almost but not quite scientific exactitude of actually living beyond the class-bound economic hierarchies of what Marx once provocatively termed “pre-history.” But once one lets go of the kind of political mission the formation of the Petrograd Soviet represents, however historically and materially sound such movement

may be, Marxism itself almost always becomes more interesting theoretically but still more obtuse practically, as if the cruelest antinomy of revolutionary dialectics is the subreption or misrepresentation of its basic point: that social transformation is a practical solution. The living-on of Marxism is not about the rigor one should foster in regaining a false authenticity (although as a preliminary exercise in understanding political economy in the wake of the financial crisis of 2007–2008, the rereading of *Capital* has provided invaluable lessons), but about the role of critique in making transformative change more rather than less possible. This is the message of political commitment raised by Jameson in his introduction to the English translation of Roberto Fernandez Retamar's *Caliban and Other Essays* in 1989 and it is a pointed reminder that whatever the peregrinations of western theory in the 1970s, Marxism of the South or "third world" had an altogether different conjuncture to confront and engage. Retamar's main essay, "Caliban" (1971), does not encapsulate this alternate lineage of the time, but nevertheless illuminates the idea that, whatever kind of *coupure* was being announced in Paris, socialist practice elsewhere necessitated different (or "differential" as Jameson puts it) reading protocols. Jameson also points out the institutional valence of Casa de las Americas in Havana, that Retamar would eventually direct, as a conduit and meeting place for Caribbean and South American artists and thinkers of the left, a cultural center with few correlatives in western Marxism (the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham would offer a provocative contrast). If Retamar's intervention is about "Marxism and Form," it is specifically about forms of Marxist internationalism and under what conditions such solidarity might be propagated. Again, it is not that class politics is somehow absent from Marxist theory within advanced capitalist states, but that the modes of solidarity expressed are continually displaced onto discourses of inclusion or incorporation when more radical or disjunct alignments are at stake.

Just as Lenin in Zurich is offered an epistemological question, so a European journalist provides Retamar a similarly odd existential challenge: "Does a Latin American culture exist?" And so Retamar begins his extraordinary pamphlet (as he calls it) that undoes the European projection of either utopia (no man's land) or of the human flesh-eating Carib by affirming and complicating the rich histories of Latin American culture through Caliban as a revolutionary Symbolic. This is not without controversy, either within Latin American Studies or within Marxist theory, but its general polemic is of a piece with many other struggles against colonialism and imperialism in post-World War II geopolitics. Caliban had long been the figural apex of dispute in Caribbean and South American discourse, whether linked to the rationalized predatory colonialist instincts of Eurocentrism (in the work of Ernest Renan, for instance), or to various forms of rapprochement with U.S. regional policies (Rodo's *Ariel* of 1900 makes North America Caliban, but rarely develops a critique around that idea), or else to a reimagining of a revolutionary instinct (as in the postcolonial injunction of Aimé Césaire's 1969 play, *Une Tempête*). What Retamar's text develops is an idea that even if Latin American socialist practice is ignored or misrepresented in the West, it possesses vital means for political and cultural renewal wherever it takes root.

The dialectical coordinates Retamar sketches are significant for a number of reasons, but three in particular are apposite with the problems of a left lineage that can only be inflected rather than elaborated on this occasion. First, Retamar indicates the political dilemmas of liberation in the region are manifestly historical, relations that include the *longue durée* of colonial "discovery" and the systematic extermination of local

populations, including the Carib whose name gives us cannibal and in turn Shakespeare's Caliban. On the one hand, this would link Retamar's understanding to Anderson's on absolutism; on the other hand, it underlines that a major task of Marxism has been to energize and elaborate the broad contours of struggle against the colonial/capital nexus, especially but not limited to its European declensions. Second, "Caliban, our symbol" announces an intercultural and transnational insistence linked to both anti-capitalism and a sustained decolonizing of the mind (the latter also inspired by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, whose work is footnoted in the text). Third, while the contradictions of decolonization within European languages are profound (a subject where Ngũgĩ might also have been of use), Retamar's Marxism-Leninism is not primarily experienced as disjunct or defeated but is composed within living discourses of liberation. The art of the dialectical sentence may still be discerned but as a deep-seated expression of a revolutionary situation. Perhaps this is even more of a "peculiarity" than my previous examples but it should not be wrested from its history as exceptional, as a reified object of nostalgia. Retamar's symbol is not a measure of distance from the present, but a dynamic presence, an almost tactile connection, a texture of the textual. While the philosophical foundations of this expression are to be found in other radical thinkers of the time (Enrique Dussel's *Philosophy of Liberation* [1977] comes to mind, for whom Fanon and Gramsci are also inspirations; it is also redolent in the work of the great Trinidadian philosopher, C. L. R. James), Retamar's intervention foregrounds lineaments of the literary, as his own list of Calibanistas affirms.

The English version of Retamar's Caliban was published in 1974 and touched off some heated discussion in the United States about the "Yankee" as, or producing, Caliban. *Diacritics* would not only review the text but would feature several attempts to elaborate its meaning (it would also include an extended interview with Retamar by another Cuban literary critic, Roberto González Echevarría). Emir Rodrigo Monegal, who is singled out by Retamar for dampening any anti-U.S. sentiment in the Caliban lineage (and who is thus labeled "a servant of imperialism"), writes a long response to Retamar's piece suggesting, for instance, his reading of Rodo is "largely worthless." As mentioned, part of the theoretical challenge of Marxism is its understanding of the ideological as that which itself cancels through the politics of its position. This does not mean one stands back and paints theories according to their stripe, but that one engages how such positioning becomes visible or not in any discursive exchange (what Pierre Macherey refers to in literary critique as what the text does not say [2006]). Although this particular difference is academic in at least two senses, it at least points to a notable frisson in the emergence of Latin American studies that is imbricated with decolonization, Cold War polemics, and the real and imagined influence of the U.S. south of its border.

In this essay and others Retamar elaborates the power of the margin, not in relation to former colonial centers or more contemporary arch-pretenders, but as a means of solidarity across the South, whether in the insurgent third of third world politics, or among those for whom development means something other than modernity's key or capitalism's triumph. Of course, Cuba itself was a touchstone for such creative tendencies, although hardly alone among socialist alternatives at the time. Retamar draws on the Caliban genealogy in Caribbean and South American culture to foster an exorbitant Cuba, a "repeating island" in at least some of the inclinations theorized later by Antonio Benitez-Rojo. There can be no innocent embrace of the figure of Caliban, for even in his

excess he might otherwise and all too easily slip into the symbol of logical reversal – the real Prospero, etc. – rather than ground a sense of material contradiction, in whatever language, in whatever time. Retamar does not always read this inconstancy. The Caliban of the West is always ideological and thus always the Carib as cannibal projected since Columbus, but it is the urgency and immediacy of Caliban in art and politics that marks the prescience of Retamar’s text. In Jameson’s 1989 foreword, this inspires a call to a new internationalism. For different reasons, but similar politics I read this as a cultural transnationalism, one that might interrogate both Caliban’s effect (the persistence of Carib blood, figuratively and sometimes more than that in Retamar’s claims for José Martí) and Cuba’s predicaments today.

Earlier I used “peculiarities” to mark constitutive characteristics of Marxist thinking. In the figure of Caliban such a term is still more problematic because, given Retamar’s trenchant thoughts on the indigenous and the *mestizaje*, it finds positive meanings within a discourse that is always already circulated as otherness. This is in part Retamar’s political and aesthetic strategy: to claim outsidership in its own history as a creative resource of hope. One would expect a Marxist-Leninist to take up this cause as part of a veritable ideological war and, at least in terms of Latin American radicalism of the time, it was a war in which socialism was achieving gains. Of course, in 1973 such solidarity of the other, the other solidarity, would be countered violently with the overthrow and death of Salvador Allende, Chile’s democratically elected socialist president. U.S. President Richard Nixon openly feared an idea of Cuban “Calibans” across South America and so began the rollback of revolutionary desire (a process that would intensify under U.S. President Ronald Reagan, despite or because of the triumphs in Nicaragua). Two years before Allende’s murder, Retamar could be much more optimistic, even within the vexed racial and linguistic politics of Caliban as symbol. Retamar reads the historical and cultural logic of the region in its specificity, one that is as much a confirmation of Marxist precepts as it is a demonstration of their limits. It is as if the inappropriateness of Petrograd lives on in Retamar’s critique, tautly stretched between science and the subjective. The Cuban Revolution allowed Retamar “to live and to read the world in another way” (37) and this is a founding reason to come to terms with Marxism’s attention to social and cultural dynamics. If one strips away the ideological sparring with his perceived adversaries (a long list that includes Renan, Rodo, Monegal, Sarmiento, Borges, and Fuentes), Retamar invokes a broadly structuralist approach to cultural theory, in which criticism is “a generalization of the literary practice of its time” (the idea comes from Pomorska via Todorov [Pomorska, 1968]). But this does not do justice to the nuanced interanimation of Fanonian decolonization and Gramscian organic intellectualism his writing proffers – indeed, Retamar himself recognizes structuralism’s relative decline in this regard. The lesson here is not about a lost moment as a comment on either structuralist certitude or practical optimism, but it is symptomatic of an almost impossible lineage riddled by divergent contemporaneity.

To return to Jameson’s notion of diachronic extension once more, the dialectical valence contains within itself a synchronic multiplicity. It is not simply a Rashomon-like effect of plural perspectives, but a distinction of temporality as eventful. If identity politics has taught us that difference is powerfully inflected and conflicted then Marxist politics begins in the quandaries of differential time. Its materialism says that revolutions are made, but that the time of revolution has objective conditions that defy any extensive prescriptions within it. Within the synchrony of the instant – something like

Walter Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* or "now time" – causal logic is not so easily arrayed. This does not mean it cannot be discerned, but that one can track different histories of its distillation by beginning at alternative points along its trajectory or plateau. Thus, for Retamar, the Cuban Revolution is a fulcrum, but the attention to Caliban as figure, as symbol, changes the historical meaning of the revolution for postcolonialism and Latin American solidarity vis-à-vis continuing western predations. It might be less positivist, and at times Retamar's ideological convictions veer towards the simply dismissive, but it is also less burdened by the political experiences of the European or North American left. Its role in Marxism as a cultural transnationalism can therefore be decisive in another key, and its lineage favors a worker/peasant solidarity that would necessarily alter one's understanding of the Marxism that marks Petrograd in 1917.

Meanwhile, in Petrograd. We began by thinking of the difference between revolution in Petrograd and Lenin in Zurich as a remark upon the troubled lineages of Marxist theory and practice. It is, of course, quite possible to construct a Marxist lineage as a list of names, but then one must immediately explain its inclusions and exclusions and before long what seemed a simple task to wrangle robust reds becomes instead an intimation of dubious politics and suspect prejudice. Is it Left Communist, Marxist-Feminist, Conformist, Second Internationalist, Second and a Half Internationalist, Fourth Internationalist, Maoist, Spartacist? Each group would have a different take on the events of February/March 1917 in Petrograd, and still more so those of October 1917, when the Bolsheviks would assume power and a challenge was set for global politics as a whole. Much depends on modes and forms of affiliation, many of which have largely dissolved from the present. Each political conviction produces a different reading of the socialist century. If, for instance, one began not with Lenin in Zurich but with Alexandra Kollontai in Holmenkollen, one can mark the crucial role of women activists and workers in what the revolution became and could have become. Kollontai would reach Petrograd before Lenin and, while enthusiastically conveying Lenin's "Letters from Afar" to the Pravda offices, she also attended a feminist demonstration for the women's vote at the Tauride Palace the same day. A focus on different details does not necessarily erase other stories within a critique of totality, but Kollontai's activism and extensive writing on the revolution (including the controversial "Workers' Opposition") underline the ways in which alternative and still radical genealogies exist in tension and solidarity. In 1971, for instance, the Marxist-feminist Sheila Rowbotham introduced a translation of Kollontai's 1919 pamphlet "Women Workers Struggle for Their Rights" (most of which was composed before World War I). While expressing a deep conviction for the radical impulse in Kollontai's analysis, particularly on the point of "separate agitation among women workers" as a basis for autonomous organizations, Rowbotham stresses a certain incommensurability between Kollontai's outlook on proletarian women and association from within a revolutionary moment and the real foundations on which the women's movement protested in the 1970s. Indeed, while Rowbotham's historiography of the time often focused on an extensive lineage of radical women's activism (see, for instance, *Hidden from History*, 1973), her thinking about women's work, activism, and social production and reproduction cleaved to the political contradictions of the present (differences redolent in her references in the introduction to the Women's Liberation Conferences in the early 1970s, but further elaborated in her contemporaneous works, *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* [1969], *Women, Resistance and Revolution* [1973], and *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* [1973]).

Such dialectical sentencing, while a sharp contrast to Retamar's Caliban rhetoric, nevertheless evinces a similar materialist urgency in insurgency and at once invites reflection on all that is living and dead in any Marxist thinking.

If socialist feminism, Black Marxism, trade unionism, Black Power, Pan-Africanism, and anti-colonialism continued to flourish in the 1970s, this was not only in spite of the political setbacks that the student movements of 1968 were often held to represent alongside the counter-revolutionary instincts of global capitalism and nascent neoliberalism, but also because the cultural discourses of Marxism had an intimate resonance, a mediatory and explanatory power. When one reads Kwame Nkrumah's *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970) or the posthumous *Revolutionary Path* (1973) one is struck by their critical immediacy, the idea that social transformation was not just a historical problem of Marxism, but is a living touchstone of disputation (Amilcar Cabral's speeches of the 1960s, especially "The Weapon of Theory," resonate in this way). Those who think about and fight oppression today carry this sense of disputation, yet not necessarily the Marxism that is immanent to it. As if to further accentuate the perspicacity of Jameson's elaboration of a "political unconscious" (1981) we can conjecture that socialist practice requires both an objective correlative in recognizable socioeconomic contradictions and an affective infrastructure that necessarily draws on a deep imaginary schema of liberation from the world as it is. Certainly the idea of Marxism as imaginary can be taken quite literally in the negative sense, as everything that is absent from the real and reality. Such truth has a peculiarity all of its own, but here I mean that Marxism is now not that which negates but must be first thought of as negated in order to be imagined concretely. On one level, we could characterize this as a "bad new thing" in the Brechtian sense, a present constellation in which Marxism appears to have no active presence; on another level, the value of invoking a lineage is to test its grounds and bounds which includes the notion that one finds Marxism where it is not, where it is consciously and unconsciously unannounced yet is nevertheless performed in discourses on inequality and oppression, and is secreted in the syntax of their utopian alternatives.

Surely this meanwhile of Marxism is a rationalization of defeat, a presentation of historical symptoms (and very few of them at that) with perhaps the vain hope they are Janus-faced enough to look into the promise of Petrograd 1917 and the peregrinations of the present as somehow continuous if not contiguous? The reason for invoking Anderson's history of absolutism is that it is caught in the tension between lineage (as itself a bridge between empiricism and the abstract) and legacy, the idea that a thickly invoked past is being written into a hardly undisputed present. A Marxist dialectic would seem to be a wonderfully astute and fortuitous methodology for assessing Marxism itself, for the analytical frame cannot be dead if it is being used to array this death (we are reminded this spectral Marxism emerges in Jacques Derrida's thought at the very death of Soviet socialist existence). The persistence of capitalist contradictions does not mean that thinking them sustains Marxism as a veritable first philosophy, although the materialist geographer David Harvey has proved its practical applicability again and again. Whither, then, Marxist theory and socialist practice? We know that it left Petrograd, to become Leningrad then finally to return, repressed, in St. Petersburg. Similarly, we know that postmodernism did not exhaust irony because the largest capitalist economy is run by a communist party and if the capitalism is real then the communism cannot be, however one defines "Chinese characteristics."

The familiar narrative of 1989–1991 is that the Soviet Union paid for Mikhail Gorbachev's political liberalization (*perestroika*) with the collapse of any socialist pretense, while China snuffed out any democratic inklings (the brutal suppression of the Beijing Spring in 1989) in favor of even more intensive economic modernization. To conclude with Beijing in our lineage is surely to confirm that all is that was solid in socialism has melted into the iPad Air. Again, the lineage becomes more complex when thought in its synchronic extension; here, in the early 1970s. China at the time was of course still in the throes of the Cultural Revolution (CR), an event that for many seemed to drain all positive meaning from both words. Such a pessimistic assessment remains dominant and for good reasons, but what does this say of Marxist theory of the time and what if the CR is in fact a legitimate critical and cultural “companion”? The Marxist theory and practice of the CR was encapsulated in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (Máo Zhǔxí Yǔlù), a hugely influential work whose Marxism stands in stark relief to other examples of the period. During the CR at least a billion copies of the Little Red Book were printed and it was distributed abroad in more than sixty-five languages (officially and unofficially). Within China it was available in several minority languages and also in braille. In 1970 several million copies of *The Selected Works of Marx and Engels* remained warehoused in China so that study of Mao's quotations could proceed without distraction. Beyond, however, brusque assessments of the cult of personality and its braided discourse of religion and charisma, there are many ways in which the *Quotations* were the apotheosis of dialectical sentencing, as if so many other revolutionary moments, including 1776, 1789, 1848, 1871, 1905, 1917 (February and October), and 1949, could only be understood to the extent they helped produce or hinder revolution within a party or state rather than overturning them. The Maoism that blossomed as the seeming end of China's socialist experiment can now be read as the lasting contradictory challenge of Marxism-Leninism, a means to fathom the antinomies of party and state, of democracy and capital, much more than purely historical lessons in thinking liberation.

But Mao's *Quotations* is so stubbornly didactic, so shorn of meaningful context, so printed and yet unread, it has become an allegory of false promises, a crucible of political inspiration that, like a backyard furnace in the Great Leap Forward, forged something so substandard that what makes a communist foundation has been radically banalized. Indeed, the book's singular intervention calls into question the synchronic intimations employed here, as if any cut into the lineages of socialist theory and practice is in fact the death of the dialectic, a cruel Foucauldian reversal of twentieth-century history in which the heirs of Marx can summarily suppress the concreteness that shaped his theory's very possibility. The problem of the *Quotations* is about an adequate reading methodology, both one in the moment of the CR, and one among moving antinomies, including those that riddle capitalist formations, China's most obviously. If the exegetical knot is more imposing now it is precisely because the phenomenon of the Little Red Book stands in its place as a monument and monumentalism that blocks the transformational logic of its form. This is in part the truth of the *Quotations*' symbolic power and helps to explain, for instance, how Maoism interlaced Althusserianism and how it still haunts Alain Badiou (Badiou's Maoism is, like Žižek's Leninism, primarily a philosophical problem not a condition of praxis). At the time, the *Quotations* worked best as a little red bludgeon that could be wielded or waved to handle correctly the contradictions within the upper echelons of the Party, and yet it is often read to

answer a question it did not in fact pose: how could the people best participate in producing their freedom from necessity? In thirty-three chapters and 427 quotations Maoism is laid out less as a guide than as a template for argument: dialectical materialism is difficult but it can be lived if the basic components of party and state are positioned for active discussion. True, the actual process of interpretation for Mao was often to seek excuses from facts, a strategy of intra-party neutralization, but his thoughts are indefatigable in the way Marxism is made from Chinese particularity (a long-term engagement that for Mao and other Chinese radicals began, like here, in their reflections on the Russian Revolution). The lesson should be to make Marxism from particularity since much of what is Chinese in that moment has been largely lost to history, even in China itself (such a “revolutionary hermeneutics” is, as Arif Dirlik points out, redolent in Mao’s essay “On Contradiction,” although I continue to believe its mass line is properly situated in the *Quotations*). When Nixon was in China in 1972 he complimented Mao and suggested his writings had “moved a nation and have changed a world,” to which Mao is alleged to have replied, “I’ve only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing.” The difference in this assessment is not just about an ideology of theory (however subjective and situational), it is about how to read the world, in its timeliness.

Taken together these notes are neither a roadmap nor a history. They also draw no conclusions, for instance, on whether burgeoning symptoms of Marxism’s symbolic power have come to supplant key critical components of its otherwise radical reading strategies today. Dialectically, I have emphasized a seriality in the moment which, if pursued, might elaborate some of the vast material left out, or might function like lost steps in Alejo Carpentier’s sense, as a means to engage temporal logic itself. If Marx “begins” Marxism, it is at the point he reads political economy as a lived relation in which all that makes the social is suffused with determinate conditions that, if understood as well as felt, we would do well to transform. In the twentieth century this helped foster millions of socialists and large and small efforts to make socialism an actual existence, not just bureaucratically, but spontaneously, as Rosa Luxemburg would theorize it. In the 1970s parties and states were questioned mercilessly, sometimes to strengthen them, and sometimes to extirpate their very idea. If they have died we say they have died for good materialist reasons, but if the terms of critique have shifted dramatically the lineage at issue is less bound to them except when the precepts are about what grounds socialization itself. And the more capitalism arrogates to itself a form of absolutism in globalization, so a Marxism of these changed circumstances will look to change them further.

- see CHAPTER 1 (FRANKFURT – NEW YORK – SAN DIEGO 1924–1968; OR, CRITICAL THEORY); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES)

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9

Chile – Seattle – Cairo 1973–2017?; or, Globalization and Neoliberalism

Myka Tucker-Abramson

By now, the story of the transformation of the world from Keynesianism to neoliberalism is well known. Following the Great Depression, Washington turned to Keynesian policies that attempted to regulate and prevent the excesses of capitalism and to stabilize the global economic system. Defined by the Bretton Woods system, which created a system of fixed exchange rates, the assumption of a manipulable trade-off between inflation and employment rates, and the belief that the government could strike a balance between labor and capital ensuring prosperity for all, Keynesianism became the new common sense. It was hailed for bringing about a thirty-year period alternately called “Les Trente Glorieuses” (Piketty 2014), the “long boom” (Brenner 2006), or the “Golden Age of Capitalism” (Marglin and Schor 1990). By 1971 even the conservative President Richard Nixon would declare his allegiance to Keynesian economics (Kotz 2015, 11). However, throughout the 1970s the Keynesian-inspired postwar deal stopped working. Corporate profit rates began to decline and capital started to invest in finance instead of production, which in turn led to rising unemployment rates and increases in the price of daily life. As well, in this period the Bretton Woods monetary system collapsed, the disastrous Vietnam War suggested that U.S. global power was not as secure as previously thought, and growing student and worker militancy threatened the delicate compromise struck between capital and labor.

Policy makers, heads of state, and the public began looking for new economic fixes. They found it in the trinity of Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises, who marched out of the intellectual wings and onto center stage with a fully developed program that promised to return the economy to its “natural” prosperous state. Premised on a reversal of Keynesian economic policy, this new policy called on governments to cut taxes, deregulate the financial and industrial sectors, privatize state companies and holdings, remove subsidies and tariffs that prevent the free movement of goods across borders, divest resources from social programs like affordable housing and health care, and turn attention to fighting the market’s two arch enemies: inflation and organized labor. In the 1980s, neoliberalism had become dominant in the United States and much of Europe, driving domestic and foreign policy. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, history was said to have ended,¹ there was no alternative, and neoliberalism was as natural as the air we breathed.

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Until 2008. If the economic crisis of 1973 marked the end of Keynesianism, the global financial crash of 2008, which resulted in banks and big business alike calling for government intervention, was supposed to mark the end of neoliberalism. “Basically, neoliberalism is over: as an ideology, as an economic model,” Paul Mason unabashedly announced (2009, x). He was not alone in doing so. Across the political spectrum, many took for granted that those at the helm would see the errors of their ways and plot a course to the calmer (neo-)Keynesian waters of yesteryear.² But almost a decade later, neoliberalism marches on, comfortably inhabiting what many have termed its “zombie” afterlife (Peck 2010b; Fisher 2013), where it remains, as Neil Smith put it, “dead yet still dominant” (2010, 56). Why? If the crises of the 1970s marked the end of Keynesianism, why didn’t 2008 mark neoliberalism’s end? In an attempt to answer this question, economists, sociologists, political economists, and cultural theorists have asked a series of other questions: how did neoliberalism gain hegemony in the first place? And more basically, what is neoliberalism? Is it even a useful term or is it a vague and overused catchall phrase that, in Joshua Clover and Aaron Benanav’s formulation, simply refers to the “dog’s dinner of ad hoc ploys” carried out in order to restore profitability following the economic crisis of 1973 (2014: 749)?

I want to argue for the continuing importance and explanatory power of the term neoliberalism, not in spite of, but *because* of its ubiquitousness and imprecision. First, its ubiquity. The anti-globalization movement and its informal spokesman Subcomandante Marcos popularized the term neoliberalism in the 1990s to counter the globalization discourse that implicitly aligned free market capitalism with human freedom. Marcos used the term neoliberalism in order to drive home what activists and intellectuals from the global South had been forced to learn much earlier: that the defining aspects of free market fundamentalism – economic liberalization, deregulation of the financial sector, the privatization of state companies, clawing back of social services, and a focus on controlling inflation – opened up borders and created more freedom for capital while limiting freedom and increasing poverty, insecurity, and confinement for people. As Eduardo Galeano succinctly put it, “the freer the businesses, the more imprisoned are the people” (1983, 130). The ubiquity of the term neoliberalism is not a problem, but an important leftist victory in the battle over ideas.

However, because of its success, neoliberalism has become an embattled term: is neoliberalism a technical science that gained traction because of its ability to restore capitalism’s natural profitability? Is it a new structure of reason? A new phase of accumulation? A new structure of regulation? A new biopolitical regime? For Marxist critics and theorists, neoliberalism was never just an economic science based on a theoretical commitment to shrinking the state and liberating the market and people from its excessive grasp. It was a thoroughly political project in two important ways. First, neoliberal policies were used by the United States to discipline labor and social movements at home as well as left-leaning and protectionist states abroad, and to reconsolidate American global power (Ginden and Panitch 2012). Second, the project of neoliberalism didn’t so much shrink the state as it retasked and reenvisioned it (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2010a). Under neoliberalism, the state’s job became to protect the market from any governmental or social deviancy, a term primarily deployed to describe the increased power of labor, student movements, and national liberation movements worldwide that were becoming increasingly militant in their demands for economic redistribution.

In order to create this new “natural” market, the subjectivities, values, and social institutions associated with these older “unhealthy” or “unnatural” economic systems needed to be destroyed.

Many, however, have taken issue with this characterization. Wendy Brown, for instance, in her *Undoing the Demos* argues that it is not “a set of state policies, a phase of capitalism, or an ideology,” but is “an order of normative reason that [...] takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life” (2015, 30). Brown, like many others in the fields of critical and cultural theory, is drawing on Michel Foucault in conceptualizing neoliberalism as a biopolitical regime – that is, a regime whose focus is on the development and deployment of “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 1998, 140). Indeed, the emergence of both what Patricia Clough terms the “affective turn” (2007) and what we can similarly term the “immaterial labor turn,” two of the most prominent theoretical responses to neoliberalism from within cultural and critical studies, have approached neoliberalism as a disciplinary mechanism that creates new racial, gendered, and sexual orders (Duggan 2003; Puar 2007; Spade 2009; Melamed 2011; Reddy 2011), new regimes of labor (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Lazzarato 2006; Virno and Hardt 2006), new models of citizenship (Sharma 2006; Ong 2006), and new subjectivities and rationalities (Rose 1989; Brown 2015).

The imprecision within the term “neoliberalism,” then, is not about sloppy scholarship or theoretical murkiness, but a real, important, and vigorous debate within intellectual and academic circles as to the meaning of neoliberalism, and, more importantly, ways out of neoliberalism and into a more equitable, just, sustainable, and democratic structure of politics. While, in the last instance, this chapter reads neoliberalism as a project for the expansion and intensification of capitalism within a period of U.S. global hegemony, questions of changing forms of subjectivity, of structures of labor, of racial, sexual, and gendered regimes, and of emergent forms of protest – as well as the struggle over the emergence of the term neoliberalism and its meaning – are central to the story of neoliberalism that this chapter tells.

To elucidate the economic, political, social, and subjective transformations pointed to above, I want to select three key moments in the process of neoliberalization that allow us to track its development from an eccentric intellectual movement and haphazard political strategy to becoming a concept and practice with global hegemony. I take as my starting points two events that became the blueprint for neoliberalism’s ascent: Augusto Pinochet’s military coup that overthrew the democratically elected socialist leader Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, and New York City’s fiscal crisis in 1975 that culminated in what David Harvey and others have termed a “financial coup” (Lilley 2006, n.p.).³ Second, I turn to the first wave of global anti-neoliberal protest, which was sparked by the emergence of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico and led to the so-called anti-globalization movement that culminated in the 1999 Seattle protests that shut down meetings of the World Trade Organization. I conclude by looking at the Arab Spring of 2011 and the election of the left-wing anti-austerity party, Syriza, in Greece in 2015 to consider the future of neoliberalism as a global system.

These dates and spaces illustrate the core principles and processes underlying neoliberalization, the different kinds of political movements that have fought neoliberalism, and the forging of economic and political alternatives to neoliberalism. However, they

are not the only or the most important sites of neoliberalism. The story of neoliberalism's rise is deeply disjunctural and thus the account I offer here – a narrative of neoliberalism offered largely from the perspective of the Americas – is necessarily partial, incomplete, and inadequate. Nonetheless, while this story would look different if I were to take East Asia or Africa as my center, the underlying system and general trends would remain the same. Neoliberalism, like all iterations of capitalist modernity before it, is at once uneven and heterogeneous, yet also a singular and systemic structure. It is this structure I attempt to trace in what follows.

Chile and New York City 1973–1975

While the ideas that have become known as neoliberalism – privatization, deregulation, and the battle against inflation – emerged from economists and thinkers belonging to the Mont Pelerin Group (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009), the political project of neoliberalism was implemented in the 1970s by the U.S. government in response to two perceived threats to the functioning of capitalism. Globally, waves of anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles were expanding and consolidating. Domestically, the working-class, racial, and feminist liberation struggles, which had traded their earlier demands for civic equality for economic redistribution, were gaining power and popularity. Neoliberal policies were the tools used by the U.S. state and capital to discipline and dismantle these movements and integrate them into a U.S.-centered, capital-friendly framework. If we are to understand neoliberalism, then, our focus should not be exclusively on the theories of neoliberal economists, but on the political struggles and situations in which these policies were first implemented.

While many now date the origin of neoliberalism to the Chilean “laboratory” of Pinochet (Klein 2007), there were actually two laboratories: Chile and New York City. Thanks to the work of Harvey and Naomi Klein, the story of Pinochet's coup and the so-called Chicago Boys’ – Chilean economists trained at the Chicago School and who became Pinochet's economic advisors – implementation of neoliberal economics is now well known. In 1970, Allende became the first democratically elected socialist president in the Americas. Under Allende's three-year reign, he attempted to institute the *Via Chilena*, or “peaceful road to socialism,” through broad-reaching social reform. These policies included the implementation of universal pensions, social security, health care, agrarian reform, and most dramatically, the expropriation and nationalization of the copper industry from the hands of largely foreign capital (Riesco 2012, 24).

These policies created an increasingly confrontational relationship between the government and the traditional property-owning elite and foreign companies in control of the copper mines. It also raised the ire of the United States, which worried that the *Via Chilena* would, as Defense Department analysts argued, lead to both “tangible economic losses” for the United States and “a definitive psychological advance for the Marxist idea” in Latin America and beyond (qtd in Kornbluh 2003, 8). On September 11, 1973, a decade-long U.S. campaign to prevent the election of, and then to destabilize and bring down, the Allende government culminated in the CIA-backed overthrow of Allende (Constable and Valenzuela 1993; Galeano 1997; Kornbluh 2003; Haslam 2005) and the implementation of the Pinochet regime, which would be responsible for the murder and disappearance of over 3,000 citizens (Kornbluh 2003, 47).

Once in power, Pinochet ceded control over economic policy to the Chicago Boys. Technocratic ideologues to their core, they saw it as their mission to heal an economy that had grown “immoral” and “sick” under Allende through a round of “shock therapy” that would restore the economy to its normal or natural functioning (Han 2012, 7). In the following decades, the Chicago Boys slashed funds to and privatized social services such as health care and education, privatized all state-owned enterprises except for the copper industry, eliminated price controls, reopened the economy to the global market and particularly to U.S. capital by reducing trade barriers, and attacked or outright eliminated workers’ rights to strike (Kornbluh 2003; Harvey 2005; Klein 2007). These policies reversed Allende’s redistributive measures and reconsolidated national wealth into the hands of U.S. and Chilean capital.

Two years later in a seemingly very different environment, New York City would undergo a remarkably similar process. While there was no *Via New York*, New York City, too, had a uniquely vibrant coalition of community advocacy groups, labor movements, and civil rights groups. In the context of President Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” which specifically targeted urban crises of poverty, these groups fought to make New York what historian Joshua Freeman terms a “social democratic polity” (2000, 3): that is, a municipal government committed to social spending and provision. Unlike almost any other city in the United States, New Yorkers had a publicly funded City University system with no tuition and open admission, an extensive public hospital system that serviced predominantly low-income neighborhoods, cooperative housing, and rent control (Moody 2007, 16).

As with Chile, the emergence of polities like New York City came to be viewed as an increasing threat to the economic and political power of U.S. elites. “If we don’t take action,” David Rockefeller wrote in a 1971 Chase Manhattan Bank report, “we will evolve into another social democracy” (qtd in Moody 2007, 17). Fortunately for Rockefeller, the economic precarity of New York City and a change in federal policy meant that what required military intervention in Chile could be carried out through a fiscal takeover. When Richard Nixon was elected in 1969, he declared the urban crisis over and traded in the “War on Poverty” for the “War on Drugs.” This policy shift stripped cities of much needed federal funds at the same time as urban tax bases continued to diminish as a result of white flight and deindustrialization. When the financial slump of 1974–1975 hit, New York appeared to be on the brink of total collapse. Investment bankers refused to roll over the city’s debts in 1975, and President Gerald Ford, continuing in Nixon’s footsteps, refused to bail out the city (as the famous *Daily News* headline read: “Ford to City: Drop Dead”), which left the doors open for capital to step in and “save the city” by taking over its fiscal management.

This was nothing short of an undemocratic regime change. As William Tabb explains, “New York City lost control of its own affairs and was forced to accept a debt-restructuring program that left it, by 1980 – after its ‘rescue’ – using 20 percent of locally raised revenues to service its debt” (1982, 21). Within this new regime, 40,000 city workers, including teachers, park maintenance, and police, were laid off, much of New York City’s public health care system was eradicated, and the City University of New York was forced to charge tuition and to eliminate its open admissions policy. These policies were a direct attack on the largely politicized working class of New York and on the Keynesian and social democratic structures of governance that had shaped urban policy.

They created the institutional framework that changed the city's identity from, in Kim Moody's apt phrase, "welfare state to real estate" (2007).

The histories of Chile and New York City offer three fundamental lessons for understanding the historical trajectories of neoliberalization more broadly. First, while some economists believed that they were implementing technical solutions to an economic problem of an unhealthy economy, those in charge of these coups understood that economic transformation required the dismantling not just of labor movements and redistributive tendencies within the state, but also of the feminist, queer, racial justice, and national liberation movements that were also thriving throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Tamara Spira points out that the Pinochet coup did not just target socialists, but sought to eradicate the feminist, gay, and indigenous liberation tendencies and policies that were part of Allende's Popular Unity government (2012, 132). In Chile, the seemingly technical equation of society with the market and of subjects with rational economic actors – what Michel Foucault terms "*homo economicus*" (2008, 292) – required a strict regime of social regulation that sought to reassert a patriarchal social order. This process occurred through both economic restructuring and constitutional reform (Garreton 2012, 85), as well as through systematic and sustained state violence. Spira contends that this violence took on a particularly sexual character in order to feminize prisoners, stripping them of "subjectivity, political agency, or an ability to participate in the public domain of politics – consigning them to the private, feminized sphere" (2012, 133).

While the coup in New York City involved neither fighter jets nor secret prisons, we should not underestimate the extent to which prisons were used to manage the social crises created by the slashing of public services in cities, to eliminate the threats posed by social movements, and to regain control over the labor of poor people and people of color.⁴ As political prisoner and writer Assata Shakur put it, "If every state had to pay workers to do the jobs prisoners are forced to do, the salaries would amount to billions ... Prisons are a profitable business" (2001, 64–65). Incarceration rates skyrocketed in the wake of New York City's fiscal crisis (Tabb 1982, 43) at the same time as the U.S. government was expanding its covert war against militant black and Latino/a rights groups, student and labor movements, and the anti-war movements through misinformation campaigns to sow dissension, spurious convictions often based on falsified evidence, and even assassinations (Churchill and Van Der Wall 1998; Chomsky 1999). In short, while neoliberalism is often characterized as an economic policy, it has always been part of a much larger regime of social regulation and control.

Second, the battle over ideas was crucial to the emergence of neoliberalism. In both Chile and New York City, the goal was not just to fix the market, but also to radically restructure dominant ideologies of governance, and this meant transforming the intellectual climate. As leaders of finance were taking control of New York's budget, conservative think tanks like the Manhattan Institute and their *City Journal* waged a full assault on the ideology of the municipal welfare state (Tabb 1982; O'Connor 2008; Peck 2010a). Aligning the very principles of Keynesian governance with the fiscal crisis, these think tanks created a new common sense in which the economic crises that beset both Chile and New York were not framed as a result of capitalism, or its crisis-prone nature. Rather, this new common sense characterized the market as a natural self-regulating system, and the crises as the result of Keynesian policies that intervened in and disrupted the natural and harmonious logics of the market. Those who had implemented or benefited from social services and programs were transformed into criminals whose

greed endangered the health of the market and who needed to be punished. Within this frame, it was not the state, but corporations who were needed to run the market while the state's job became policing and disciplining the poor in order to protect the "natural health" of the market (Wacquant 2009; Harcourt 2011). It required an immense amount of intellectual, institutional, and political work to turn this idea into the common sense it has become today (Peck 2010a).

Third, while coercion, violence, and manipulation were crucial to the process of neoliberalization, so too was consent. These revolutions could not have occurred, nor could the ideas of the Chicago School and *City Journal* have taken hold, without local support. Part of what gave these policies traction in both Chile and New York was the artful manipulation of class antagonisms present in both societies. The CIA's FUBELT – the code name for the CIA's operations that worked to prevent Allende's election and that subsequently destabilized his regime and promoted Pinochet's coup – drew on the resentment of middle- and upper-class Chileans who were dismayed by the expropriation of their land and the loss of their privileges. In the United States, both Nixon and Ford's policies and rhetoric attached themselves to the swelling number of white flighters who felt they shouldn't be picking up the tab for the so-called undeserving poor (while disavowing the large influx of federal cash that had bankrolled their highways, suburbs, and homes). It was within this white flight (and subsequent tax revolution) base that the Chicago School and Manhattan Institute ideologies of the natural, efficient, and prosperous market settled, and it was this base which fomented the Reagan revolutions that crushed organized labor and launched a war on the urban poor (Davis 1990; Lassiter 2006; Kruse 2007). Similarly, in so-called developing countries, it was the propertied elite and the emergent bourgeois class that championed the neoliberal reforms that the United States began to implement overseas throughout the 1980s and 1990s and that led to the global consolidation of neoliberalism.

Chiapas and Seattle 1994–1999

Neoliberalism emerged as a global system in the 1980s when the United States began to systematically use debt and trade deals in order to dismantle foreign regulatory regimes and open up new markets to U.S. capital. This history has its origins in the 1973 oil crisis and the large capital surpluses this created in oil-producing countries. Those surpluses were reinvested into U.S. banks, which subsequently found themselves in need of new markets for investment. U.S. capital decided that the safest place to invest this capital was in loans to developing governments because, as Citicorp CEO Walter Wriston put it, "countries don't go bust" (qtd in Roos 2012, n.p.).

However, shortly thereafter the United States was faced with its own economic crisis and Paul Volcker, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank, broke with Keynesian fiscal policy that aimed for full employment in favor of a policy that aimed to end inflation. To do so, Volcker raised interest rates on all U.S. loans, which by July of 1981 neared a staggering 20 percent (Harvey 2005, 23). Because most of the loans taken out by these developing countries were in U.S. dollars, the so-called "Volcker shock" had particularly deleterious effects on these developing countries, which became unable to keep up on debt payments. This triggered a global debt crisis that pushed much of the third world into default, and threatened to take the rest of the world (or at least the

U.S. investment banks who had been handing out these loans) with it. Not wanting to let its investment banks collapse, the United States needed to find a solution, which it found by turning the Bretton Woods organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), into a global enforcer of neoliberal and free market policy. Under this new regime, the IMF would provide countries that were at risk of defaulting with alternate sources of funding and arrange for countries' debt to be rolled over. But they would only do so on condition that those countries undergo sweeping reforms or undertake what came to be called "structural adjustment programs." Mexico was the first test case. Between 1980 and 1991, Mexico received thirteen structural adjustment contingent loans from the IMF (Barry 1995). As in Chile and New York, these programs tasked the government with abandoning restrictions on foreign investment, privatizing state-owned industries, eroding longstanding agrarian reform that gave *campesinos* access to land, eliminating import restrictions, cutting social spending, freezing the minimum wage, and reducing trade tariffs (Weinberg 2000, 174).

While these policies claimed to be implementing sound economic practices that would eliminate fiscal deficits, restore financial health, and strengthen the country's economy by integrating it into a global market, the result was the immiseration of workers and peasants, the consolidation of wealth into the hands of a national elite, and the opening up of third world markets to extraction and foreign investment by U.S. owners of capital (Duménil and Lévy 2011). In short, it created a massive flow of capital from the third world and into the United States, creating the conditions for the emergence of what appeared to be a second American Century. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Thatcher, Reagan, and the Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had largely broken the labor movement in the global North, while in the global South, military coups and debt-backed restructuring programs had largely overthrown or disciplined emerging socialist (or at least social democratic) governments. Meanwhile, a new generation of intellectuals gained an increasingly dominant presence in newspapers, universities, and on the news, proclaiming that the decimation of working-class movements, the wrenching open of third world markets, and the destruction of the Soviet Union was actually the culmination of freedom's forward march through history. This was a new age of global prosperity, heralded under the term of globalization. "We are witnessing," globalization's most famous mouthpiece, Francis Fukuyama, explained, "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (1992, 4). Within this seeming stranglehold, both economic and ideological, fear was spreading: was there no alternative? Had history ended?

If this was indeed the end of history, it didn't last long. On January 1, 1994, a hitherto-unknown guerilla movement called the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) occupied four towns in the Chiapas Highlands in Mexico. They chose the date to coincide with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a trilateral agreement that eliminated trade barriers between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, creating the largest free market in the world. NAFTA became the model of post-Cold War globalization. President Bill Clinton promised that it was going to "promote more growth, more equality and better preservation of the environment and a greater possibility of world peace" (qtd in Rojo and Perez-Rocha 2013, n.p.), but the Zapatistas disagreed. They argued that NAFTA exacerbated an already dire situation by further eroding the labor rights of Mexican workers and eliminating Mexico's *ejidal* or

communal land system, which, as their initial communiqué announced, was “a death sentence for all of the Indigenous ethnicities in Mexico” (Subcomandante Marcos 2001, 72).

However, while the Zapatistas were all too aware of the disastrous impact NAFTA would have, they also saw in NAFTA an opportunity. The entrenchment in the North of what had previously been implemented in third world countries and first world cities through structural adjustment programs and brute military force meant that a new form of solidarity was now possible between students, workers, and activists in the global North and the global South. The Zapatistas understood that in this new world order where power no longer seemed to lie with the nation-state, but with the international trade agreements and transnational economic organizations, their resistance struggle, too, had to be global.

As their guerilla fighters carried out military campaigns to create an autonomous zone around the Lacandon jungle and defend it against the encroachment of the Mexican military and elite local ranchers, their spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos, launched an educational campaign that targeted activists and intellectuals in the global North to challenge the dominance of pundits like Thomas Friedman, who claimed that globalization was about creating “more efficient and flourishing” markets that would expand individual liberty and foster the free exchange of culture and goods (1999, n.p.). Instead, the Zapatistas argued that globalization simply exacerbated and expanded Reagan and Thatcher’s war on, and criminalization of, the poor in the global North and Mexican Prime Minister Carlos Salinas’s war on workers and peasants in Mexico. Marcos sought to show that free markets went hand in hand with repressive national states that restricted movement, free speech, and human rights. “The globalization of markets erases borders for speculation and crime and multiplies them for human beings,” Marcos said at the *Encuentro* for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. “National repression is a necessary premise of the globalization neoliberalism supposes” (2001, 118).⁵ In addition to providing an analytical frame, Marcos also provided the activists and intellectuals in the North an alternative term for globalization, one that more accurately described the processes it sought to implement: neoliberalism.

The struggles of the Zapatistas sparked a resurgence of Mexican worker militancy, kindled the imagination of a new generation of activists across the globe, and jump-started a global movement. In the following years, a series of explicitly anti-neoliberal revolts erupted across the world.⁶ Perhaps the most unexpected of these revolts was the 1999 Seattle mass protests that shut down the meetings of the World Trade Organization. On November 30, 1999, thousands of activists converged in Seattle to take over the intersections leading to the Convention Center and prevent the meeting from taking place, thus symbolically “shutting down the WTO.” This protest, organized by traditional leftist labor groups, environmentalists, anti-sweatshop activists, the anarchist-inspired Direct Action Network, international solidarity organizations, and alternative media centers, represented a new political focus and strategy. Politically, mass demonstrations had previously targeted governments, but in Seattle, protests were targeting the transnational deals and organizations that seemed to be the new seat of power. Strategically, the protests moved away from central planning committees and instead adopted a non-hierarchical, decentered model in which “affinity groups” – self-organized and autonomous groups – would carry out non-violent “direct actions” such as blockades, puppet performances, culture jamming, or banner drops during the day and

would then meet at larger spokes counsel meetings at night to debrief and plan future actions (Solnit 2009; Dixon 2009; Wood 2012).

While this global movement did not emerge directly out of Chiapas, Marcos and the Zapatistas were foundational in the forging of this new global, anti-neoliberal movement both in the streets and in the university. In the Zapatistas, the left of the global North found a new model of politics and world-making that avoided the twin traps of a tired state socialism and free market capitulation. Where the socialist politics of the old left seemed hemmed in by its attachment to state power, the Zapatistas didn't want to "take power" as Marcos put it (qtd in Weinberg 2000, 299). They wanted to resist state and capitalist power, and create spaces that were autonomous of that power. And where the old leftist politics appeared to subordinate the struggles of women, people of color, gays, and indigenous populations, Marcos refused such hierarchies, announcing that he was "gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Québec, [...] and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains" (qtd in Klein 2002, 3).

In universities as well, the Zapatistas became the model for a new way of theorizing and embodying political resistance to neoliberal capitalism. For instance, John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002) identified the Zapatistas as exemplars of what he called "the revolutionary challenge [of] the twenty-first century: to change the world without taking [state] power" (20). Similarly, Hardt and Negri argued that the Zapatistas' appropriation and subversion of traditional or centralized military and guerilla structures was both generative and emblematic of a new revolutionary politics for the twenty-first century that they termed the "multitude." The multitude, they explained, was an "internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common" (2004, 100). This new form of politics, they contended, had replaced the obsolete class-based politics of earlier eras and was uniquely positioned to fight against the global biopolitical regime of neoliberalism and create "a democratic organization of the biopolitical commons" (87).

But what became known as zapatismo was not (at least initially) the goal of the Zapatistas, but a specific tactic in a larger struggle against neoliberal policies that threatened the indigenous populations in the Lacandon jungle and the jungle itself (Weinberg 2000). And yet, in the wake of Seattle, the Zapatistas' tactics – the refusal of state power, the development of locally based participatory democracy, and the creation of autonomous zones – often became fetishized as a political end in themselves (Sunkara 2011, n.p.). Such a project fundamentally underestimated both how rapidly the neoliberal state could clamp down on these spaces of autonomy and, paradoxically, the flexibility of the neoliberal state and its ability to absorb, adopt, and deploy the rhetoric and ideas of the anti-globalization movement in order to neutralize that movement and create a new onslaught of neoliberalization.

This became all too evident in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Almost immediately, the George W. Bush administration fostered and leveraged a climate of fear to create a new law and order mentality that cracked down on and repressed these new anti-globalization movements and secured consent for new projects of imperial expansion. While the most dramatic example was Operation Backfire, a federal sweep of environmental activists that used the newly implemented PATRIOT Act to define

relatively minor acts of property destruction and civil disobedience as domestic terrorism, the criminalization of protest was widespread. But consent for the war on terror relied on more than fear.⁷ One of the most surprising outcomes of 9/11 was how comfortably police and military interventions sat alongside the accommodation of gay and queer, feminist, or racial demands for formal equality (Melamed 2011). While attacks on gay, feminist, and national liberation movements were crucial to neoliberalism's initial dismantling of Keynesian and socialist social structures throughout the 1970s, by the 1990s and 2000s, neoliberalism had developed a far more sophisticated strategy. The neoliberal state proved itself adept at defanging the left by simultaneously criminalizing social movements that were demanding systemic change, while exalting and fostering new accommodationist movements whose demands for either the expansion of rights – calls, for instance, for gay marriage or the allowance of gays in the military – or tougher anti-discrimination laws were deployed to facilitate the expansion and intensification of neoliberalism. In Lisa Duggan's formulation, we live in a period characterized by "'multicultural,' neoliberal 'equality' politics – a stripped down, non-redistributive form of 'equality' designed for global consumption during the twenty-first century, and compatible with continued upward redistribution of resources" (2003, xii).

One key example of this program's efficacy is what legal theorist Dean Spade identifies as the shift in LGBT organizing from the "anti-police activism of the 1960s and 70s" such as Stonewall and Compton's Cafeteria riots to a new "law and order" activism (2009, 353). In 2009, the Obama administration added the Matthew Shepard Law Enforcement Enhancement, which expanded the 1969 federal hate crime law to include crimes that targeted a victim because of their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability, to the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010. This artful uniting of anti-homophobic hate crime legislation with a military budget, Spade points out, bolstered the prison industrial complex at home – the act provided an extra \$10 million for "police and prosecutorial resources" (2009, 338) – in the name of LGBT rights, while securing liberal consent for a \$680 billion measure for the Pentagon's budget that funded the almost 100,000 U.S. military personnel troop surge in Afghanistan. This appropriation of leftist discourse for neoliberal projects is not the exception, but the new norm, and queer theorists have importantly pointed to how, from Laura Bush's proclamation that "The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (Gerstenzand and Getter 2001, n.p.) to Israel and the United States' "pinkwashing," or promotion of a LGTBQ-friendly image to reframe the occupation of Palestine in terms of a human rights campaign for Palestinian gays and lesbians (Puar 2013), the post-9/11 neoliberal state has mobilized accommodationist aspects of the feminist, gay, and civil rights movements to secure consent for imperial projects that opened up new markets for U.S. capital's expansion. Within this dual system of criminalization and absorption, it became incredibly difficult to imagine a politics outside of this overarching neoliberal frame.

Cairo and Greece 2008–Present

And yet, just a few years later, in 2008, the entire system of neoliberal global capitalism came screeching to a halt.⁸ Bewilderingly, what triggered this crash was a localized housing bubble in the U.S. South and Southwest. Before the 1990s, the government

backed most mortgages in the United States, and thus had strict requirements based on employment, credit ratings, and the ability to make a down payment. In the 1990s, mortgage dealers began to make increasingly risky or “subprime” mortgages to people with little to no capital, low-paying or no jobs, based on the assumption that the housing prices would continue to expand indefinitely. This phenomenon was facilitated by both concrete legislative changes such as the repeal of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act (which separated risk-seeking investment banking from risk-averse retail banking), the financialization of debt through the practice of “securitization” – the packaging of debt into tradeable assets – and the emergence of a new culture of risk.⁹ Throughout the 2000s, investment banks like Goldman Sachs started repackaging these subprime mortgages as AAA-rated investments that were then sold to European banks, municipal and state governments, and pension funds (Goldman Sachs, meanwhile, was placing high-stakes bets on the collapse of the mortgage industry). While the bulk of these subprime mortgages were located within the American states of Florida, Southern California, Arizona, and Nevada, banks, states, public pension funds, and corporations across the world held this debt. Thus the bursting of the relatively localized speculative housing bubble in 2006/7 became a federal, and then a global, crisis almost overnight. By the end of 2008, the global credit system had frozen, the financial system was thrown into widespread panic, and it became evident that only a massive government intervention could prevent further spiraling. That a localized crisis could lead to the near-collapse of the global economy precisely *because* of neoliberal policy – namely the liberalization and deregulation of the financial sector and the intensive integration of the global market – led many to believe that this was the final indictment of neoliberalism, its “Berlin Wall” moment, as Klein put it (2008, n.p.).

However, like the fiscal crises that triggered the financial coup of New York City and the military coup of Chile in the 1970s, the 2008 financial crisis transmogrified into an opportunity for yet another financial coup. This one was signaled by George Bush’s signing of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), a \$700 billion taxpayer-funded initiative that offered a no-strings attached bailout for the banks and financial institutions that had made these bad loans in the first place.¹⁰ While TARP effectively saved the banking sector, it did so, Harvey notes, by transforming “a financial crisis in the banking sector” into a “fiscal crisis of the state” (Harvey 2011, 107). In turn, this crisis provided the political opportunity to impose new rounds of cuts, to further dismantle the welfare state, and entrench a political climate of deficit reduction and austerity. The United States was not unique in this regard. Across Europe and the Middle East, governments bailed out the banks and then implemented further cuts to workers’ wages and benefits in order to lower their national deficits.

As the fallout from this crisis rained down on poor and working people across the globe while the bailed-out investment banks and hedge funds were restoring their profitability, social unrest erupted globally. Its two most celebrated faces were the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring, or Arab Revolt. On December 17, 2010, a twenty-six-year-old Tunisian fruit vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, had his cart confiscated by local officials. When he went to the police station, he was violently beaten and mocked by the police. Frustrated by the repeated economic and brute physical violence he had experienced, Bouazizi immolated himself in protest. As news of his immolation spread, protests erupted throughout Tunisia, leading to the ousting of its long-time dictator, Ben Ali. The protests didn’t stop there. They continued to grow and spread across the region,

most famously to Tahrir Square in Egypt where millions gathered, calling both for the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime and for "Bread, freedom, and social justice" (Amar and Prashad 2013, 26).

The United States quickly attempted to package the Arab Spring as a pro-neoliberal revolution that was nourished by and fighting for western-style capitalist democracy. Bouazizi became cast as the tragic *homo economicus*, that industrious entrepreneur who was unable to maximize his capital because, as Barack Obama decried, of "the relentless tyranny of governments that deny their citizens dignity" (2011, n.p.). The Arab Spring, Obama claimed approvingly, was a protest against this kind of corruption and tyranny, one that the United States supported, going so far as to help pressure Mubarak to peacefully relinquish power. If that wasn't enough, the narrative continued that not only was the United States a supporter of the Arab Spring, but the catalyst for the Arab Spring was the U.S. social media corporations, Facebook and Twitter.

But the demands of many of the protesters across the Middle East – for increased state services for the poor, for the renationalization of industries, and for the reimplementing of restrictions and regulations on foreign investment – were not simply targeting the corrupt or authoritarian nature of these regimes. These revolts were targeting the U.S.-backed neoliberal and austerity policies they had implemented in the preceding decades (Massad 2013; Hanieh 2011; Amar and Prashad 2013). Egypt's road to neoliberalism will by now seem familiar: the Volcker shock triggered a fiscal crisis that forced Egypt to turn to the IMF to avoid defaulting on debt payments. As in previous cases, this relief was provided conditional upon a series of structural adjustment reforms that included the privatization of most public sector companies, the liberalization of trade, the introduction of flexible labor legislation, and the defunding and elimination of progressive social policies (Joya 2011a; Hanieh 2013). The outcome of these policies was predictable: public resources and wealth were consolidated into the hands of a new economic elite; peasants faced often violent dispossession from newly privatized land; workers faced cuts to jobs, wages, and benefits; and the cost of food and rents skyrocketed (Joya 2011b; Hanieh 2013). The social unrest, strikes, and dissent that resulted from these policies were met with increasingly harsh and punitive repression.¹¹ While, as Hanieh argues, the 2008 financial crisis was not a "sharp break with what went before [... it] overlay and deepened the multiple, pre-existing forms of fiscal crises that had long been extant in the region" (2013, 146) by exacerbating unemployment and rising food and oil prices.

The Arab Spring was not a spontaneous uprising against an autocratic and invasive state. It was both part of a longer history of what Vijay Prashad terms the "long Arab revolution" (2011, n.p.) and a key node in a global wave of post-2008 anti-austerity or anti-neoliberal struggles such as the UK Uncut movement, ATTAC in Germany, Indignados and Podemos in Spain, the *Printemps érable* in Québec, and the election of the anti-austerity Syriza party in Greece, to name but a few of the most prominent examples. While not often linked, these are all common expressions of a global resistance to neoliberalism and its primary mechanism of debt. Reading these movements as interconnected allows us to make a few final observations about neoliberalism. First, neoliberalism's fundamental concern is to increase the flow of capital, but this requires the disciplining of labor and the prevention of the establishment of programs that aim to redistribute wealth, both of which are perceived as blockages. Second, while neoliberalism requires the erosion of national borders and regulatory regimes so that capital

can move more freely, it requires strong and potentially repressive states in order to enforce the social policies that facilitate this flow. As we saw with Chile and New York City, there is no contradiction between dictatorial rule and neoliberal policy. Finally, the global market has been tightly integrated within a neoliberal framework and thus a global movement is necessary to create a new system. There can be no anti-austerity in one country.

I want to very briefly conclude this chapter with a discussion of Greece, both because it represents a moment of hope in the ongoing struggle against neoliberalism and because it elucidates the incredible difficulties in creating a progressive alternative. In the summer of 2015, Syriza attempted to challenge the iron hand of debt, and to steer an almost unnavigable path between what former finance minister Yannis Varoufakis terms the “austerity trap” and default on Greece’s national debt (2015a, n.p.). Varoufakis has insisted that Syriza is unwilling to put their debt commitments to the European Central Bank above the welfare of the Greek people, but he also warns that a wholesale rejection of the Eurozone and European capitalism more broadly would be catastrophic. While the mainstream media considers Syriza to be a “radical leftist” and anti-capitalist party, Varoufakis was clear that for the time being, his party’s goal, like that of Keynesian economists, is to save capitalism from itself. In an op-ed for the *Guardian*, Varoufakis wrote, “Europe’s present situation is not merely a threat for workers, for the dispossessed, for the bankers, for social classes or, indeed, nations. No, Europe’s current posture poses a threat to civilization as we know it.” Within this situation, he insists that the project of “radicals” must paradoxically be to “arrest the freefall of European capitalism in order to buy the time we need to formulate its alternative” (2015b, n.p.).

Neoliberalism did not end in 2008 because the left had no alternative – no Friedman waiting in the wings, no platform with the will and the power to deliver it. That has been the work being done by Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the anti-austerity movement in Québec, and the remnants of the Arab Revolt in the Middle East, though as history has shown that work is uneven and incomplete. It is also the job that we as committed activists and intellectuals have in the academy. For those who fret over the irrelevance and obsolescence of the humanities and social sciences, it is worth remembering that neoliberalism was birthed in the university and that, from the rise of the Chicago School to the student movements of ’68 and the early 1970s, to the Occupy movement in the post-2008 crisis, the university has always been a central battleground of and against neoliberalism. Perhaps the alternatives to neoliberalism, too, can be, or indeed have already been, birthed in campuses. It is a possibility worth considering.

Addendum

This piece was written in the spring of 2015. Since that time a number of things have changed, including the Brexit referendum, the election of Donald Trump, and the spread of (neo)fascism across the globe. We are living in a different historical moment than the one out of which this piece emerged: a world in which, while capitalism remains dominant, neoliberalism has become residual. This means that how we think about and historicize neoliberalism also must change. It’s early days yet, but there are two imperatives for those of us committed to the utility of the term “neoliberalism.” First, we need to remember that neoliberalism was never synonymous with capitalism, and while we

may be post-neoliberal, we are not post-capitalist. Just as activists and scholars developed and theorized the term neoliberalism as an analytical term to counter the rhetoric of “globalization,” we must theorize the social and political structures, systems, and fantasies that are materializing in this emergent period of (neo)fascism. Second, we must remain vigilant in refusing the impulse to become nostalgic for neoliberalism and particularly its veneers of cosmopolitanism; we must continually recall and rewrite the ways in which neoliberalism’s claims to a kind of cosmopolitan freedom were always imbricated with the intensification of a racialized military and police apparatus. We must, in other words, insist that neoliberalism and (neo)fascism are not disconnected and opposite systems, but rather that neoliberalism nourished the ground from which (neo)fascism could grow.

(February 2017)

- see CHAPTER 10 (SUBJECTIVITY); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES); CHAPTER 16 (WORK AND PRECARIETY); CHAPTER 27 (CULTURAL PRODUCTION)

Notes

- 1 In the summer of 1989, the magazine *National Interest* published an essay by the political scientist Francis Fukuyama, entitled “The End of History?” in which he announced that the great ideological battles between East and West, between liberalism and absolutism, bolshevism, fascism, and finally an updated Marxism, were over, and that western liberal democracy had triumphed. Three years later, that essay became a book, the question mark was removed, and Fukuyama’s claim came to underpin the widely held belief that there was no alternative (or at least no palatable alternative) to capitalist liberal democracy.
- 2 In *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste* (2013), Philip Mirowski offers an amusing and educational list of economists who announced the end of neoliberalism (31–33).
- 3 Jack Newfield and Paul Du Brul termed it a “revolution in the governance of New York City,” Robert Bailey termed it a “regime change,” and the Financial Emergency Act, which was signed on September 26, 1975 – largely at the behest of the corporate-led Municipal Assistance Corporation – drew on the language of martial law, declaring the economic crisis a “disaster” and a “state of emergency” in which the “state must undertake an extraordinary exercise of its police and emergency powers under the state constitution, and exercise controls and supervision over the financial affairs of New York City” (qtd in Moody 2007, 31).
- 4 Christian Parenti’s *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* (1999) offers a clear-eyed account of the U.S. state’s consolidation of police power, surveillance, and incarceration in response to the rising social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. For more on the relationship between policing, the war on drugs, and the containment and exploitation of African American labor, see Angela Davis’s “From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick Douglass and the Convict Lease System” (1998) and *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003), Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (2007), and Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010).

- 5 Dawn Paley offers a clear-eyed vision of precisely this relationship between free market neoliberalism and the militarization, political repression, and outright murder of poor and working people in her book, *Drug War Capitalism* (2015). Eugene Jarecki's film *The House I Live In* (2010) similarly limns how the war on drugs has been used to criminalize and control people of color in the United States.
- 6 To take just a few examples from the list David McNally's *Another World Is Possible* (2006) offers: in France, hundreds of thousands of students, workers, and the unemployed launched strikes and mass protests against the so-called Juppé plan, which called for \$12 billion cuts in health care and pensions and the privatization of France Telecom and the public railway network (December 1995). In South Korea, waves of protest surfed against the structural adjustments imposed by the IMF on the South Korean government following the widespread East Asian crisis (1998). In Venezuela, the election of Hugo Chavez led to the creation of the Bolivarian Revolution, a Latin America-wide political and social movement to wipe out neoliberalism and implement Bolivarianism (1999). In Bolivia, the workers and indigenous peoples of Cochabamba successfully revolted against water privatization (April 2000), and in India, millions of workers struck against "globalization, privatization, and liberalization" (April 2001).
- 7 For more on the so-called "green scare," see Marshall Curry's film *If a Tree Falls* (2011).
- 8 Much of the account that follows comes from Craig Calhoun and Georgi Derlugian's edited collection, *Business as Usual: The Roots of the Global Financial Meltdown* (2011), Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy's *The Crisis of Neoliberalism* (2011), Philip Mirowski's *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (2013), and Matt Taibbi's *Griftopia: Bubble Machines, Vampire Squids, and the Long Con That is Breaking America* (2010).
- 9 Annie McClanahan offers a concise summary of this shift: "In the early 1990s and through most of the 2000s, federal interest rates were pushed to historic lows: able to charge significantly higher interest rates than they had to pay on their own debt, banks lent more and more readily. High-risk lending was far more profitable than low-risk lending because the latter was expensive to acquire and had a limited potential value. As a result, the once-fundamental idea that institutional lenders should only lend to 'credible' borrowers was abandoned: between 1999 and 2006, the so-called 'subprime' market – the market in the riskiest debt – went from five percent of all lending to forty percent. Banks introduced a wide range of new 'affordability products': loans that did not require borrowers to document their income, interest-only loans, no-down-payment loans, and loans that allowed lenders to borrow twice the value of the house. Very in-credible borrowers (such as those referred to as NINJAS, or "No Income, Job, or Assets") were granted vast amounts of credit" (2012, n.p.).
- 10 Then then-newly elected President Barack Obama's 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act would continue in line with TARP.
- 11 Egypt was not unique. Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia were following similar trajectories. For a broader overview of the trajectory neoliberalism has taken in the Middle East, see Hanieh's *Lineages of Revolt* (2013).

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Part II

Problematics

Section A: Living and Laboring

The phrase “living and laboring” brings into play a wide range of forces and discourses, both through the range of associations produced by each concept on its own and through their concatenation into a single figure (living *and* laboring) that can be taken as describing nothing less than social life itself. The contributors to this section of the *Companion* investigate many of the most important theories concerning the production of subjectivity and the social formations (communities, nations, work spaces, ethnic groups, social classes) within which subjects live and work. If there is an emphasis in some chapters on the social, in others on work, and in still others on subject-formation, all of them recognize that the subject and the social are inextricably linked, and thus always need to be examined and theorized in relation to one another. All of these contributions are also guided by a common awareness of the violence and exclusions characteristic of contemporary social life. Each chapter identifies and describes the limits and borders that continue to be drawn around spaces of belonging and the norms and prohibitions that attend our sense of personhood, in order to open up new understandings of community and identity for the twenty-first century.

Contemporary theory understands existing societies as riven by hierarchies of power and privilege, as shaped by class and ideology, and as both patriarchal and racist, which has consequences for the subjects that are created by and which inhabit these societies. In modern theories of subjectivity, the aim is not to isolate the true nature of being by stripping away or bracketing the social so as to identify some core fixed element of the human (as, for instance, in Hobbesian or Rousseauian attempts to locate those aspects of the human that preexist the social). Rather, theory engages in an exploration of the complexity and specificity of the modes of subjectivity generated by social life. If specific attention is paid to gender and queer subjectivity, to ethnicity and race, and to members of marginalized communities, it is because of the ways in which these experiences prove the true rule of modernity. Far from the official narrative of ever-expanding rights and freedoms for all, the fundamental drama of the era of liberalism has been – and continues to be – one of inclusion and exclusion, the advancement of rights and opportunities for some at the expense of many others. These divisions and separations are not merely the consequence of a system that needs constant adjustment to allow it to continue a slow process of systemic maturation. Rather, these chapters draw our attention to the multiple ways in which our existing social and political systems

necessitate divisions and hierarchies, and the ways, too, in which these divisions are obscured so as to maintain our misbegotten commitment to them. The critical and cultural theories explored in this section highlight the mechanisms that produce social divisions and exclusions, and their impact on both those subjects left on the outside looking in *and* those fated to live in systems that they believe to be inclusive and democratic. For all the differences in the subjects taken up in these chapters, each also interrogates a figure that has played an essential role in underwriting contemporary systems of power: the self-identical, self-certain, autonomous subject, who can (supposedly) name and narrate their own relationship to the social in a manner that negates the impact of the social on subjectivity. Puncturing a hole in the inflated balloon of subjective self-certainty is as essential to undoing social and political exclusions as is identifying the mechanisms through which these exclusions are produced.

There's no doubt more to life than work (a charge that many workaholic, entrepreneurial subjects have heard leveled at them!). But how we work – and why we work – plays an important role in shaping subjectivity and society in ways that demand critical attention. The multifaceted, ever-changing tasks of creation and destruction that constitute work – from the work of reproduction still disproportionately performed by women to the labor of factory production now disproportionately clustered in the developing world – make up a significant part of everyday life; as such, labor is one of the primary ways in which subjects are made into who and what they are. If work has been a central issue for critical and cultural theory, it is because of the radical transformation of labor over the course of capitalist modernity, which has in turn brought about unprecedented changes in subjectivity and society. The brute efficiency of the Taylorist factory line, which renders subjects into automatons who are required to devote much of their lives to a single task (or even a single, repeated bodily motion), is one of the most obvious ways in which capitalism has transfigured human experience.

A number of the contributions to this section highlight the ways in which work continues to undergo important transformations that have had repercussions for being and belonging. The relative security of work in the decades following World War II (at least in some parts of the world and for some members of the global population) has been decidedly undone; work has become increasingly precarious and uncertain in ways that have implications for the activity of life and the social imaginaries which animate it. As in the factory era, these transformations in the character of work are guided by a single aim: to generate profit. In the contemporary moment, profit is increasingly hard to come by through typical forms of production alone. And so profit has had to be found in the massive reorganization of labor (mass unemployment in some parts of the world, wages below the poverty line in others) and, increasingly, in spaces that were once (however tenuously) outside of the workday – puncturing spaces of leisure and the relative freedom and autonomy of evenings, weekends, and even sleep (on the latter, see Crary 2013). While leisure has become increasingly productive, more workerly, work itself has, for large segments of the labor force, increasingly geared toward practices traditionally associated with artistic creation and social reproduction. Theodor Adorno's recognition, in 1969, that "free time is shackled to its opposite" (1991, 187) has been extended to such an extent that positions requiring "afterhours" work are no more noteworthy than the fact that companies profit by following our clicks through our cultural consumption on the web.

The contributions to this section probe the causes and implications of a world of almost universal labor precarity, of economies governed by risk and the logic of markets, and of new and apparently intractable social divisions (famously encapsulated in Occupy Wall Street's slogan "We are the 99%") that highlight just how far afield we are from the fantasy of a universal middle class with equality of opportunity for all.

As befits chapters that address a range of topics, the contributions to this section provide us with a broad array of contemporary critical and cultural theories that touch in different ways on living and laboring. Even so, it bears noting that there is one thinker whose ideas run through all of these texts: Michel Foucault. The ideas of Foucault have been influential since the publication of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; English translation 1970), which became a surprise bestseller in France and which was chosen by *Le Monde* as one of its 100 books of the century. While Foucault has long been seen as an important thinker, his final lectures – and specifically those collected as "*Society Must Be Defended*" and *The Birth of Biopolitics* – may ultimately prove to be the most vital and valuable. It is here that Foucault provides us with a detailed account of the mechanisms and operations of neoliberalism. In his late lectures, Foucault outlined the processes by which a fundamental shift takes place in the operations of power and the mechanisms of governmentality: it is now the market that supplies the state with its mandate and imperatives, rather than the state guiding, shaping, and supervising the market on behalf of those subjects who (at least in theory) collectively legitimate its actions and practices. One of the consequences of this paradigm shift in the operations of power has been the creation of an almost universal condition of precarity – a condition of insecurity, vulnerability, and scarcity that Paolo Virno describes as "the chronic instability of forms of life" (2004, 13). The impact and significance of neoliberalism on the experience of living and laboring is such that the authors in this section cannot avoid exploring their subjects except in relation to it. William Callison explores the reconfiguration of subjects into "entrepreneurs of the self"; Miranda Joseph examines the possibilities of queer world building in and against neoliberalism; Randy Martin probes the central role of the logic of derivatives in animating and guiding financial capitalism; Amber Jamilla Musser uses precarity to map trends in recent queer theory; and Jason Read takes up precarity as a way of "working through the antinomies that define not only the current political moment, but labor as such." As the theorist who has given us the most fully elaborated articulation of the origins of neoliberalism – and who did so seemingly *avant la lettre*, before the end of the Cold War and the birth of globalization and its attendant ideologies – Foucault's ideas promise to continue to reshape our understanding of work, society, and subjectivity for some time to come.

"Intellectually and politically," writes Randy Martin, "we may be suffering the abandonment of the project of society that cultural and social theory and its concomitant movements had placed on the agenda. This project emerged through a critical engagement with what capitalism had wrought, how it operated, what fundamental social arrangements it engendered when treated as the outcome of a particular and contested historical trajectory that could be made differently." Martin's anxieties about the end of society as a critical project are echoed in the multiple challenges to social and political equality – to life lived as equally and freely as possible – outlined by the contributors to this section. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's infamous pronouncement that "there is no alternative" has come to stand as the unofficial slogan of the neoliberal era.

While political and theoretical challenges abound, the committed, critical engagements with capitalism and its social arrangements in the chapters that follow offer up pathways to new modes of living and laboring in which everyone might be able to flourish. Ghassan Hage, for instance, provides an account of the significance of changes to migration and diaspora from the nineteenth century to the present – changes that include redefinitions of race and movement in relation to belonging that are essential to understanding today’s political context.¹

It is not only with respect to migration that the experience of precarity draws to our attention the ways in which the relation of life and labor has in recent years been transformed. Materialist feminisms of the 1960s and 1970s intervened forcefully to undo the separation of work and leisure that had been established with the advent of bourgeois capitalist society. These feminisms highlighted the unacknowledged and uncompensated work of women that was required to produce and maintain the warmth and sentimentality of family and home life – that self-same place outside of work and its limits that was imagined by many as constituting a space of freedom in which subjects could constitute themselves freely. In the neoliberal era, reproductive labor remains unacknowledged, even as women have been included more fully into the world of work; and far from work being reduced and the time of leisure being expanded, those who work now work constantly while a growing mass of unemployed are cut off from both labor and a fulfilling life outside of work.

Precarity opens up possibilities even as it generates risks, threats, and insecurities: it is hard to have any commitment to a system that no longer even pretends to have any commitment to you. How might we now reclaim life from labor, or even properly imagine the relationship between these terms? In addition to providing an overview of contemporary theories of society, subjectivity, and work, the following chapters provide us with the critical tools and insights needed to answer this difficult, but essential, question.

Note

- 1 At the time this volume went to press, in early 2017, war, conflict, and persecution had displaced at least 65 million people globally – the highest number of displaced people ever recorded (Edwards 2016). As the United Nations Refugee Agency reports, “[g]lobally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. If this were the population of a country, it would be the world’s 24th biggest” (UNHCR 2015).

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10

Subjectivity*William Callison*

Contemporary reflections on subjectivity, observes Étienne Balibar, are often unwittingly caught in a “play on words” with a long linguistic, philosophical, and political history. Inherited from the dual Latin terms “*subjectum*” (subject as in person or thing) and “*subjectus*” (subject as in subordinate), the modern category of the “subject” incorporates both and is thus entangled in a problematic of power and freedom from the very start (Balibar 1994). The term’s knotted roots refer to both a kind of neutral substance, the originary site of freedom and autonomy for much of the history of western philosophy (*subjectum*), and a politico-juridical condition of submission (or, tellingly, subjection) to the law of a “sovereign” or the authority of a superior power (*subjectus*).¹ These roots evince a historical tension *within* the “subject,” which is to say *between* the agentic aspirations and the always-encumbered relationality of subjectivity.

This chapter will, however, neither dig up these roots of the subject nor reprise their more familiar, modern points of departure – whether in philosophy (Descartes, Kant), political theory (Hobbes, Rousseau), or other discourses (legal, religious, etc.). Nor will it provide a close conceptual analysis of the word’s many metonymic relatives – “man,” “human,” “individual,” “agent,” “self,” “person,” “citizen,” and so on. Rather, I will introduce and cut into the problematic of subjectivity by pursuing some of the key ways in which it has been figured and interrogated by strands of critical and cultural theory and, in particular, by lineages of Marxist and post-Marxist thought. These approaches to the social and cultural critique of capitalism will offer different heuristic and methodological resources for conceptualizing contemporary forms of subjectivity.

This, I readily admit, is an unusual route into the problematic. Subjectivity is perhaps more conventionally associated with the way one experiences and relates to oneself, with the problem of self-knowledge, or a deeper realm of interiority that, though inaccessible to others, comprises the affective makeup or reality of one’s person. In philosophy, subjectivity is often framed in terms of limitations on subjective consciousness; this is part of a larger question concerning the epistemic conditions (the “knowability” and “understandability”) of certain objects or facts appearing to (and being conceptualized by) the mind through sense experience and reflection. To pursue such questions of experience and perception would require a discussion of phenomenology and existentialism, among other traditions. But my task in this chapter is a different one.

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I would instead like to ask what happens to the formulation of subjectivity and the practice of critique when capitalism is understood not simply as a structure and organization of economic processes, but a way of making the self at the very deepest levels. What kinds of subjects are presupposed by and are constructed through the multiple powers and formations of capitalism (which are, of course, historically and culturally variable)? What kinds of practices and technologies of the self are made available by these orders? What kinds of imperatives and norms do they prescribe, and how are these constitutive and regulative of the subject? Such questions will take us on a journey through critical theory, beginning with Karl Marx and the practice of “ideology critique” before moving on to others who, like Louis Althusser and the Frankfurt School, modified this method in the twentieth century. I will also consider approaches inspired by psychoanalysis and Michel Foucault (especially his lectures on liberal and neoliberal political rationality), which will then help to identify the limitations of “ideology,” “culture,” and even “economy” as the primary targets of critique. These alternative formulations link the construction of the subject to operations of power within and outside spheres of “the economic”; in this way, they provide better resources for understanding specifically neoliberal processes of “economization” that, through the notion and norm of “human capital,” transform the practices and valuations of the subject even (and especially) in previously non-economic realms of life. Through this neoliberal shift, I will argue, “the economic” is reconfigured: it becomes even more central to the practices and rationality of neoliberal subjectivity, and now appears as the lingering trace as well as the philosophical stakes of materialist and post-Marxist formulations of subject constitution.

Subjectivity and Power: Marxist Lineages

Whatever his debt to Adam Smith and David Ricardo on the one hand, or to G. W. F. Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach on the other, Karl Marx theorized and historicized economic subject positions uniquely by linking them to relational operations of social power. Notwithstanding the significant discontinuities and developments from his earliest to his latest writings, Marx’s vision consistently revolved around the essentially economic problems of inegalitarian divisions and conflicts, of forms of exploitation and domination that have hitherto driven historical development and shaped both individual and collective destinies. Whether in the materialist account of history, developed with Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology*, or later in *Capital’s* critique of political economy, Marx’s (1978 and 1982) account turns on a dynamic understanding of labor as the defining capacity of the human subject and of class struggle as the defining contradiction between collectivities leading up to the capitalist mode of production. Marx did more than anyone before him to push the conceptualization of “the subject” into the economic domain.

Marx’s materialist focus on the spheres of economy and civil society came with a critical approach to theory (and praxis) linked to an essential observation: the domination and exploitation endemic to capitalism (as with previous modes of production) do not appear as such to subjective consciousness. For capitalism generates illusions and mystifications that prevent us from seeing its real basis: the activity that is the true motor of human history – human production. These illusions and mystifications comprise what Marx termed “ideology,” a concept whose influence and meaning still bear his imprint today.

Under capitalism, Marx explained, the motor of surplus value extraction lies in the “hidden abode” of production – what has been called the economic “base” or “infra-structural” sphere – which, in turn, dialectically gives rise to the cultural, “superstructural” spheres of life. Though power is chiefly “at work” in the economic domain, it also takes effect in the superstructure through the effects of ideology. While its meanings are many in Marx’s writings (and in those who borrow and alter this conceptual framework), ideology is essentially that which mystifies and inverts the subject’s consciousness, leading consciousness to misapprehend the true material conditions of existence. Marx’s conceptual apparatus and critique of ideology is thus inherently linked to the economic domain as its dynamic foundation.

Privileging particular elements of Marx and Engels’ work while discarding others, twentieth-century Marxism turned to ideological and cultural analysis to supplement the critique of capitalism and to modify the underlying assumptions about subjectivity and power. Culture thus became a central site, and ideology an essential phenomenon (as well as a means and method of analysis), to account for the social reproduction of capitalism through the formation and incorporation of subjects – above all, a working class that appeared increasingly incapable of fulfilling its emancipatory promise. Antonio Gramsci’s formulation of “hegemony,” for example, illuminated how class rule operates not simply through the consolidation of political power (the state apparatus) but through the organization of consent and coercion throughout society, which need not necessarily take recourse to violence (Gramsci 2000 [1929–1935]). Later theorists would draw on Gramsci to rethink the politics of identity (Laclau and Mouffe 2014) and, especially for those who developed cultural studies in Britain, to critique emergent neoliberal discourses, including “Thatcherism” (e.g., Hall 1979).

Toward a similar end, Louis Althusser advanced a revised theory of ideology and subject formation, which focused on the role of subjection within the structural reproduction of the conditions and relations of production. His “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1970) proved valuable for identifying sites and mechanisms of subjection outside of the “merely” economic realm and away from the state (whatever the significance of the latter for exercising violence to maintain order “in the last instance”); in this way, Althusser underscored the way subjects are made by and for non-state (or cultural) apparatuses such as the school and the church. In this account, subjects are constituted through material practices and rituals Althusser calls “interpellation” and “hailing”; ideology interpellates “the individual” as “a (free) subject” such that *“he shall (freely) accept his subjection [...] There are no subjects except by and for their subjection”* (Althusser 2014, 269; italics in original). In this fusion of structuralist influences from Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Lacan, Marxist ideology critique receives a psychoanalytic valence with an updated materialist underside: ideology, which now occurs *within* material practices and embodied rituals of subjection, is defined as “a ‘representation’ of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 2014, 256). The subject cannot escape ideology, which is an “omni-historical” and unconscious reality, because it is only through ideology that the subject becomes a (purportedly free, individual) subject, properly so called. For many, this structuralist revision of Marxism was too exhaustive, while for others it was simply flawed: it assumed the status of “science”² and could not adequately account for historical change, as its formulation of (capitalist) subjectivity remained overly totalizing in its reach yet underspecified in its mechanisms.

The Frankfurt School represents a different Marxist-inspired critique of culture and cultural production as both conforming to yet potentially autonomous of what we have called “the economic.” This account understands culture as a domain of capitalist ideology and instrumentality, which corresponds to economic interests and profit motives, but which cannot be confined to “the economic.” Like Max Weber and György Lukács before them, this interdisciplinary cluster of scholars associated with Frankfurt’s Institute for Social Research analyzed processes of capitalist domination that manifested in the rationalization of state and economy as well as the extension of instrumental rationality into subjective thought and behavior. Seeming to transcend economic production, instrumental rationality formed a mode of subjectivity, relationality, and reified experience that gained its own autonomous logic and undercut alternative modes of valuation – a process that took a dark and totalizing turn during World War II. Though the Frankfurters located the Enlightenment tendency to dominate nature (and, in turn, man himself) at the core of the projects of all three then-predominant world powers – the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and the United States – their critique specifically targeted the ideology and instrumental rationality of mass culture in the West. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002) and *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse 1991), for example, subjectivity is described as commodified and instrumentalized by a system whose logic and reach become totalizing; culture fully incorporates alternative ways of living and resistant modes of thinking. In these trenchant critiques of the first generation of critical theory, even oppositional subjects (or collectives) are integrated into the mechanisms of the “culture industry” (Adorno 2001). The “closing of the political universe” is signified by the manner in which language is reified, social relations are commodified, and the subject of reason (like the Enlightenment ideal of individual autonomy) is fully enmeshed in a cycle of identification and consumption. Though Jürgen Habermas carried on the Frankfurt School’s tradition of Marxian ideology critique,³ expanding on this narrative in his early study of the rise and fall of “the public sphere,” he would later fault the first generation’s reliance on “the philosophy of consciousness” or “philosophy of the subject” (Habermas 1991 and 1985). Revising their critique in terms of “the colonization of the lifeworld” by instrumental rationality, Habermas formulated an intersubjective communicative rationality, a possibility and practice inherent to language itself. These are but a few elements within a broader shift that takes place in how we have come to understand subjectivity – a shift from the subject of production (i.e., the laboring subject dominated by capital and mystified by ideology) to the production of the subject.

From the Subject of Production to the Production of the Subject

Over the past several decades, various kinds of neo-Marxism, including those outlined above, have been criticized for the assumptions and epistemic principles that underlie the concept of ideology, as well the overly narrow formulations of subjectivity that accompany these assumptions (Barrett 1991; Hoy 2004). Ideology critique has itself been the subject of critique, in other words, for implying the possibility of separating “true” from “false consciousness,” “real interests” from “false needs.” At the same time, critics of Marxism have also focused on the primacy given to the subject’s “class” over

other formative identity categories (Laclau and Mouffe 2014; essays in Rajchman 1995) and, relatedly, on Marxism's inability to adequately theorize modes of subject formation that exceed the fundamental mechanisms of capitalist domination and exploitation – for example, the formation of raced, sexed, and gendered subjects who, though their formation may intersect with class, cannot be reduced to class, and thus demand their own qualitative and theoretical accounts of subjection. From literary theory to postcolonial studies, “the critique of the subject” opened up other, intricately related problematics including Eurocentrism, logocentrism, and phallogentrism. The diverse methods and sites that emerged under the big umbrella of “critical theory” further challenged the philosophical underpinnings of “the subject” (including “the subject of history”) within and far beyond the tradition of Marxism.

It is worth noting that the most compelling criticisms of “ideology critique” have come from thinkers inspired by Marx, albeit dissatisfied with some of the categories and methodologies passed down through the Marxist lineage. This move away from ideology is coupled with a call to rethink previous renderings of state–economy relations as well as the material–ideal divide, which is itself based on a caricatured binary of base–superstructure. It comes, too, with a more expansive notion of politics and power, neither held by subjects nor mystifying in nature, but as relational, asymmetrical, and dispersed sites of subject formation (Foucault 1980). Put a different way, if the subject \neq consciousness – i.e., if the subject is historically produced by the interplay of “external” and “internal” forces that condition and overflow consciousness, and indeed in ways that escape the theoretical grasp of Marxist ideology critique – then the implications for both the “method” and the “objects” of analysis are vast. Although these formulations fall within the admittedly broad trajectories of “post-Marxism” and “critical theory,” which comprise an array of theoretical traditions, I will introduce only two approaches here before moving on to discuss how they have been, or might be mobilized in the examination of neoliberalism and subjectivity – namely, those inspired by psychoanalysis and Foucault.

“The critique of the subject,” as is well known, was precipitated by the insights of Freudian analysis (or, going further back, by Friedrich Nietzsche and the Romantics) that disturbed any sense of the subject as a rationally unified, self-determining entity; its examination of the psyche revealed the operation of non-transparent drives and unconscious attachments that either escape, or are discounted by philosophies premised on the centrality of conscious, autonomous subjectivity. The relation between subject and society, in the Freudian account, is shaped by structures of kinship as well as the demands, rules, and norms of “culture” placed upon the subject, which the subject must in turn psychically (and sometimes neurotically) navigate through processes of internalization, repression, and sublimation. Lacanian psychoanalysis would later rework the foundational coordinates of the disunified subject, who illusorily projects her “self” into the world as a unity (beginning with the “mirror stage”). In this Lacanian model, the subject comes into being within linguistic and symbolic structures, which engenders an anxiety inherent to inhabiting a particular identity. These are structures, of course, that precede the subject's existence and in turn regulate the subject's desire.

As much of an impact as this account has had, its structural formulation of desire can exceed, yet often falls into, the same kinds of tensions discussed above. While elaborating new theoretical points, many who bring psychoanalysis and post-Marxism together around a conception of desire still conceive of the production of subjects with a

particular (and gendered) identity in terms of “ideology.” While this suggests that “persons find their form, their ‘selves,’ by way of fantasy, which includes the projection of impossible desires onto love objects ... alongside the mediation of norms that make them socially intelligible,” it “does not mean that there is no such thing as the enigma of personality” (Berlant 2014, 86). Despite the problems of a generalized, primarily psychic and linguistic theory of subjectivity, many cultural and critical theorists find indispensable resources in these Lacanian formulations of the unconscious and desire; indeed, many working within gender and queer theory have forcefully dynamized these approaches in order to better grasp problematics of gender normativity, the regulation of identity, and the normalizing effects of subject formation more generally.

Foucault’s work broadly takes the critique of the subject of consciousness and the concept of ideology as its central points of departure. Famously critical of psychoanalysis, though perhaps not completely incompatible with some of its enduring insights,⁴ Foucault’s methodological statements are often explicit in their attempt to bypass predominant models, whether Marxism and psychoanalysis or existentialism and phenomenology. His routes into the study of subject constitution are thus less attuned to symbolical or unconscious structures and more focused on the historicity and the very materiality of techniques and processes of “*assujettissement*” (variously translated as “subjection,” “subjectivation,” or “subjectivization”). Across his writings, these techniques take multiple, always historically specific forms; the two best known might be his study of disciplinary power, which works on the body of the criminal to produce a “soul effect” (Foucault 1995), as well as the study of religious and medical discourses, which, through techniques of examination and confession, are productive of sexuality and forms of identity (Foucault 1990). Through such processes, the subject both emerges from and is subjected to power-knowledge. Recalling the tension at the opening of this chapter, subjection is a process of formation (and of possible self-transformation) that duly *acts on* and *activates* the subject. Both sides of the coin flash up here; both *subjectum* and *subjectus* may show their face. Yet no agentic movement, no mode of self-determination is possible without a prior relation of power, without a movement of subjectivation that produces the subject *as* subject. As a situated and reflexive being marked by the norms that govern its existence, the subject cannot but cultivate herself (or, in gender performativity, reiterate these governing norms [Butler 2011]) within relations of power-knowledge that are at once discursive, material, and social. Power, in other words, is not simply repressive or prohibitive, but is productive and regulative of subjectivity. Thus, Foucault explicates, “it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals” (Foucault 1980, 98).⁵ Power is neither held nor seized, but comprises those asymmetrical, non-egalitarian, and mobile relations within which we move, which regulate the terms of our identity and which shape our conceptions of self. Though power has no center or source, the constitutive relations and conditions of subjectivity operate in the most obvious and hidden of ways, at the most “micro” and “macro” of levels. We can thus say, in a rather general way, that shifts in power can give rise to shifts in subjectivity, if not in any transparent and predictable fashion.

If power courses through discourse and knowledge and gives rise to historically specific understandings and practices of the self, it becomes imperative for analysis to specify the sociohistorical realms it hopes to illuminate, however broadly. Foucault’s

late lectures at the Collège de France (2008) introduced the heuristic categories of “governmentality” and “political rationality”; using these analytics, he examined “liberalism” or “liberal governmental rationality” as a transformation of *Raison d’État* and as an emergent way of configuring, reflecting upon, and exercising state power, which is in turn transformed by neoliberal political rationality. In these studies, governmentality signifies a move away from the sovereign–subject model of power in which the king both “holds” and “represents” power.⁶ Such a shift in perspective compels us to “cut off the head of the king” (Foucault 1990) and to focus on the ways in which subjects are “governed at a distance”; how power operates through “the conduct of conduct”; how governmentality works as “action upon the conditions of action” (Foucault 2008). In this account power is not simply repressive but, as Thomas Lemke puts it, “is foremost about guidance and *Führung*; that is, governing the forms of self-government, structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects” (Lemke 2010, 36).

This focus on the governmentality of liberalism and neoliberalism is thus consistent with the methodological shift away from ideology critique and toward the political rationalities that condition certain forms of subjectivity. Because the objects of inquiry involve “forms of rationality, which the human subject applied to himself,” Foucault poses a question that returns us to the tension of subjectivity with which we began: “How does it happen that the human subject makes himself into an object of possible knowledge, through which forms of rationality, and at what price” (Foucault 1996, 355)? In a word, Foucault’s lectures suggest that the fundamental principles as well as the relationship between government and the market defined by eighteenth-century liberalism were “completely reversed ... in the twentieth century” (Foucault 2008, 121). The shift from *liberal* to *neoliberal* political rationality can be found in the movement from *labor* to *human capital*; from *production* to *entrepreneurship*; from *exchange* to *competition*; from the market principle of *equivalence* to that of *inequality* (i.e., from a policy of social welfare to a policy in which, as Röpke says, “inequality is the same for all”); and from the *naturalism* of *laissez faire* to the *constructivism* of active state support of competitive markets (Foucault 2008).

To update Foucault’s study to contemporary neoliberal conditions, one must account for the rise of finance and financialization, processes which “responsibilize” – that is, prioritize the market while placing the responsibility and burdens on – both individuals and the state, valorize the ideal of “consensus” among “stakeholders” above all else, and employ the techniques of “best practices” and “benchmarking” as the most effective (and depoliticizing) ways of exercising power (Brown 2015). In other words, these become the means of attaining the objectives of neoliberal governance, which include privatization, deregulation, and economization. Foucault’s account also forces us to reconsider “the economy” as a noun that designates a “sphere” of activity – a noun used so often that it is taken for granted but that, as Mitchell (2002 and 2011) shows, only emerged as such in the mid-twentieth century. Not to be equated with a regime of *laissez faire* in which the state lets “the” economy “be,” neoliberalism adopts the market as the organizing and regulating principle of the state itself, such that the “state is under the supervision of the market rather than the market being supervised by the state” (Foucault 2008, 116). This signifies not only an inversion of the classical state–economy formulation and a disturbance of classical formulations of sovereignty (Biebricher 2014; Vogl 2014), but a completely new way of figuring “the economic,” which brings with it a new set of values and ends, and a new conception of the subject along economic lines.

Neoliberal Subjectivity

What, then, of “the economic”? We appear to have reached a strange impasse in how we theorize the subject. Following, in broad brushstrokes, various conceptions of subjectivity in critical theory, we first tracked the emergence of the economic domain of material production in Marx and in Marxist ideology critique; here the subject and forms of consciousness were largely linked to their position vis-à-vis socioeconomic relations of production. The primacy of “the economic” then subsided as the focus of critique and conceptions of subjectivity shifted to “culture,” broadly construed; here “materialism” departed from strict economic determinants, as the concept of ideology played a new, more expansive role in accounting for the formation and incorporation of subjects within capitalism. And finally, subsequent to “the critique of the subject” and through Foucault’s analytics, “the economic” has returned, albeit in a more dynamic and reconfigured fashion. Here “the economic” is no longer understood as *the* domain of world-making, as the site of the real and the mover of history, endowed with a kind of ontological primacy. Additionally, in this approach, “ideology” is no longer the central concept or mode of critique. Rather, the state–economy binary and “the economy” as such have lost any such status, as the examination of political rationality, which animates new modes of governmentality, helps make visible processes and practices of *economization* that reconfigure subjectivity across spheres of social, economic, and political life. “The economic” has returned, not as a structural or ontological determinant, but as a construction of political rationality that enables new forms of conduct and subjectivity, as well as new mechanisms of control.

Is this nothing other than the specter of Marx, which, as Derrida (2006) might suggest, is rearing its head yet again? Perhaps. The specter of materialism? This is also a possibility, though not exactly as the “speculative turn” would have it. At once developed and left underdeveloped by Foucault, this analytic framework of political rationality forces us to reconsider the categories (including materialism) and to rethink the methodological assumptions (including ideology critique) that undergird predominant approaches to analysis and critique. It compels us to ask how we might understand neoliberalism not simply as an ideology, a class project or a prescribed set of policy objectives (e.g., Harvey 2005), but as a transformation and dissemination of (neoliberal) political rationality that remakes the conditions of subjectivity, which include the availability, the normativity, and the limitations of certain practices of the self.

Let us explore such forms of subjectivity, by both using and pushing beyond Foucault. For there is much to be found in his account, and much that requires further development in the conceptualization of human capital, the entrepreneur of the self, and the shift from the liberal to the neoliberal form of *homo economicus*. Pursuing this path leads us away from the subject of interest in Jeremy Bentham or Adam Smith and toward the subject of human capital in Gary Becker. For Becker, “capital” should not be confined to its tangible forms (e.g., “a hundred shares of IBM stock, assembly lines, or steel plants”) because other forms of “investment” (computer training, medical care, and even “lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty”) are capital, too, in the sense that they “raise earning, improve health, or add to a person’s good habits over much of his lifetime.” However, Becker adds, there is an important difference in *human* capital since “people cannot be separated from their knowledge, skills, health, or values

in the way they can be separated from their financial and physical assets” (Becker 2008, 1). In this way, Becker’s (1996) “economic approach” branches out into entirely new domains, for the subject *as* human capital is not so only in its market interactions, but *everywhere*. It follows that this perspective cannot begin with human capital’s rational market choices – say, when the subject begins to act as a worker or consumer. It rather begins from the *very* beginning, with the psychosocial formation of the child. In Becker’s view, “no discussion of human capital can omit the influence of families on the knowledge, skills, health, values, and habits of their children. Parents affect educational attainment, marital stability, propensities to smoke and to get to work on time” (Becker 2008, 3).

The affective and psychic elements of subjectivity are suddenly and significantly brought into the “economic perspective.” By introducing questions of self-investment, “psychic income,” and long-term valuations, this approach breaks with the predictability of neoclassical economics and rational choice models of the subject. It does not focus on a narrow view of “self-interest” but on how subjects “maximize welfare *as they conceive it*”; it is a “*method of analysis*” in which behavior is “driven by a much richer set of values and preferences” (Becker 1996, 2; italics in original). A consequence of this, Becker admits, is that the financial and psychological conditions of self-appreciation become especially difficult to predict, for they cannot be established completely and definitely. Thus, Feher explains, all one can know about human capital in general is the following:

- (1) the subjects that [human capital] defines seek to appreciate and to value themselves, such that their life may be thought of as a strategy aimed at self-appreciation; (2) all of their behaviors and all the events affecting them (in any existential register) are liable to cause the subjects either to appreciate or to depreciate themselves; and (3) it is therefore possible to govern subjects seeking to increase the value of their human capital, or, more precisely, to act on the way they govern themselves, by inciting them to adopt conducts deemed valorizing and to follow models for self-valuation that modify their priorities and inflect their strategic choices. (Feher 2009, 28)

This neoliberal (and effectively biopolitical) shift in perspective dissolves the distinction between the producer and the consumer, and so allows for the reprogramming of the economic subject. If “capital” is anything that can be a source of future “income” (which includes the laborer’s wage), then labor, defined as abilities and skills, and indeed the entire subject herself, becomes a capital: “the set of all those physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage” (Foucault 2008, 224). This further entails a recasting of the very notion of ownership: in practical terms, Foucault remarks, human capital is “inseparable from the person who possesses it.” Skills and capabilities are precisely what define the worker as a capital, and in this way “the worker’s skill is really a machine” that is “bound” to the subject in his very constitution (Foucault 2008, 224). Human capital thus encompasses a multiplicity of attributes, such as innate (genetic and physical), contextual (social milieu and parental care), as well as collateral (lifestyle and psychological) factors (Feher 2009, 26). It implies not just an intensification of the classical *homo economicus* (i.e., the truck-and-bartering economic man of interest and exchange) but a transformation of *homo economicus* into

the entrepreneur of the self. It carries a more expansive and further economized sense of self – i.e., the subject as her own capital, her own producer, and the source of her own earnings. In turn, this mode of analysis can be (and currently is) *applied* to all realms of life. Which is to say that all problems – from education to criminality, from diet and exercise planning to corporate management, from migration to public hygiene – can (and, in this model, must) be conceptualized in terms of the enhancement and appreciation of human capital. “Human capital is so uncontroversial nowadays,” Becker accurately observed in his 1992 Nobel speech, “that it may be difficult to appreciate the hostility in the 1950s and 60s toward the approach that went with the term” (Becker 1996, 10).

How does this novel figuration of subjectivity alter the (post-)Marxist accounts of subjection discussed above? To address part of the Marxist formulation head-on, Foucault emphasizes that this “does not exactly mean, as economic, sociological, or psychological criticism said traditionally, that capitalism transforms the worker into a machine and alienates him as a result” (Foucault 2008, 224). “This is not a conception of labor power,” Foucault insists, but is “a conception of capital-ability ... so that the worker himself appears as a sort of enterprise for himself” (Foucault 2008, 225). Expanding on the significance of this shift, Feher observes that “contrary to the relationship of liberal entrepreneurs to their businesses and that of free laborers to their labor power, the relationship of a neoliberal subject to his or her human capital cannot be properly defined as ownership and thus escapes the liberal realm of possessive individualism” (Feher 2009, 34). Human capital thus takes the stage and replaces the Marxist conception of the subject of “free labor” and the liberal subject of interest as the dominant subjective form of neoliberalism. That this concept of human capital has become so widespread, Feher adds, “is less a symptom of the gradual ‘commodification’ of the liberal subject than it is the expression of an emergent neoliberal condition” (Feher 2009, 25).

Beyond commodification and marketization, human capital is part and parcel of processes of *economization* – a broader process that can include but is not reducible to commodification (Çalışkan and Callon 2009; Brown 2015). The economization of previously non-economic domains is not simply an updated mode of calculating or a form of subjective consciousness in line with the Weberian and Frankfurt School critique of instrumental rationality. It involves the interplay of material and subjective elements that would qualitatively evade the “colonization of the lifeworld” by instrumental rationality. The “economic perspective,” as we have seen, foregrounds the “enterprise form” within a competitive market society, which disseminates entrepreneurial norms of voluntary cooperation (Friedman 2002) based on a conception of freedom as self-responsibility (Hayek 2011). This comprises a larger model for the valuation for rational, self-appreciating activity, whether individual, familial, or corporate. Neoliberalism thus extends “the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family” (Foucault 2008, 242). Such a model, prescribed by both the German ordoliberals and the Chicago neoliberals, entails “a policy of the economization of the entire social field, of an extension of the economy to the entire social field” (Foucault 2008, 242). Focused on “non-economic processes, relations, and behavior,” the application of the neoliberal model works as a sort of methodological and conceptual “grid,” which makes it possible to reveal “a number of intelligible relations which otherwise would not have appeared as

such – a sort of economic analysis of the non-economic” (Foucault 2008, 243). At once an object of inquiry and an analytic of inquiry, political rationality becomes a critical lens for capturing practices of economization: subjectivity (and forms of intersubjectivity) are configured by knowledge, discourse, and modes of governmentality which must now comport with an economized social field that is constantly remade by neoliberal metrics and modes of valuation. The implications for understanding subjectivity today are clearly far-reaching.

Following Foucault’s line of inquiry – as well as those who have since further developed it, such as Brown (2015), Feher (2009), Lemke (2010), Dardot and Laval (2013), and Rose (1998) – neoliberalism presupposes a condition and a form of subjectivity that it in turn brings into being. We have seen that the generalized concept of human capital is central to this process, and that the *homo economicus* of classical liberalism is, on the one hand, modified by the normative entailments of human capital and, on the other, subjected to turbulent conditions of a neoliberal market society. As governmentality alters the conditions in which certain forms of conduct are prescribed and made possible, subjectification works through the discursive and practical dissemination of political rationality, reprogramming and absorbing into the subject’s self-relation and reflexivity. Because practices of governance are premised on the notion of human capital, they can be seen as at once attempting to understand the internal rationality of individuals *and* as strategically programming the individual’s activity. A prime example of this is the normalizing processes of *evaluation*, which, as Dardot and Laval (2013) observe, lead “individuals to adapt to the new criteria of performance and quality, to respect new procedures that are frequently no less formal than classical bureaucratic rules.” Such processes work through “the internalization of performance norms, constant self-monitoring to comply with the indicators, and competition with others” (250–251). Though Çalışkan and Callon’s (2009) article addresses neither neoliberalism nor human capital *per se*, they offer a helpful guide to understanding these processes of economization: “Subjectification implies that, if some modes of valuation are seen as economic and if they are related to behaviours also considered as economic, it is because agents have been configured and formatted as subjects who are technically and mentally equipped to enact these valuations.” In other words, the neo-Marxist and structuralist accounts examined above won’t do; subjects are not simply made and driven by the overdetermination of larger forces, since these “subjectified agents are actively engaged with the very cognitive and material devices that enable them to participate as economic subjects” (389).

The economization of human capital thus returns us to the opening tension between *subjectum* and *subjectus*: subjects within a neoliberal order are subjectified by its norms, its imperatives, and its turbulent, anxiety-producing conditions; at the same time, by targeting the subject’s capabilities as human capital, neoliberal rationality also makes possible certain reflexive techniques of working on the self materially connected to technologies that facilitate such economized forms of valuation. While the focus thus far has been the production of these figures and conditions by a specific political rationality, such processes also have, without doubt, vast implications on the unconscious and on the operations of desire – returning us to the contributions of psychoanalysis. Not only must economization affect desire but, in Maurizio Lazzarato’s (2014) rendering, the production of subjectivity is itself based on “deterritorialized desire,” which exceeds the “subjective essence of production” in Marx, Smith, and Ricardo. Neoliberalism now includes “an ethico-political dimension”; it combines “labor” (production) with

“work on the self” (praxis). Taking inspiration from and recourse to Deleuze and Guattari (1977), Lazzarato foregrounds a concept of desire “appropriate to the new nature of ‘economy’ wherein ‘labor’ and ‘work on the self,’ production and subjectivation, coalesce and desire serves to define economy as the ‘production of the possible’” (Lazzarato 2014, 51). Differentiating his account from that of “cognitive capitalism,” he stresses that capitalism does not simply run on “knowledge,” as the Silicon Valley faithful might have it, but on ways of producing subjectivity that are centered on desire – i.e., configurations of “desire on which even knowledge, information, and cultural production depend” (Lazzarato 2014, 52). The prime example of this, for Lazzarato, is found in the internalization and enslaving effects of financial capitalism, most specifically its reproduction of the creditor–debtor relationship, which constitutes the subject as “indebted man.”

Through an examination of post-Marxist approaches to critique, I have attempted to bring to light new forms of rationality, which presuppose and are productive of a certain kind of subject and which the subject in turn applies to the self through modes of conduct and reflection. This has further pointed to formations of desire linked to new configurations of power under capitalism, which run through both conscious and unconscious patterns of behavior and which are thus central in the production and regulation of neoliberal subjectivity. Let me conclude, then, with a brief consideration of some of the potential features as well as profound implications of neoliberal subjectivity.

Foucault’s examination of *homo economicus* and human capital laid the groundwork for understanding neoliberal subjectivity and the interconnected rise of “the entrepreneur” – a figure that has become the *ideal* within and beyond managerial and corporate discourse, the *norm* for citizen conduct in political discourse, and the “*reality principle*” within a socioeconomic order whose objectives include the production of creditworthy individual subjects as well as the collective production of endless economic growth. Human capital operates here as a model of the subject (the entrepreneur of the self) not just in the market, but in all realms of life. This proved integral in the shift from “the subject of interest” and “labor power” to the subject who can and must rent her assets and skills in order to appreciate her value, in order to engage in proper modes of credit-accumulation and portfolio-management (Feher 2009). The features and imperatives of this entrepreneurial subject include *flexibility*, *adaptability*, and *plasticity* (Mirowski 2013); a willingness not only to *compete* but also to *risk* oneself and one’s assets in the enterprise of value-appreciation (Feher 2015; Mirowski 2013); a focus on corporations’ *shareholder value* and stock over and above the previous imperative to increase and optimize profit over time (Brown 2015; Feher 2015); an embrace of *innovation* as an individual and systemic imperative, whether in a corporate or public setting, whether for start-ups or universities (Newfield 2015); a ravenous search after and incorporation of *new services and technologies* toward the end of value-appreciation (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media [Silverman 2015], or Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, and other services within the “sharing economy” [Feher 2015]); and an expository disposition and desire that manifest themselves in constant connection, in digital self-projection and self-exhibition, and in the new modes of self-monitoring and surveillance (personal, corporate, and state) that accompany them (Harcourt 2014; Morozov 2012).

The consequences of this new dominant mode of subjectivity might include the further *fragmentation of the self*, which, according to Mirowski (2013), “begins when the

agent is brought face to face with the realization that she is not just an employee or student, but also simultaneously a product to be sold, a walking advertisement, manager of her resume, a biographer of her rationales, and an entrepreneur of her possibilities⁷ and continues in the process, not of learning about but rather *managing* the self: “She is a jumble of assets to be invested, nurtured, managed, and developed; but equally an offsetting inventory of liabilities to be pruned, outsourced, shorted, hedged against, and minimized” (108). Coupled with the aforementioned “culture of risk” and the interconnected regime of debt, particularly student debt, higher levels of *anxiety* are an additional consequence. This we learn from basic insights of psychoanalysis (whether regarding “civilization” writ large [Freud 2010] or conditions specific to capitalism [Lacan 2002]), of course, but also from recent academic studies and news articles that declare it a problem of public health: “Anxiety has now surpassed depression as the most common mental health diagnosis among college students, though depression, too, is on the rise” (Hoffman 2015). The politics of austerity play a role here, but such policies are subtended by discourses of institutional *devolution* and individual *responsibilization* on both the right and the left. The normative rhetoric of responsabilization implores and (en)forces subjects to be responsible for themselves and to “care for the self,” regardless of the often minimal resources at their disposal or the turbulent conditions that created their desperate situations in the first place (Brown 2015). This is a further political tactic of economization and a part of social experience that, of course, falls in line with the norm of human capital. Yet these facets of subjectivity also manifest themselves in economic relations and employment – namely, with generalized conditions of *precarity*. Connected to broader shifts in deregulation and financialization, this comes with the demise of organized labor and the rise of the “sharing economy.” The growing prevalence of contract work across different sectors (e.g., journalism, sales, marketing, technology, and finance) has in turn produced a new and often highly qualified reserve army of “independent contractors” (e.g., itinerant nurses, university adjunct lecturers, Uber drivers), whose terms of employment often lack the benefits, security, and stability that once characterized a life’s work in many of these sectors.

When market competition among enterprises becomes “the formative power of society” (Foucault 2008, 148), the effects on subjectivity are palpable and indeed “remake the soul” as Margaret Thatcher, following Friedrich Hayek, so wished. As entrepreneurship becomes “the new common sense” (Szeman 2015), there occurs a kind of “anthropological shift”: a turn from the possessive, sovereign, humanistic subject of liberalism (a subject who can consume as well as own the objects she desires) to the self-investing, self-appreciating subject of human capital (a subject who, in being bound and dispensable according to her credit score, loses even this possessive element of sovereignty) (Feher 2016). This form of *homo economicus*, presupposed by neoliberal political rationality, is now targeted by a form of governance that rewards creditworthy subjects and, with the European Union as a case study, “disposes” of discredited subjects through manifold techniques of obfuscation, harassment, replacement, neglect (Feher 2015). In this shift, Brown (2015) argues, the economized subject of human capital (*homo economicus*) replaces the aspirationally sovereign citizen-subject (*homo politicus*), with profound consequences for democracy, liberal or otherwise. Where neoliberal political rationality governs, the democratic political imaginary decays. The norms and forms of valuation that shape neoliberal subjectivity thus devitalize the most basic democratic

practices; indeed, the basic features of democratic citizen-subjects become an infeasible afterthought. Is the (aspirational) ideal of popular sovereignty sacrificed to the trophy of (limitless?) economic growth as yet another (though perhaps the most profound) consequence of ever-expanding processes of economization (Brown 2015)? Foucault's remark that the subject of human capital is "someone who is eminently governable" (Foucault 2008, 270) becomes particularly salient under these conditions, though in ways Foucault likely could not have imagined.

The enduring tension of the "subject" – between agentic *self-making*, on the one hand, and *subjection* to the powers in which the self is situated and formed, on the other – has not been dissolved. Yet today the tension has taken an economized turn. Following some of the terms and debates in Marxist and post-Marxist thought, I have tracked the ways in which particular conceptions of subjectivity are couched in larger traditions and approaches to critique, revealing in turn the stakes of critique for apprehending modes of contemporary subjectivity. This chapter has also followed the many senses of "the economic" within these formulations, with the dual aim of capturing the dilemmas inherent to "ideology critique" and of offering the analytic of "political rationality" as an alternative approach. In focusing on shifting practices of governmentality rather than on the mystification of consciousness, I have argued, the former may better account for the multiple processes involved in the production of subjectivity today – processes that are never exhaustive in their operations and never without the possibility of resistance. That these economized features and practices of the self often work at levels "far above and below" subjective consciousness does not preclude us from inquiring into the root tensions of power and self-making; nor does this prevent us from continuously asking after the techniques employed, the values embedded, and the objectives guiding our subjective and collective futures – lest we forget that they are variable and interconnected.

- see CHAPTER 2 (VIENNA 1899 – PARIS 1981; OR, PSYCHOANALYSIS); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES)

Notes

- 1 "This sovereign being," Balibar importantly adds, "may be another human or supra-human, or an 'inner' sovereign or master, or even simply a transcendent (impersonal) law" (Balibar 1994, 8). See also Balibar (1991) and *Power* (2007).
- 2 The underlying argument of *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar 2009), for example, rests on such an assumption: Althusser claimed to seize upon a "scientific" mode of analysis through a reading of the "epistemological break" between Marx's earlier and later writings, where the latter became scientific by overcoming the subjective humanism contained in the former. For a discussion of the question of "science" in Marxism, see Thomas (2008) and Jay (1984).
- 3 For classic analytical treatments of the concept of ideology, see Geuss (1982) and Rosen (1996).
- 4 For thinkers who bring together insights about the subject from psychoanalysis and Foucault, see for example Brown (1995), Butler (1997), and Luxon (2013).

- 5 “The relationship between law and desire [in certain versions of psychoanalysis] works in much the way Foucault portrays the relationship between power and resistance. Law does not repress, but rather incites desire” (Brown and Scott 2014).
- 6 For a discussion of the difference between sovereignty and government in Foucault’s lectures, see Callison (2014).
- 7 For an example of “walking advertisements” and other neoliberal techniques of branding and managing multiculturalism and diversity in higher education, see Cohen and Raiford (2015).

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11

Diaspora and Migration

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If a student wishes to study migration and diaspora today, he or she will be faced with an incredible range of theories and perspectives competing or combining to try to define the phenomenon and make some analytical sense of it. The field has always been of interest to a variety of disciplines, from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies to geography and demography. But today, one can add a whole array of cross-disciplinary approaches such as migration studies, globalization studies, mobility studies, transnational studies, diasporic studies, cosmopolitan studies, and many more, all shedding light in their own particular way on one dimension or another of the migratory process that one wishes to analyze. In many of these fields, migration or forms of diasporic being are seen as challenging narrowly national forms of identification, subverting dominant forms of sovereignty and borders, and leading to a proliferation of hybridized identifications and forms of life. Consequently, any suggestion that a true critical cultural analysis of diaspora is still to come might come across as pretentious and uninformed. So, a clarification is needed.

I would like to differentiate here between critical *cultural* analysis and critical *social* analysis in the way I have differentiated elsewhere between critical anthropology and critical sociology (Hage 2015). Critical social analysis is concerned with unearthing relations of power and is articulated to an oppositional politics (*anti*-politics). Critical cultural analysis is more concerned with the formulation of another way of living and is articulated to a political search for alternatives (*alter*-politics). As I have argued previously, this is not an either/or choice. All critical writing is a combination of critical social/sociological and critical cultural/anthropological analysis. And in so far as it is political, it is always a combination of anti- and alter-politics, whether the critique is of capitalism and colonialism or of normative gender or normative sexuality. If I argue then that a critical cultural analysis of diaspora is something towards which we need to move, I don't mean to suggest that no critical cultural analysis has ever been done. Nor do I mean to argue that critical cultural analysis should be done instead of critical social analysis. Rather, I want to point out that, thus far, critical diasporic study has been far more dominated by a social/sociological rather than an anthropological/cultural imaginary (even within anthropology), and that there needs to be more of the latter.

The movement of people, the circulation of goods, and the spread of cultural forms have always been at the core of anthropology as a discipline. This can easily be exemplified by the study of the circulation of goods and gifts, the analysis of the movement of cultural forms behind theories such as diffusionism, and, least recognized of all as an antecedent to migration studies, the study of population movements assumed by patrilocal and matrilocal marriages. Despite this, it is customary to begin a work on the anthropology of diaspora and migration by saying that the discipline was late in taking migratory flows into account (Brettell 2003) and that it contributed to a general sedentary analytical bias by naturalizing the relation between identity and territoriality (Malkki 1995). The failure to recognize and build on the study of mobility, which lies at the core of the discipline, has meant that anthropology's turn towards the study of migration and diaspora has been grounded in disciplinary traditions other than its own. This meant that very little had initially differentiated anthropological studies of migration from other disciplinary studies when those began to emerge in the 1950s.

One important domain of disciplinary distinction has been the study of transnational networks. Yet despite the rich material produced by the anthropology of transnational networks, the dominant analytical attention towards transnationalism (encapsulated in the very notion of network and its emphasis on "relations" and "ties") has been sociological or social-anthropological rather than cultural. This has been so right from the beginning, in the foundational texts of the transnational studies of migration (see Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995). Arjun Appadurai's (1990) concept of ethnoscapas moves towards a cultural direction, though it remains what I would define as a sociological conception of culture, that is, culture as something that can be observed and delineated by an outside observer, precisely in the manner of a landscape, rather than an environment in which one is situated and which is the product of a certain experience.

If there is cultural analytical work associated with such approaches to transnationalism, it is mainly concerned with the global cultural conditions that facilitated the formation of transnational networks rather than with transnationalism itself as culture. In anthropology, however, cultural analysis has been more prevalent and productive in the analysis of "migrant cultures" or the "cultures of migration" such as in the work of Roger Rouse (1991) and Pnina Werbner (2012). Of equal foundational importance is the work of Appadurai on the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of cultural forms (Appadurai 1996). Clearly, the above studies and those which have issued from them offer important windows into the actual makeup of diasporic cultures, especially the transformations and variations in their key constitutive elements such as kinship, food and religious beliefs, and the social relations articulated around them. Nonetheless, such investigations of various cultures of settlement and the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization do not define a common cultural milieu. Indeed their interest lies in the opposite direction, in the differentiating processes happening within that milieu. Foundational as they are, they have nonetheless been more often than not location-specific studies of the cultures of settlement, examining either the transformations of traditional cultural forms that occur in the process of migration and settlement or the classical problematics of assimilation, acculturation, culture maintenance, and the relation with host national cultures. None take as their object the cultural

specificities of the global/transnational environment experienced and shared by all members of a particular diaspora or the critical cultural perspective such an analysis offers us. This is what I intend to move towards here, by taking the Lebanese diasporic space that I have been studying for the last twenty-five years as my starting point.

Towards an Analytics of Diasporic Culture

In the village of Jalleh in North Lebanon where I began my fieldwork, people are continuously migrating. There are also always people who are coming back either permanently or for a visit. Those immigrants and returnees are part of a substantial transnational migratory flow that has long shaped and continues to shape the very nature of Lebanese society, economy, and culture. International emigration from Jalleh began in the earliest periods of the history of modern Lebanese international migration and has continued to closely follow the trends and changes the latter has witnessed over time. Between the 1850s and 1880s, migration from what was then referred to as “the Lebanese Mountain” or simply “the Mountain” slowly evolved from a movement of a few individuals to an important structural phenomenon. By the 1890s and until World War I around a third of the Mountain’s population of roughly half a million had migrated to the American continent, and in smaller numbers to Europe and Australia. In ways with which researchers in migration in other parts of the world are familiar, the intensity of this migratory flow has varied, shaped by both local developments and the many global factors that have influenced flows everywhere, but it has continued throughout the twentieth century after Lebanon was constituted into a nation-state, and it continues today. Also, and again like everywhere else, what began as a one-way migration was quickly transformed into a transnational network of relations between the various national and international points to which and from which people continuously traveled.

Bearing in mind that Lebanon’s population in 2011 was around 4.2 million people, the importance of this diaspora numerically and in relative terms is beyond doubt. All in all, and taking into account the abundance of some rather extravagant claims, there are up to four times more Lebanese outside than inside of Lebanon. With around 7 to 8 million people of Lebanese descent, or up to twice as many Lebanese as there are in Lebanon, Brazil clearly stands out. Next in numerical importance are about 1.25 million in Argentina and about 1 million in the United States. The Caribbean, Mexico, Europe, Venezuela, Canada, and Australia come next with populations between 300,000 and half a million. Finally, one has to note substantial settlements of up to 150,000 Lebanese throughout Africa and a similar number in the Gulf. Although only about 2 million of all of the above continue to have Lebanese citizenship, overall this transnational diasporic presence is an integral part of the Lebanese social formation, if for no other reason than the remittances they send back to Lebanon. These constitute roughly 25 percent of Lebanese GDP. As far as Jalleh is concerned, there are people from the village literally in all of the above locations. But the biggest concentrations of villagers are in rural Venezuela, in Sydney and Melbourne, and in Boston and its surroundings, with smaller settlements in Montreal, São Paulo, and some seasonal migration to the Gulf. My fieldwork was conducted between the village, Cadubare in Venezuela, Sydney, and Boston. I only occasionally visited the other settlements.

How to come to grips with the nature and significance of the migratory movements and the transnational realities to which they give rise, and of which they now are part, is one of the foundational problematics of what constitutes today migration/mobility/diasporic/transnational studies. While these movements and realities can be approached in many ways, my central question here is: Where and in what does one immerse oneself to study the transnational culture constituted by the people of Jalleh as they, those in the village and those who have migrated and settled elsewhere, relate to each other around the globe? Working as I do in a multidisciplinary environment with various understandings and imaginaries of what “culture” is, I find the concept of immersion (though commonly deployed in anthropology) important to stress in order to highlight the particularity of a critical *culturalist* approach. At the very least, it draws attention to the fact that a culture conceived as something in which one can immerse oneself is not akin to a Durkheimian discreet social fact, a cultural happening or a cultural trend – that is, something one can position causally in relation to other discreet social or cultural facts existing within a wider all-encompassing social space. Culture as something into which one immerses oneself is an all-encompassing phenomenon. It is a generalized milieu in which all the facts, happenings, phenomena, events, and trends of this social space are located. If causality is to be thought within such an understanding of culture, it stands towards the dominant sociological forms of causality in a similar fashion to how Newtonian causality stands to Cartesian causality. This is a point well made by Georges Canguilhem in his classic work, “The Living and its Milieu” (2001, 8). It is worth quoting him at length here:

In Newton’s day, the problem facing mechanics was that of the action of distinct physical bodies at a distance. It was a problem that had not existed for Descartes. For him, there was only one mode of physical action, impact, in only one possible physical situation, that of contact. This is why we can say that in Cartesian physics the notion of milieu has no place. But it was difficult to extend the Cartesian theory of impact and contact to the case of separate point particles, since in this case they could not act without being confounded by this action. As a result, we can see that Newton was led to pose the problem of the means of the action. Luminous ether was for him the fluid that served as the vehicle of action at a distance. This explains the passage from the notion of fluid as a vehicle to its designation as a medium [milieu]. The fluid is the intermediary between two bodies; it is their milieu; and to the extent that it penetrates these bodies, they are situated within it.

A Beirut doctor captured this notion of a common milieu reasonably well when he described migration to me as “a bug that pervades the social environment. It affects people differently but everyone catches it the moment they breathe the air.” Trying to capture this bug-infested environment highlights some important differences in the way both migration and diaspora as research objects are defined when approached this way.

Firstly, to say that from the moment one is born as a social subject – the moment one “breathes the air” – one is constituted as a diasporic subject immediately puts us at odds with approaches that assume a subject who at some stage suddenly begins thinking and “deliberating” about the possibility and viability of migration as if for the first time in

their lives. This is an approach often associated with “rational choice” theory. Indeed, when I began my research in Jalleh, I used to naïvely ask some of the people preparing to migrate: “So, when did you start contemplating migration?” Their answer was inevitably a variation on “I’ve been thinking about migration ever since I was born.” A diasporic milieu interpellates all the subjects born into it as always already diasporic subjects – as subjects whose very being and social viability cannot be understood without understanding their entanglement with questions of migration and transnationalism. In Jalleh, for instance, one would have to struggle to find someone whose life is being lived without questions of migration and diaspora being part of it. It is important to stress, however, that understanding that everyone’s social viability is entangled with questions of migration does not mean everyone is contemplating migration. Thinking about and being affected by migration can take many forms.

This brings us to the second point highlighted by my Beirut doctor above: the idea that the migration bug “affects people differently.” To study diasporic culture is not the same as to study “migration” for it involves recognizing the multiplicity of modes of being a diasporic subject. Being a migrant subject who has experienced international mobility and has settled elsewhere, or a subject who wants to experience such forms of mobility, are only a few modes among many of being a diasporic subject.

Asserting that a diasporic subject is not necessarily a migrant subject helps us to delineate more clearly the contours of what we are calling diasporic culture. It allows us to highlight the fact that migratory culture is merely one dimension of diasporic culture and not even a necessary one from an experiential point of view. It could be immediately objected that migration historically precedes diaspora and that a transnational diasporic culture is practically and logically, not just historically, unthinkable without actual migration. This is all of course true. Yet, none of these objections prevent us from arguing that migration is merely one among many trajectories and endeavors that constitute the diasporic universe. To help understand the coexistence of such apparently paradoxical propositions (and the reader will pardon me the Australian-specific example), we can say that diasporic culture is to migration what beach culture is to swimming and surfing. Swimming and surfing are of course at the core of beach culture. In some places, at least, beach culture formed historically around swimming and surfing practices. And swimmers and surfers, with their various modes of inhabiting the ocean and the beach, their habits and relationalities, and their fashion, etc., have continuously shaped beach culture. But beach culture is the culture of a whole beach town or at least a whole section of a beach town. And despite the historical and even ontological primacy of swimming and surfing in beach culture, they nonetheless become one feature of beach culture among many once this culture has been instituted, even if they remain experienced by many as its most important feature. Likewise, then, we can say that migration, despite its historical and practical importance, is only one part of, and one mode of experiencing, the wider diasporic culture that it has nonetheless brought about.

This brings us back to the second point in our delineation of diasporic culture: to say that one does not need to be a migrant to be a diasporic subject is to also say that one does not need to be outside of Lebanon to be part of diasporic culture. Indeed, as I will argue, seeing diasporic culture at the point of its emergence in Lebanon gives us access to some its key features that might otherwise escape us if we are approaching diaspora from a point of settlement.

Jalleh's Diasporic Culture

When people tell me “I have been thinking about migration ever since I can remember,” or when my doctor tells me that migration is a bug that “pervades the social environment” and that “affects people ... the moment they breathe the air,” they are each telling us in their own language that there are certain aspects of Jalleh, like in every other Lebanese village, that constitute the village subject into a diasporic subject very early in their lives. Many of these features are easily available ethnographically. It is striking how, in reading the available literature on migration, one is left with an implicit impression that cultural complexity and hybridity are always on the side of the cultures of destination while the villages immigrants leave are imagined to be simple and monocultural. While the literature on vernacular cosmopolitanism aims to dethrone the urban, upper-class, western bias of the conceptions of cosmopolitanism that preceded it, travel is still seen as precondition for access to such cosmopolitanism. Yet, it does not take long for an observer that becomes conscious of this to realize how misleading such an image can be. Indeed, the very opposite is true: what is astonishing is the extent to which any village in Lebanon is constituted by a multiplicity of transnational cultural forms the moment it has become part of the transnational diasporic circuit, which is, as already pointed out, soon after it begins to witness emigration.

When I initially stayed in Jalleh, the very first thing that happened was the mayor taking me on a tour of the village “real estate” where houses built or renovated with migrant remittances were referred to by the geographic location of the emigrants that funded their construction: Saudi Arabian, American, Brazilian, Australian, and so on. And just like the external public spaces of the village, the interior of houses is also full of diasporic connections: from photos of family members often displayed in lounge rooms on walls or tables or on top of the television. But along with the way diasporic relations mark themselves in material culture there is of course the intensification of technologically mediated interactions with emigrants that are becoming cheaper, quicker, and more interactive, particularly with the introduction of Skype (see Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010; Madianou and Miller 2012; Nedelcu 2012). Then there is the constant flow of returning emigrants who, in the way they walk, dress, cook, and eat, become living diasporic monuments in themselves. In public gatherings one can hear all kinds of diasporic exclamations that can sometimes make for a truly multilingual cacophony, sometimes uttered by the same person: “por favor, come here, viens chez moi, ya habibi.” Furthermore, throughout the Mountain today, Felipe, Sol, Christo, Mario, and Christina as first names increasingly compete with the traditional Maronite Charbel and Maroun, and the equally traditional Pierre, Jean, and Jeannette French names that have been popular since the nineteenth century.

Finally, one has to note that along with these village-specific social and symbolic diasporic forms there is a continuous flow of nationally produced discourses concerning migration that one learns in schools and that are diffused in a variety of media, particularly Lebanese folk singing, a tradition extremely rich in diaspora-related themes. Arguing that this diasporic culture is just as much the culture of Lebanon as it is the culture of those emigrants who have settled elsewhere around the world, pits such a definition against those who used the concept as a mode of differentiating between local culture and the cultures of those who are traditionally called “the Lebanese of the diaspora.” Local culture is just as much a composite of transnational cultural forms as

any place of settlement. There are no differences in this regard between the two. This puts us face to face with an important claim that I want to now develop: there is no such a thing as non-diasporic modern Lebanese culture. This is because diasporic culture is the very culture of Lebanese capitalist modernity. To the extent that a non-diasporic culture exists, it is in those very few places where capitalist modernity has not taken hold.

Diasporic Culture as a Culture of Capitalist Modernity

Most academic accounts of the history of Lebanese migration and the transnational networks it gave rise to ground them in the history of the stunted development of Lebanese capitalism (Chevallier 1982; Labaki 1984; Khater 2001; Traboulsi 2012). World-system theory, dependency theory, and theories of underdevelopment are mobilized either separately or together to account for this history. To be sure, there is no doubt that the Lebanese Mountain's migratory processes that began in the middle of the nineteenth century were a feature of the limited, dependent, and ultimately stunted form of industrialization that followed the capitalist penetration of what was a predominantly feudal region at the time. This process was triggered by French interest in the quality of Lebanese silk and the industrialization of silk production that ensued. This industrialization brought about changes commonly associated with capitalist modernity everywhere, such as the straining of the relation between peasant and feudal lord, the severing of the peasant's relation to the land, the spread of the wage form and of a money economy, the rise of individuality at the expense of kinship solidarity, and the transformation of gender relations. This silk-based industrialization itself was short-lived, ending with the global decline of the silk industry that began at the end of the nineteenth century. But its transformation of the Mountain was irreversible, particularly so through the migratory movements that accompanied it.

It is very clear, then, even from this very brief account, that a structural understanding of the causes of emigration grounded in theories of uneven development, and particularly Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System* (1974), with their emphasis on "the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, noncapitalist societies creat[ing] a mobile population that is prone to migration abroad" (Massey et al. 1993, 444), have much purchase over nineteenth-century Lebanese migration to the West. While not wishing to underrate the explanatory power of this narrative, I nonetheless think that the way causality is spoken of and imagined in structural theories is not unlike the Cartesian forms of causality described above by Canguilhem. It is good to carefully think through what it means to say, as in the way it is often formulated, that the introduction of capitalism "caused" the rise of migration. Such a notion of causality invites one to think the two phenomena as external to each other, as in the general positivist formula $f A \text{ causes } f B$.

What is at stake in this critique of externality can be appreciated when we compare a statement such as "capitalism causes migration" with another often-made claim about the Mountain at the time, but also made about the history of capitalism in general, which is that "capitalism causes the spread of wage labor." It is very clear that in this second statement the notion of "cause" is used rather loosely, in that there is not much difference between saying "capitalism causes the spread of wage labor" and "capitalism is partly defined by the spread of wage labor." This is so because "wage labor" is seen as

an intrinsic feature of capitalism, unthinkable without it. The same kind of “internal relation” is not implied in the first statement “capitalism causes the spread of international migration.” This is what I mean by migration being imagined as extrinsic to Lebanese capitalist modernity when such causal claims are made. Yet, if we are to see migration as an intrinsic dimension of Lebanese culture, it is precisely this kind of internal relation that needs to be affirmed. We need to capture the way migration becomes as constitutive an element of Lebanese capitalism as wage labor, such that we can say that diasporic culture is not the by-product of Lebanese capitalist modernity but the very form that Lebanese capitalist modernity takes.

To be sure, this problem does not arise because of the inability of thinking an intrinsic relation between capitalism and migration in general. Indeed, histories of European capitalism often contain statements in the form of “capitalism causes migration from the country to the city” where causality is used in a loose fashion to mean that country–city migration is an intrinsic part of the formation of capitalism. If there is a difficulty here and a difference from the way the relation to wage labor is thought, it is because “migration” or “mobility” is not seen as an intrinsically “economic” category in the way the “wage form” is. But this externality takes a different turn and becomes even more pronounced as soon as we start thinking about international migration. This takes us closer to where the problem we are pointing to lies. Paradoxically, world-system theories still invite a national and Euro-normative account of the culture of capitalist modernity at the very moment that they emphasize the international structural interconnectedness of the world economy. World-system theory seems unable to think culturally what it theorizes economically. By naturalizing national space culturally while undermining it structurally, it is unable to think the relation between capitalism and international mobility in the same way capitalism and national mobility is thought. Yet this is precisely what is needed if we are to think international migration culturally. This has significant ramifications, for to say that international migration is part of the very culture of Lebanese modernity is to think of non-Euro-normative modern forms, and to move into the territory of “alternative modernities.” To be sure, it does not mean simply saying that Lebanese modernity is international “rather than” national. In a more complex way, it is to be able to think the manner in which the particular form of internationalism represented in diasporic culture is the very form taken by national modernity.

We can say that Lebanon’s modern diasporic culture is the international mode of existence of Lebanon’s underdeveloped capitalism in the same way modern colonialism/imperialism is the international mode of existence of advanced capitalism. Both began and involve forms of international mobility and resettlement. Both involve the creation of permanent transnational networks. Both are powered by the dynamic of capitalism. The biggest difference is that settler colonialists “migrate” with a sense of power and a sense that they are transnational subjects capable of dominating the spaces they go to in a way that diasporic subjects cannot. In this sense we can say that diasporic culture such as that of Lebanon’s is the poor capitalist countries’ colonialism. The colonizing subject experiences the world as organized by their own nation-state and their own national law as their turf. Transnational space becomes their national space and their national law writ large. The Lebanese diasporic subjects, on the other hand, have always seen themselves as being subjected to or having to negotiate, confront, submit, move in the shadows or between the cracks of a world organized by laws that are not theirs.

It should be clear that I am not trying to redefine what “diaspora” in general means here, but to contribute to an argument that highlights the multiplicity of forms it can take today. The Lebanese migration that became the expression of Lebanon’s capture by western modernity was largely a petty entrepreneurial migration that favored even the smallest mercantile venture over industrial wage labor. One can compare it, for instance, to Algerian migration to France. Although Lebanon was also colonized by the French, unlike the case of Algeria, Lebanese migration did not predominantly take the form of migration of wage labor to the French colonial metropolis. There would be useful analytical work to be done by comparing the relation between the colonial metropolis and its colonial settlements with the diasporic metropolis and its ethnic settlements to capture the many differences – but particularly the different “sense of power” – that are diffused within the colonial and the diasporic form of transnationalism. This, however, as we shall now see, does not mean that there were no similarities at all between the two forms of transnationalism, in so far as they represent particular modes of dwelling in the world.

The Diasporic Condition

Like the colonial transnational experience of the colonizers, the first crucial defining element of diasporic culture is the internationalization of the imaginary space of social viability. Speaking of the decline of the silk industry, the historian Akram Khater (2001) says: “Silk, then, had lifted hopes only to dash them for most Lebanese peasants; it brought into view new possibilities for life, only to snatch them away” (47). While this is undoubtedly true when speaking of local Lebanese conditions, it is also important to say something that Khater amply demonstrates but does not explicitly spell out: that silk, while dashing hopes locally, had also globalized the space of hope by linking the Mountain to the global economy. A key component of the Lebanese diasporic imaginary is therefore the way the Mountain dwellers, captured and reconstituted into modern subjects by the international capitalist economy, experienced locally the space of realizing their human viability as a global one.

Lebanese capitalism entailed, as with all capitalist transformations, new forms of dissatisfaction and new needs. One of the first local anthropologists of Lebanon, Fuad Khuri (1967), has written a classical piece comparing two villages, Douma and Aramti, that are unequally developed in capitalist terms. He shows how increased capitalist penetration created differences in the sense of ontological security experienced by the village population. As he put it: “The annual income per capita in Douma is fourfold that of Aramti, and the family size is only half as large. Yet the people of Douma show less economic security than those of Aramti. Higher standards of living appear to induce less security, while the subsistence economy of Aramti produces more security” (213). Furthermore, international capitalism was accompanied by a greater exposure to idealized images of life in the West. These were relayed by emigrants, especially returnees, but also by the growth of an international media. As Khalaf (1987), for instance, points out in relation to migration to the United States: “The literature also abundantly references the importance of the Chicago Fair in 1893 and that of Saint Louis in 1906 for attracting and spreading immigrants all over the country” (27). The rise in western schooling also played a crucial role. French Jesuits and American Protestants engaged

in a competitive drive to set up schools throughout the Mountain, giving it the best schooling network of the region.

Capitalism certainly led to the distribution of a greater capacity to migrate, whether in the form of having the necessary financial resources, or having the necessary social networks, or being free enough from kinship structures, duties and connections, and so on. As Khater (2001) points out: “Unfettering the peasants from the land is but one part of the puzzle of this migration movement; another was money. It took money to leave the village, buy a ticket, bribe officials, pay off the *sarrafs*, stay at hotels along the way, and take care of oneself in the first few days – at least – of arrival in the new country” (55).

Indeed, fantasies of international migration took root and began spreading in the Lebanese Mountain at the same time as the wage relation did. These fantasies circulated in the Mountain with the same intensity and with the same immediacy as the circulation of money and wage labor and the changes in taste and values that accompanied them. In his biographical novel, based on family archival material, Amin Maalouf tells the story of his great-grandfather’s migration to the United States:

My future grandparent stayed in Beirut for three years, a city he came to cherish, and where he will return to live on a number of occasions throughout his life. The city was then in full expansion; a development accelerated by the massacres of 1860. Many people who, up till now, dozed lazily in their Mountain villages, thinking themselves protected from the ferocity of the world, have experienced in those events a sudden awakening. The most audacious chose to go beyond the seas – it was the start of an immense migratory movement that was hardly ever interrupted since. First, in the direction of Egypt and Constantinople, then further and further afar, towards the United States, Brazil, and the totality of the American continent as well as Australia. The less adventurous – often those encumbered with a family – were content to “go down” from their village towards the harbor city, which, bit by bit, began to have the allure of a metropolis. (2004, 82)

In a revealing passage Maalouf portrays his grandfather, a man educated in an American-initiated Protestant school, delivering a speech about the virtues of the English language, “the most necessary of all those that one can study.” This was not only, his grandfather proclaims, because “books in English contain, let there be no doubt, innumerable forms of knowledge, in all domains, which is not the case of other languages,” but more importantly, because “the poor among us just as much as the rich will have to leave to the United States or towards Australia, if not immediately, at least in the near future, for reasons no one ignores.”

And so the grandfather ends up exclaiming:

Long live the English speaking countries!
Long live English! (70)

“I force myself not to smile hearing these pathetic and incongruous exclamations,” says Maalouf after relating this – with a hint of francophone chauvinism. But, as he goes on to note, the speech reveals the extent to which leaving had become a taken-for-granted fact in the Mountain. As he put it: “To leave or not to leave” very quickly became then, and has remained so today, the Mountain’s “to be or not to be” (70).

It is precisely this point that I am trying to emphasize here around the concept of diasporic culture: capitalist modernity in the Mountain and later across Lebanon took the form of a generalized circulation of diasporic forms of being. Just as much as the spread of wage labor, the money economy, or western tastes, the spread of the diasporic imaginary was part and parcel of becoming a modern Lebanese. Diasporic modernity as a cultural form becomes the very medium in and with which people start to think themselves, their relations, and the issues they confront, whether these have to do with migration or not. If a Lebanese is contemplating studying, it becomes impossible not to ask: should I study locally or overseas? If they are applying for a job, it becomes impossible to think it without wondering how different it would be to do the same job in another country. And so on.

This leads us to the second key feature of diasporic modernity, what we will call “comparative spatiality.” The modern European experience is impossible to think without a comparative logic that is both spatial (e.g., comparing the city and the countryside) and temporal (comparing before and after). Diasporic modernity also involves both, but entails an accentuation of the spatial at the expense of the temporal.

Claude Lévi-Strauss argues that comparative thought is one of the defining features of modernity (1976, 272). But it is the diasporic mode of being that entails the primacy of comparative spatiality over a comparative temporality. To be diasporic is to find it impossible to experience a social phenomenon, be it a landscape, an object, a social opportunity, or a social relation on its own terms without having an *elsewhere* shadowing it. This is also true of the related but even more central modern idea of progress, which takes us to the third key feature of diasporic modernity. Western modernity firmly grounds the idea of progress in time. As many have described it, the experience of progress involves the projection of oneself into a future that is imagined to offer the gains towards which one sees oneself as progressing. But in the process there are losses and one always yearns for a past where one can regain what is lost in the process of acquiring what is gained. The diasporic condition entails again a far greater spatialization of this temporality. The future is experienced as another space (the space one can or should or shouldn't migrate to) and so is the yearned-for past, the home space that one has left, and which still embodies what is lost.

I have noted so far three key modalities of being that partake in the making of the diasporic condition: the internationalization of the space of viability, a pervasive logic of cross-national comparative spatiality, and a spatialization of the temporality of progress. There remains one final component, one that is perhaps its most distinguishing feature. It is what I will call a vacillatory mode of existence. Unlike many other modes of existence, diasporic being is not about being this or being that. It is always, as we have already seen, a Shakespearean question mark: to be or not to be, to migrate or not to migrate, to stay for a year or for three, to go back home or to stay. The idea of being torn between two decisions, or between two countries, is often used to portray this state of affairs. One concept that can be used is that of oscillation. Oscillating between migrating and not migrating, or between returning home and staying away, can convey an uncertainty pertaining to decision-making. But once a decision is made, one cannot be said to be oscillating. This, however, is hardly true of the form of ambivalence that is foundational to the diasporic condition. For in an important way, uncertainty never ceases, and every decision taken is continuously shadowed by what was left out in a far more pronounced way than what one can commonly expect with every other form of decision-making.

This is why the concept of vacillation seems more appropriate. I am borrowing here from Spinoza and his notion of a “vacillating conatus” (2000). Vacillation for Spinoza is the product of contradictory striving for joy. When a would-be emigrant is stuck asking “should I migrate or not migrate?” it is not because they don’t know but because they have a meaningful investment in both leaving and staying. What is important, though, is that vacillation is not just a movement between various states of being; rather, it is a state of being in itself. Vacillation conveys not only a moment of indecision that ends when a decision is taken, but a permanent state of being that makes doubt and ambivalence part of any decision taken, such that no decision can ever settle one’s state of indecision. The emigrant will continue to be asking herself, “should I have migrated or not migrated?” long after migrating or not migrating. Perhaps nothing captures this better than the wonderful Kabyle song recorded by Abdelmalek Sayad in his book *The Suffering of the Immigrant* (2004):

*To stay or to go...
 To go or to stay...
 Refrain
 And yet my heart wonders
 Whether it should stay or go,
 Whether it should go or stay;
 Or if it has gone or stayed
 Or if it has stayed or gone.
 Its illness took hold long ago
 And its life, poor thing, hangs by a thread
 My heart asked me for advice, I told it to stay
 Whereas it wanted to go;
 So I told it to go,
 Whereas it wanted to stay.
 ...
 One day it went, but in its thoughts
 It came back before it had gone
 Our law has neither settled nor decided anything
 Our luck is poor
 If I go, it wants to stay
 If I stay, it wants to go
 While I remain perplexed
 My heart bleeds from its wound. (29–30)*

While in the beginning of this chapter we had been satisfied with equating the notion of culture with that of milieu (in reference to the above Canguilhem quote), it is the case that the notion of culture we are referring to is far more relational and experiential than is implied by that quote – more akin to the Husserlian conception of the lifeworld. In this conception, there is an intimate relation between experience, mode of existence, and the lifeworld in which they come to exist. One always implies the other without there being a single causal direction between them. Neither the diasporic lifeworld is the product of the diasporic mode of existence, nor vice versa. The two co-emerge historically such as the existence of one is impossible to think without the other. It is precisely the emergence of the Lebanese diasporic lifeworld in its transnational

specificity that I have aimed to analyze here, while at the same time highlighting the critical capacity of its more universal spatial comparative/vacillating dimensions to enlarge our conceptions of experience and existence.

- see CHAPTER 10 (SUBJECTIVITY); CHAPTER 16 (WORK AND PRECARIETY); CHAPTER 26 (CIRCULATION)

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12

Community, Collectivity, Affinities*Miranda Joseph*

Community, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, means “the body of people having common or equal rights or rank, as distinguished from the privileged classes, the commons,” or “a body of people sharing place, common culture ... ethnicity, leading a communal life, sharing interests.” Community thus connotes an organic, even necessary, outgrowth of place, culture, position, or interest. By contrast, the term collectivity refers to “a state or quality ... an aggregate ... the body of people forming community” and thus suggests a great deal more contingency and ephemerality. Community is one potentiality of collectivity but not an inevitability. Affinity is precisely that non-inevitable connective tissue on which collectivity is contingent: “relation by marriage” (as opposed to blood), “mutual dependence,” “an accompaniment,” “alliance, companionship,” “similarities of characteristics, resemblance,” and, especially with regard to chemicals rather than humans, “liking for or attraction to, natural inclination toward” (OED Online 2015).

Community has been an important keyword of social and cultural inquiry and of political movements over the last half-century (featured in Williams 1983; Burgett and Hendler 2014; and Schlund-Vials, Trinh Vō, and Wong 2015; see also Creed 2006a, b). Collectivity and affinity have played less well-examined roles in contemporary debate – perhaps rightly so, as they may still have some ability to open questions rather than providing answers, as community so often does. All three terms operate amidst a number of other key terms of social formation. In the 1980s and 1990s, the terms publics and counterpublics were useful for theorists of social formation and social struggle. Common(s) has also taken on significant prominence in contemporary left academic and activist discourse. And, in the last couple of decades, affect has been a central term through which theorists have investigated the qualities and mechanisms of affiliation.

I begin with a brief review of the critiques of community that I and other scholars of critical and cultural theory have articulated, particularly with regard to the deployments of community as a supplement to capitalism and neoliberal governmentality. That critique has prompted widespread efforts in critical and cultural theory to articulate visions of collectivities that would not be liable to critique as racist and exclusionary (thus responding to a prior critique of the functions of community when naturalized and authenticated through identity, place, or history). Then, guided by José Esteban

Muñoz's rich, sophisticated, and persistent contributions to the effort to envision such alternatives, and especially queer-of-color collectivities, the chapter surveys the various theoretical resources and terms on which he drew, from publics and counterpublics to affect to commons. Finally, I return briefly to the question of how those efforts engage the relation of the collectivity to capitalism and governance.

The Critique of Community

Raymond Williams concludes his brief *Keyword* entry on community by noting that community “seems never to be used unfavorably” (1983, 76). Zygmunt Bauman's *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* opens by recognizing that “Community, we feel, is always a good thing” (2001, 1). And I begin my book, *Against the Romance of Community* (2002, vii), by remarking, “Community is almost always invoked as an unequivocal good, an indicator of a high quality of life, a life of human understanding, caring, selflessness, belonging.” The positive valence of community noted in these texts persists despite the longstanding critique that associates community, as unity or identity, with violently exclusionary practices, most often racism (this critical literature is reviewed at length in Joseph 2002, xi–xxvi; a briefer overview is offered in Burgett and Hendler 2014, 53ff.; see also Trinh Vō 2015).

Community has been analyzed as gaining its halo through its positioning as the name for a nostalgically viewed past and a yearned-for future of particular, intimate, affective, authentic relations (Williams 1983, 104; Rose 1999, 172) and of security (Bauman 2001, 3) in opposition to the abstract, alienated, rationalized relations (or actually, lack of relation, often named anomie) of modernity, society, and capitalism (Joseph 2002, 1–13; see also Soto 2007). For example, credit and debt have been articulated through this romantic discourse of community: the mortgage crisis of 2008 prompted expressions of nostalgia for a “once upon a time” when loans were offered by community banks and based on interpersonal knowledge and relationships as opposed to depersonalized global markets for mortgage-based securities derived from loans underwritten primarily via credit scoring algorithms (Joseph 2014, 3ff.). As evidence for this community–society opposition, scholars generally cite a wealth of work in the field of sociology, even suggesting that this opposition defines that discipline (Bender 1978, 16–24; Rose 1999, 172; Joseph 2002, 5–6). The valences can sometimes reverse: those invested in progress through capitalist development (including Marx, in so far as he would have us move through it to something else) have cast community as an obstacle to modernization and the full development of human potential; libertarian liberals see communitarianism as unduly constraining of individual liberty, a point echoed by Bauman, who articulates the costs to freedom of community-based security (2001, 4).

Recognition of the extraordinarily positive connotations of community frequently opens onto a critical investigation of the strategic deployments of its “warmly persuasive” capacity (Williams 1983, 76) to mobilize support for any endeavor or entity to which the term is attached. In *Powers of Freedom*, Nikolas Rose, drawing on the Foucauldian conceptualization of governmentality, posits that, “it is through the political objectification and instrumentalization of *this* community and its ‘culture’ that government is to be reinvented” (1999, 172–173). As Rose articulates it, through the implementation of neoliberal forms of government, communities became zones of

examination and intervention: “something to be programmed by Community Development Programmes... policed by Community Police ... and rendered knowable by sociologists pursuing ‘community studies’” (175). And at the same time, along with individuals and families, community was to be the autonomized, responsabilized locus of social welfare provision, the space and force expected to compensate for the withdrawal of states from that role (see also Larner 2000). It is important to recognize that in Rose’s work, as well as my own, community is not merely a term that is deployed strategically but a social reality constituted by discourse. Performatively invoked, constituted, and deployed as a supplement to capital (even while supplemented by capital), community enables the flow of capital as well as compensating for the limits of capitalism, even as it expresses a desire that is potentially displacing or disruptive of capitalism (Joseph 2002). The extent to which capital (and also the governmentalized neoliberal state) needs community is exemplified not merely by niche marketing to various “communities” such as “the LGBT community” and niched or culturally marked production (e.g., the supposedly small agile hands of the female maquiladora worker, the family- and/or ethnically owned business), but also by the incorporation of community as not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations, and by the centrality of concern with “trust” as a necessary feature of capitalist development (Joseph 2002, 153–154).

This critical assessment of the imbrications of community with neoliberal government and capitalism is now quite widespread; but identifying that imbrication is rarely considered the end of the story. Gerald Creed’s 2006 edited collection, *The Seductions of Community*, brings together diverse examinations of community as a “moment in modern rule ... articulating discipline and accumulation, [that] nevertheless holds the promise of escape from the conditions of its own constitution” (Creed 2006a, 9–10). And in the context of environmental studies, the idealization and then critique of the deployment of “community” has reached the point of critique of critique: Pratt (2012, 177) describes a whole body of literature in which “Community, they claim, is a fundamentally problematic concept riddled with normative assumptions and abstracted from the social and political realities of local places.” Arguing that these works “stop short of grappling with the actual practices of togetherness,” and in keeping with the affective turn in theorizing social relations (about which more below), Pratt draws on Latour (2005) to propose that we “begin in the middle, with the practices of coming together and moving apart, of associating and disassociating” (2012, 177–178). Meanwhile, the generative persistence of the critique of community is evidenced by a call for proposals for a panel for the 2015 American Anthropological Association that aims to “de-familiarize the rhetorics of community, solidarity and responsibility to critically engage with the way in which contemporary neoliberalism is taking shape” (Jun and Lee 2015).

Alternative Terms and Alternative Formulations: Queer World-Building

Progressive scholars across a range of disciplines and political projects have sought to articulate visions of collectivities that would not be oppressively conformist, racist, and exclusionary (thus responding to the critique of the functions of community when naturalized and authenticated through identity, place, or history [Joseph 2002, xxvi–xxxi]). In doing so, they seek to preserve a positive ideal of communities of mutual aid,

solidarity, safety, and, sometimes, resistance (see, for instance, the “positive references to community” described by Linda Trinh Võ in her entry on “Community” for *Keywords for Asian American Studies* [2015, 32]), while recognizing the “fragile and fractured” character of many communities (33). In fact, the insistent affirmation of the internal difference, diversity, disunity, dissensus, and plurality that *must* characterize these collectivities is notable. But the extent to which these alternative visions of collectivities address the implication of community in capitalism and governmentality is less clear, consistent, insistent, and thus remains an issue to explore and examine.

One important strand of this effort has been work done in the wake of the theorization of “reparative reading” by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, most explicitly in “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading” (in Sedgwick 1997), and of queer world-making by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner in “Sex in Public” (1998). Sedgwick described and endeavored to offer an alternative to the so-called “hermeneutics of suspicion” (a term she attributes to Paul Ricoeur), a strategy of revelation that she felt had become overly dominant in U.S. critical theory and feminist and queer scholarship (1997, 4–5). She sought to recognize and develop – as a practice of queer scholarship and of “emergent [queer] communities” (e.g., through camp) – the “reparative” work “to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self” (1997, 28).

Berlant and Warner articulate “queer culture” (also called “queer counterpublics”) as:

a world-making project, where “world,” like “public,” differs from community or group because it necessarily includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped beyond a few reference points, modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as a birthright. The queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies. World making, as much in the mode of dirty talk as of print-mediated representation, is dispersed through incommensurate registers, by definition unrealizable as community or identity. (1998, 558)

These projects have been richly elaborated and developed by other scholars.¹ In recognition of his substantial contributions to this reparative and queer world-building approach to the question of community and collectivity, I will trace the development of some of the key terms and debates by way of and as a tribute to the work of performance studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz.²

Muñoz persistently sought to represent and performatively evoke collectivities of and for queer people of color. The conjuring of queer worlds – spaces of belonging, of life – that he attributes to the performance artists whose works form the warp through which his own conjurations are webbed, is a political project. Such evocations constitute, he suggests, “an aspect of the emancipatory project,” operating like a psychoanalytic protocol, to enable “groups and circuits of belonging to leave the realm of muteness and attain a valuable ‘articulated syntactic particularity’ that is tuned to group identification” (2006, 678, quoting Spillers 1996). Muñoz named and theorized the possibility of such collectivities differently in various works. In his first book, *Disidentifications* (1999), Muñoz describes “counterpublics” and “*latinidad*”; in *Cruising Utopia* (2009) he seeks to articulate “queer *relationality*”; and in two “Feeling Brown” essays (2000, 2006)

intended for a project he had tentatively titled “The Sense of Brown,”³ he foregrounds affect as the affiliative medium of what he comes to call commons in a late essay on “punk rock commons” (2013b) and a lecture on “The Brown Commons” that he gave several times in 2012 and 2013.⁴

In *Disidentifications*, Muñoz participated in a shared effort to take onboard the implications for community of both poststructuralist critiques of subjectivity and feminist-of-color critiques of one-dimensional identity politics. He uses the language of publics and counterpublics, developed in Nancy Fraser’s revision of Jürgen Habermas’s conceptualization of the bourgeois public sphere (which also informs Berlant and Warner’s “Sex in Public”) to envision political collectivities that are not unities or identities. And yet these collectivities – based on a shared communicative space or shared experience of being socially positioned or marked by difference – enable both safety and action, “as counterpublics that are in opposition to other social factions” (148). He draws on Stuart Hall’s appropriation of Antonio Gramsci to refuse “pat definitions of group identity” (115), and to instead recognize the “plurality,” the internally diverse and contradictory nature of “the individual subject and the collective subject” (114). As Muñoz articulates the disidentificatory strategies of various performers/performances – that is, strategies that are simultaneously dissing and identificatory relative to dominant culture – he articulates the complex spaces of queer-of-color sociality they might enable.

Still “insist[ing] on the essential need for an understanding of queerness as collectivity” (11), in his second book, *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz articulates his vision with increasing nuance. This text makes explicit his aim to thread a path between an uncritically romanticized celebration of community and a total rejection of relationality:

Although the antirelational approach assisted in dismantling an anticritical understanding of queer community, it nonetheless quickly replaced the romance of community with the romance of singularity and negativity. The version of queer social relations that this book attempts to envision is critical of the communitarian as an absolute value and of its negation as an alternative all-encompassing value. (2009, 10)⁵

The “antirelational approach,” to which Muñoz refers, is located in Leo Bersani’s “Is the Rectum a Grave?” (1987) and *Homos* (1996), as well as Lee Edelman’s *No Future* (2004) (see especially Muñoz 2009, 10–11, 34–35, 94). The anti-relational theorizing found in these works, he argues, is a reaction against the prevailing late twentieth-century understanding of sexuality as contingent and relational – that is, socially constructed – and thus interrelated with race and gender:⁶

Most of the work with which I disagree under the provisional title of “antirelational thesis” moves to imagine an escape or denouncement of relationality as first and foremost a distancing of queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference. (11)⁷

By contrast, with the needs of people of color centrally in view, Muñoz promotes a form of “educated hope,” a queer utopianism (3; see also Duggan and Muñoz 2010). He presents his utopianism primarily as contesting mainstream gay politics, which

he sees as constrained by presentism, empiricism, and a “cryptopragmatism” (an encrypted, imprisoning pragmatism) that naturalizes capitalism. However, this cryptopragmatism and all its entailments, he argues, is at best *uncontested* by the negativity of the anti-relational theorists, despite their vision of queerness as radical destruction of the social within which gay assimilationist politics makes any sense (10, 20–21).

As I’ve already noted (and the reason that his work is so useful for the survey of concepts with which I am tasked in this chapter), Muñoz draws on an extraordinarily wide range of theoretical, artistic, and experiential inspirations and resources to articulate the quality of the relations that he envisions for queerness as collectivity. Moving on from the language of publics that he used in *Disidentifications*, in *Cruising Utopia* he features Jean Luc Nancy’s notion of “being singular plural” (10–11) and Samuel Delany’s theorization/celebration of “interclass contact” (14). But the queer relationality he wants to convey also emerges in an audience at a performance as a potential community of interlocutors (106), and in the Magic Touch bar in Queens as scene of multiracial, multi-ethnic, multi-class interaction (often commercial interaction): “At the Magic Touch I found men of all colors relating to one another, forming bonds, and I saw this in mass. I glimpsed a whole that is diverse and invigorating in its eclectic nature” (59). While the emphasis here is on collectivity that is not unity, in relation to the Magic Touch, Muñoz also explicitly addresses the position of this social formation vis-à-vis capitalism. He states that, despite the commercial location (a bar, a business), this queer collectivity rejects the neoliberal privatization promoted by Andrew Sullivan (54, citing Duggan), and that the exchanges of sex for money, which are central to the scene, should be read as refusing the sanitizing imperative of “quality of life” zoning and policing that reinforces privatization, gentrification, and class separation.

Queer-of-color nightclub scenes recur as Muñoz elaborates what he comes to call “*the brown commons*.” In explaining the significance of the nightclub “Aztlantis,” which is the scene of action in Ricardo Bracho’s play *The Sweetest Hangover* and is populated “by different kinds of people of color of various genders,” Muñoz writes, “Nightlife is a zone where the affective dominance of white normativity is weakened. *The freaks come out at night*.” It is a space where a multi-ethnic “grouping does not cohere by identity but instead by a politics of affect, an affective belonging” (2000, 74–75). And “The Brown Commons” (2013a) lecture articulates his theory in part through a reading of the film *Wildness* (2012), by Wu Tsang, which tells the story of the effort of a group of young hip queers to create their own scene on the quiet Tuesday nights at the Silver Platter, “a longstanding Latino gay bar” that featured “old-school transvestite performers” in an unglamorous working-class area of LA. The opening clip of the film that Muñoz showed as part of that lecture is narrated by the bar itself (original soundtrack is in Spanish; English is from the film’s subtitles):⁸

How can I explain my legacy? I am a beacon guiding my young out of darkness. This is the story of one of those journeys...

They call me Silver Platter; I’ve been serving it up on this same corner for half a century. Thousands of children have come searching for me. I keep them safe, like a silver bulletproof vest, from the ignorance, fear and hatred of the outside world. I give them life. And life should be lived.

Here, the function of Muñoz's attention, through the film, to the bar, is not merely to notice a multi-ethnic, multi-gender collective. Rather, marking the conflicts of age, class, and aesthetics between the new Tuesday night "Wildness" crowd and the established patrons, he emphasizes the "vital importance of what Jacques Rancière calls 'dis-sensus'" to his vision of "the brown commons." In these works, as in *Cruising Utopia*, while Muñoz's emphasis is on envisioning and describing collectivity that is not community, he also articulates an oppositional role for the collective in relation to a dominant culture and, occasionally, capitalism specifically.

In two essays with titles that begin "Feeling Brown," as well as his work on brown and punk rock commons, Muñoz argues for shifting from identity to affect to explain "the affiliations and identifications [within and] between radicalized and ethnic groups" (2000, 68). He thus participated in a now widespread project of investigating and affirming the role of emotion and affect in political life and social movement formation. If the problems of class consciousness, ideology, and hegemony might be said to have centrally concerned critical theorists of oppressed/resistant collectivity in the twentieth century, in the first decades of the twenty-first, the question of affect, the stuff of affinity, has come to dominate the theorizations of community, collectivity, and, even, "new social movement" (2000, 67).⁹

One nexus of affect studies over the last couple of decades has been the Public Feelings initiative, a project with which Muñoz was affiliated and which has had active "cells" (groups of scholars working together to produce writing, performances, and conferences) in Chicago, Austin, and New York.¹⁰ Deborah Gould, a participant in Feel Tank Chicago, lays out the history of attention to emotion in the field of social movement studies (especially in sociology) in the introduction to her *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (2009), locating "the emotional turn" (16) in the 1990s. Her work, like much of what is now called "affect theory," departs from Brian Massumi's articulation of "experiences of bodily energy and intensity" that are beyond the social and discursive (Gould 2009, 19–20); however, as is characteristic of feminist work on affect, Gould is primarily interested in the shaping role of affect in social relations and especially social movements. She and others who seek to deploy affect theory to understand politicized collectivities supplement Massumi's work with a more materialist origin site for affect theory, that is Raymond Williams's conceptualization of "structures of feeling" (see, for instance, Hennessy 2013, 43–44).¹¹ Muñoz further supplements that origin story by linking Williams to critical ethnic studies scholarship; in "Feeling Brown: Ethnicity and Affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The Sweetest Hangover (and Other STDs)*" (2000), Muñoz asserts that Williams's "structures of feeling" "echoes [Norma] Alarcón's explication of 'identity in-difference' as 'identity-in-process,'" in that it speaks to "solidarity between working-class groups and a social experience that can be described as 'in process' yet nonetheless historically situated" (68, citing Alarcón 1996, 136). And in his 2006 essay, "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down," Muñoz's theorization of affective non-identitarian belonging as "belonging in alterity... [a] choreography of self and other ... negotiated through a particular affective circuit ... a feeling of brownness" (675–676) is informed by Hortense Spillers's work, which provides a springboard for his articulation of affect and specifically "brown feelings" as "not *individualized* affective particularity" but instead a "racial performativity" that enacts and constitutes "a larger *collective* mapping of self and other" (2006, 679; emphasis added).

In his effort to invoke a collectivity formed dialectically – of shared suffering and oppression, by a “sense of brown, of feeling differently,” *but also* the “ability to flourish under duress” (as he puts it in “The Brown Commons”) – Muñoz also draws on autonomist Marxist theorists. At the end of *Cruising Utopia* (ch. 10), Muñoz turns to Paolo Virno’s *A Grammar of the Multitude* to articulate “negative sentiments,” including “anticommunal affective stances,” as active political refusal, transformative performances of failure as well as *virtuosity* that enable a strategy of “exodus ... refusal or defection” and “contain the potentiality for new modes of collectivity” (176–177). And as the titles make clear, in “Gimme Gimme This ... Gimme Gimme That: Annihilation and Innovation in the Punk Rock Commons” (2013b) as well as his lecture on “The Brown Commons” (2013a), Muñoz deploys a term that figures quite centrally in the autonomist literature – the common(s) – in support of his articulation of this collectivity. Muñoz’s theorization of commons makes full use of the multiple valences of the term. Given the currency and complexity of the term commons, I’m going to take some space here to explore its contemporary uses before returning to Muñoz, to learn a bit more from his deployments of this concept.

Commons is used to refer to material resources, human capacities and potentialities, the practices of cooperation of a collective, and the collective as performatively constituted by a practice of cooperation or collaboration; Sylvia Federici (2010, 284) says: “We have land, water, air commons, digital commons; our acquired entitlements (e.g., social security pensions) are often described as commons, and so are languages, libraries, and the collective products of past cultures.” For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri as well as Federici, various forms of the term common appear across grammatical and functional roles.¹² In addition to referring to “the common” as an enabling resource generally, when specified as communication or collaboration capabilities, it is a resource that enables the common itself to come into existence, enables “becoming common,” as a mode of living “in common” or even a subjectivity. Importantly, Federici articulates the commons as produced, using a verb form – “commoning” – to suggest a project we could undertake or that is performative: “the ‘commoning’ of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created” (2010, 289).¹³ In the OED, the definition of community leans hard on “common” to mean non-elite (as in House of Commons rather than Lords) and/or a shared characteristic or essence.

Federici and George Caffentzis, both central figures in the revival of the term commons,¹⁴ date its renewed prominence on the left to “the Zapatistas [take] over [of] the *zócalo* in San Cristobal de las Casas on December 31, 1993 to protest legislation dissolving the *ejidal* lands of Mexico” (Federici 2010, 284; see also Caffentzis 2010, 37–38). More broadly, they determine its reemergence as a response to a new era of enclosure; and at the same time, along with Hardt and Negri, whose widely read trilogy has accelerated interest in the common[s] among left scholars, they both point to the emergence of and a struggle over new forms of commons in the context of affective and cognitive capitalism. Federici explains the contemporary interest as a response to new enclosures, “the neo-liberal attempt to subordinate every form of life and knowledge to the logic of the market,” but also to new forms of social cooperation: “Ironically, the new enclosures have demonstrated that not only the common has not vanished, but also new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced, including in areas of life where none previously existed

like, for example, the internet.” Her argument overlaps substantially with that of Hardt and Negri (2009, 114), who write:

By, “the common” we mean, first of all, the common wealth of the material world ... We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth.

Further, for both Federici and Hardt and Negri, the common[s] is owned neither by the state nor by private entities. Understood to include communicative products and means of production, it becomes a kind of electronically assisted *public sphere*, in the Habermasian sense of a domain of independent and potentially critical discussion and debate engaged with publicly circulating information about and/or disseminated by the state (Habermas 1991, 28). (As Fraser puts it, the Habermasian public sphere is “a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk” [1992, 110].) For Federici, who brings a specifically feminist and transnational perspective to the question: “The appeal of [Hardt and Negri’s] theory is that it does not separate the formation of ‘the common’ from the organization of work and production but sees it as immanent to it. Its limit is that its picture of the common absolutizes the work of a minority possessing skills not available to most of the world population” (2010, 286). Here, she opens a critique of their version of the common that has substantial resonance with feminist critiques of Habermas’s conceptualization of the public sphere such as Fraser’s. Among the key feminist questions are: (1) whether the common is really open and accessible to all; and (2) what power dynamics operate within the common, given that, as Hardt and Negri insist, it is a space of difference.

Caffentzis and Federici also point out the political indeterminacy of the commons. For Caffentzis, the commons denotes resources that have not been enclosed, privatized or commodified. In an argument that echoes the critique of community as supplementary with capitalism, he points out that, “Just as cooperation is used by capitalists for their profit the commons can also be used for capitalist accumulation” (2010, 29). In “The Future of ‘The Commons’: Neoliberalism’s ‘Plan B’ or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?” (2010), he suggests that neoliberalism deploys “the tools of the commons” to save itself from itself (25). He identifies Nobel Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom as the primary theorist of the potential rational economic benefit of regulating resources through a common property scheme (30; see also Federici 2010, 285), and links this theorizing to a broader recognition of the contribution of “social capital” and “trust” to capital accumulation (31). But at the same time, Caffentzis also points to the anti-capitalist potential of the commons in so far as commons are means of production enabling “potential workers to refuse to become actual workers” (34), such that resistance to the efforts of capital to enclose, privatize, and appropriate such commons is anti-capitalist resistance (33–34).

Rosemary Hennessy (2013, 206) joins Hardt and Negri (2009) in the proposal that the term love might be a name for “the affective material that facilitates the reclamation of this common resource ... [“the common human capacity for action in collaboration...”], a material force fundamental to the constitution of the common.” Muñoz, while working with this performative notion of an affectively constituted commons (meaning collectivity/subjectivity, not resource or means) animated by common (meaning shared)

feeling, clearly prefers terms, such as disaffection and discord, that more directly signal the negative experiences prompting and resulting from the affective performances and connections.

In “Gimme Gimme This ... Gimme Gimme That” (2013b), Muñoz describes “queerness as a mode of ‘being-with’ that defies social conventions and conformism, and is innately heretical yet still desirous for the world” (96). Again here, it is important for Muñoz to insist on the non-identitarian constitution of this collectivity – he “looks to circuits of being-with, in difference and discord” (96). And again, he emphasizes the work of the negative, as well as the positive, in the constitution of this commons, “a being-with, in which various disaffected, antisocial actants found networks of affiliation and belonging that allowed them to think and act otherwise, together” (99). Importantly, the dialectical constitution of the collectivity through disaffection and anti-sociality means that Muñoz posits the “being-with,” the “common,” against capitalism: “Perhaps what is needed is that those hailed by the blue and burning circle of the Germs walk out on stage ... and declare that the capitalist transactions that stand in for our actual lived experience of each other might not be enough, that we need something else, something more, something *common*” (107; emphasis added).¹⁵

Muñoz’s project in “The Brown Commons” is yet again to conjure a form of collectivity that he aims to produce as much as to describe by drawing on widely diverse theoretical artistic and experiential resources. He explains that he calls this collectivity *brown* because brown is an attribute of the members: it is a “commons of brown people places feelings sounds animals minerals and other objects.” But he also suggests that this commons is *brown* because the quality of the connection is brown. Referencing the “new materialism” (and specifically Jane Bennett’s work), he characterizes the brown commons as having an “organicism” based on embeddedness in a “vast and pulsating social world,” “beyond singular individualized subjectivities,” and beyond full knowability. However, Muñoz is persistent in specifying a *brownness*, a “common” and thus inclusive color – “of and for a multitude” – that nonetheless is most certainly *not* all inclusive. Brown commons are like punk rock commons in that they emerge from and are engaged in a dialectics, a process of contestation/opposition/agonny.

Muñoz helps us think about the new materialists, the limits of their arguments, and the work that remains for us to do. Recognizing but setting aside the indistinction of the human from other matter that is so central to the “new materialism,”¹⁶ Muñoz (2013a) notes that “The politics that organize this [his own] thought experiment” entail a focus on “human actants,” “first and foremost brown as in brown people ... [Brown by] participation in patterns of north south migration ... linguistic orientations ... by the ways one’s right to residency is challenged ... Brown indexes a certain vulnerability to the violence of property, finance and capital’s overarching mechanisms of domination.” He states explicitly that his “Ontomaterialist mapping of brownness, [is] not meant to displace more realist mappings of politics but to supplement with a different kind of mapping meant to measure the immeasurable between us.” And he doesn’t stop at “mapping” the affinity; his accounting of the “immeasurable” is, again, intended to be performative, and the collectivity thus constituted potentially transformative: “A commons [...] is brought into being by what Spinoza would call a shared affect of indignation that could potentially lead to a thinking and analysis that would help assemble a self-conscious and potentially insurrectionist commons.”

Muñoz leaves those of us who feel the indignation with a task, a performative “thinking and analysis” that “would help” mobilize not a community but an insurrection. At each step of the project, he inserts a hedge – “potentially.” What we learn from Muñoz, then, is that attention to affect, to the negative feelings as well as positive affinities that collect us, and recognition of the potentiality of the commons is necessary but not sufficient. The potentiality of the commons could easily be accumulated by capital, or serve, like community, as a supplement to it; the political trajectory of the collective remains indeterminate ... until we appropriate the force of affect, our capacity for cooperation, at least partially and provisionally, against exploitation.

The Supplimentarity of Affective Collectivity with Capitalism?

Affectively galvanized collectivities of actants with common attributes, emerging from a vast and pulsating world of entities (not to be mistaken for whole individuals), that can manifest or manage potential futures in the present: this is as good a description of financial derivatives as it is of Muñoz’s “Brown Commons.” Derivatives are financial instruments, intended to manage risk, consisting of calculations of relationships among attributes. Those attributes might be time and price (the exchange rate of a given currency at some specified future moment) but can be almost anything; the kinds of derivatives made notorious by the 2008 mortgage-then-financial crisis involve calculations related to particular “tranches” or slices of payment streams (sliced based on likelihood of payment) derived from sets of debt-based assets such as mortgages, student loans, utility bills, or an assemblage of such slices, or a derivation from those assemblages....

What are the implications of this resemblance between the social and the financial? Does the ephemeral affective nature of both social and financial affiliations make the critique of community outdated or inadequate, as Pratt (2012) suggests in her Latourian argument that the critique of community is inadequately attentive to the materiality and dynamism of practices of association and disassociation? Or does the resemblance signal a relation of determination such that the kind of affective commons that Muñoz describes is the social formation provoked by and supplementary to contemporary financialized capital (as “community,” especially identity-political community, was the supplement of another moment of capital accumulation)? Or, to reverse the relation, should we, with Randy Martin, theorize financial derivatives as a form of appearance of social relations (as for Marx, the commodity is such a form of appearance)?

Some work in affect theory suggests that a critique of community that locates social formations as supplementary with capitalism and governmentality is inadequate because affect operates beyond the social. Massumi (2015, 10), for instance, says, “the economy ends in the recesses of the infra-individual. *It reaches a limit, as a function of which it is organized – but which lies outside its logic ...* the noneconomic wonderland of intense and stormy life on the brink of action that lies at the heart of the economy: its absolute immanent limit.” But if, with Muñoz and the feminist theorists of affect who draw on more materialist origins, we understand affect as historically determined and operative in the social, then we might instead note the emergence of derivatives in conjunction with global transformations such as decolonization, as Martin does (2014, 190; 2013, 100–101). And, as I’ve already indicated,

we might note that derivatives, derived from our dependability or lack thereof as monthly payers, are imbricated in our financialized daily lives (Martin 2002; see also Bryan, Rafferty, and Jefferis 2015; Allon 2015; and Joseph 2014), daily lives that are governed and galvanized through algorithms that reiterate race and other social hierarchies, even as they calculate sub-individual attributes rather than identities (Moritz Hardt 2014; Miller 2015).

Analysis of the supplementarity between social formations and capital remains an important strategy then, even if we envision those social formations as dynamic and non-identitarian affective collectivities, rather than identity-based communities. However, it is important to recognize that the supplement not only completes but also displaces the ostensible center that is not a center, that inevitably fails to stabilize a structure.... In fact, the affective assemblage and securitization of monthly payers seems well calculated not only to pay off in capital accumulations but also dialectically, in the potent indignation of the Brown Commons.¹⁷

- see CHAPTER 10 (SUBJECTIVITY); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY); CHAPTER 18 (AFFECT)

Notes

- 1 I can only gesture toward the wide-ranging legacy of Sedgwick's provocation. Wiegman (2014) describes some of the "queer feminist scholarship" done in its wake. Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* (2007) points to a whole set of companion works that make this approach into a methodology for literary historical scholarship:

Critics such as Christopher Nealon, Carolyn Dinshaw, Ann Cvetkovich, David Halperin, Carla Freccero, Scott Bravmann, Elizabeth Freeman, L. O. A. Fradenbug and Valerie Traub have shifted the focus away from epistemological questions in the approach to the queer past; rather, they make central "the desires that propel such engagements, the affects that drive relationality across time." (Love 2007, 31, quoting Dinshaw 1999, 35)

One indication of the generativeness of Berlant and Warner's vision is that it is the inspiration for a journal, *QED*, as editors Charles E. Morris III and Thomas K. Nakayama explain:

we have been inspired and challenged by the still generative and demanding implications of their idea of "queer worldmaking" – creative, performative, intimate, public, disruptive, utopian, and more.... Among its key assumptions and commitments are belonging, transformation, memory, mobility, "the inventiveness of the queer world making and of the queer world's fragility." (Morris and Nakayama n.d.)

- 2 The rather overwhelming question of where to begin, how to orient, this mapping of current critical thought on "community, collectivity, affinity" was answered decisively for me by Muñoz's untimely death on December 4, 2013. Throughout the writing/rewriting of my dissertation/first book, *Against the Romance of Community*, Muñoz was an interlocutor, often at a certain distance, across the spaces of auditoriums and those awful

hotel rooms in which conference panels take place. His work provided important provocations, even irritations, driving my own arguments on the question of community, some of which are counterarguments to his. Meanwhile, he offered crucial material support for the publication of that book; his “blurb” appears on the back cover, but that was the least of it. No longer able to rely on him to make and promote his own arguments, I take up a small portion of the labor of carrying his work forward and offer a small tribute to his immense contributions by structuring this section of this chapter through the trajectory of his thought.

- 3 The provisional title changed several times; it was initially “Feeling Brown” (2000, 67, in biographical note) but later was announced as “The Sense of Brown” (2011, 197, in biographical note). Some scholars have suggested that this shift to “sense” is meaningful; certainly it marks a slight reconfiguration of his theoretical milieu to greater engagement with “new materialism.”
- 4 In this chapter I quote from the video of the presentation entitled “The Brown Commons: A Sense of Wildness” that Muñoz gave as part of the Journal of Narrative Theory Dialogue, Eastern Michigan University (March 20, 2013 [Muñoz 2013a]). I also saw him deliver versions of the paper at the University of Arizona (April 4, 2012) and the American Studies Association convention (November 2012). A video of his presentation of the paper at Duke University (March 22, 2013) is also available (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huGN866GnZE>).
- 5 For a taste of the debate on this issue, see Caserio et al. 2006.
- 6 My own critique of “the romance of community” is not explicitly named, except obviously by way of that very phrase, in Muñoz’s critique of the anti-relationalists; and I don’t make the same kinds of arguments (located in psychoanalytic discourse) to be found in Bersani and Edelman. Rather than isolating sexuality from other social phenomena, I argued (like Bersani) against romantic visions of autochthonous community, pointing out the supplementarity of (gay or any) community with capitalism. In doing so, however, I participate in “the hermeneutics of suspicion” rather than the “reparative” queer world-building interpretive strategy and I perform much greater concern with the constraints than the possibilities of community. No doubt, my arguments are implicated to some extent in Muñoz’s critique of the anti-relational thesis. However, I note that he manages, in a welcome reading of my work (2009, 98–99), to find, in my arguments for the implication of live performance in capitalist circulation, not only a “gotcha” identification of destructive complicity but also an argument for the possibility of constructive opportunities. For these reasons, I am well positioned to learn from, and feel directly addressed by, his effort to avoid throwing out babies (especially babies of color) with the dangerous and disempowering romantic bathwater.
- 7 As Muñoz indicates at various points in *Cruising Utopia*, evidence that these anti-relational theorists see sexuality as separable from race and other social dynamics includes the centrality they give to psychoanalytic theory, their focus on *jouissance* as “shattering orgasmic ruptures” (14) of the self and the symbolic that constitutes the oppressive coherence of the social (11) and, most tellingly, their deployment of argumentation by comparison between sexuality and race (34–35). While Bersani specifically elaborates the diverse situation of gay men in social and economic hierarchies to explain the hierarchical behaviors among gay men and thus disrupt any presumption of a natural shared inclination toward social justice based on same-sex desire, his phrasing leaves that desire itself beyond the social (Bersani 1987, 204–206).

- 8 In the wake of Muñoz's passing, I can't help hearing these words that he did not write as somehow his reflection on his own legacy. Certainly, the role of enabling scene-maker, who provides guidance and space for the young ones to live, was one he played with great virtuosity (as is amply attested in "Being With: A Special Issue on the Work of José Esteban Muñoz," *Social Text* 32.4 (121), Winter 2014).
- 9 Social movement is a term rarely used but clearly lurking in this literature, no doubt eschewed due to its association with the passé "war of maneuver" as opposed to the "war of position," as Gramsci called it, which Muñoz and others appreciate for being more "provisional and flexible" (2006, 681, citing Gramsci 1996).
- 10 "Feel Tank Chicago" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feel_Tank_Chicago) hosted a conference in 2007, "Anxiety, Urgency, Outrage, Hope...A Conference on Political Feeling," that brought together many of the scholars contributing to this project, including Muñoz, who performed a dialogue on "hope" with Lisa Duggan (<http://politicalfeeling.uchicago.edu>).
- 11 I specifically do *not* mean to be offering any sort of overview of affect theory here but rather simply to gesture towards those works on the question of collectivity with which I understand Muñoz to be in direct conversation. For more comprehensive accounts of the affect theory field see Cetinić and Diamanti, Chapter 18 in this volume; Gregg and Seigworth (2010); and Clough (2010). Hennessy's "The Materiality of Affect" (in Hennessy 2013) provides a useful discussion of the politics of various versions of affect theory from a materialist feminist perspective. Sara Ahmed's works, such as her 2004 essay "Collective Feelings," are another influential location of the argument for the centrality of affect to political collectivity.
- 12 The OED has four definitions for common, two as a noun, one as adjective, and one as verb.
- 13 Federici discusses and strongly qualifies the impulse to connect commons with community. Immediately following from the sentence I've quoted, she says: "This is how we must understand the slogan 'no commons without community.' But 'community' has to be intended not as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with communities formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals" (2010, 289).
- 14 They have both published in *The Commoner* (<http://www.commoner.org.uk>).
- 15 Here, while the invocation of the common is a wide-open invitation to imagination, because it is structurally parallel with "capitalist transactions," Muñoz seems to be deploying a sense of common as resource and specifically a mode of interaction (that is to say a force of production, such as collaboration) and one that distributes resources. He thus gets closest to the more Marxist deployments of the term by Caffentzis, Federici, and Hardt and Negri.
- 16 Ira Livingston (2006, 110) has argued that "The interrelationality and plurality of all formations are good places to start and ongoing axioms in an argument, not the payoffs of one, which had better be sought in the creative and counterhegemonic possibilities of their pluralities and contradictions."
- 17 First and foremost I want to thank the editors of this volume, especially Imre Szeman and Sarah Blacker, for their extraordinary patience as I requested and received one

extraordinary extension after another and then missed every generously extended deadline. The first extension was for seven months; two years later they finally received a draft. I also very much appreciate their helpful editing. And many thanks to Sandy Soto, Lisa Duggan, Liz Kinnamon, and Kelly Sharron for their feedback on various drafts.

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13

Feminism*Rosemary Hennessy***Feminist Theory and the Value of Materialism**

Feminist theory is the conceptual framework of the feminist movement whose historical roots lie in the rise of industrial capitalism and struggles against women's oppression. The political goals of that movement, who it speaks for, and its relation to other emancipatory efforts have been widely debated throughout feminism's history and are tied to the changing and often contested problematics of feminist theory – that is, the presuppositions that establish the kinds of questions that can be asked and the answers they allow. Feminist theory is practiced wherever sustained critical thinking can take place – in classrooms and publications, at community centers or kitchen tables. By the late twentieth century the university had become the space most commonly associated with feminist theory, in large part because it provided the labor and resources for the circulation of feminist ideas. Nonetheless, feminist thought has continuously simmered in informal spaces and on the margins of institutions in many sectors throughout the world where versions of feminism, often without the name, are practiced. The fact that women's organizing efforts have always been constrained by the material conditions that limit their opportunities for intellectual development, economic independence, mobility, and control of their fertility, labor, and wellbeing makes even more remarkable the history of feminist thought and action that has exposed and contested patriarchal gender hierarchies and issued claims for women's rights.

Recent feminist scholarship has turned attention to the stories we tell about feminism. In the words of Clare Hemmings (2011), these stories matter because they frame what and how we know, often in terms of conventional formulas that eclipse important features of feminism's history. One familiar story of feminism is the progress tale told in terms of eras in succession – the familiar first-wave, second-wave, third-wave narrative of feminist movement. Another is the tale of generations, of founding mothers displaced by daughters. Both stories are reductive. The story of feminism's waves risks homogenizing rich connections and eliminating those ideas and events that do not fit within its paradigm. The tale of generations tends to prioritize authors over concepts or reduce debates to a family drama. The history of feminist thought and practice can best be understood from a different, non-linear temporality. From this perspective trends and

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struggles can be approached as emerging from the uneven development and articulation of ideas that are embraced, lost, or recovered – and not necessarily in that order. Such a temporality conceptualizes the past as both distinct from the present and as a living force in and for the present. It is a temporality that, as Kathi Weeks puts it, is “open to lost possibilities from which we might still learn” (2011, 118).¹ Such an approach to feminism’s history shifts the ground for knowing. It is an incitement to read against the grain of convention and a helpful starting point for assessing feminism’s contribution to critical theory.

With this notion of temporality in mind, I have organized this chapter around topics to which feminism has made significant critical contributions by reorienting conventional conceptual frames. I have chosen these topics because of the debates they have sparked, the impact they made, and their relevance for an unfinished feminist project. I highlight materialist approaches because they enable a less partial understanding of social life and share feminist theory’s commitment to knowledge that enables action for a more just world.

The problematic of materialism offers a robust analysis of living and laboring and it has a long history in feminist thought. Differing versions of materialism, however, each with distinct political aspirations, span feminist theory. Even though feminist engagement with historical materialism and Marxist concepts has shaped feminist critical perspectives and informed feminist social movement for over a century, not all of the materialist analytics feminists embrace and have advanced are Marxist. In short, what is meant by “materialism” has been and remains an arena of debate. After a brief discussion of some of these differences, in the sections that follow I focus on the topics of social reproduction, standpoint, and affect – key issues in feminist theory that might be loosely characterized as body, mind, and heart – or, in different terms, as political economy, epistemology, and ontology. Finally, by way of a conclusion to these prefatory remarks, I want to underscore that certain material conditions enable feminists to gather and preserve their ideas. Some of the texts I cite in the following sections were the product of collective intellectual work done after hours because day jobs allowed little time for thinking and writing, while others were produced by feminists working in universities, many also involved in organizing efforts there and elsewhere.

Materialism and Feminist Praxis

Why does feminist theory have deep roots in materialism? The simplest answer is that materialism and feminism share many of the same aims and values. In the words of the seventeenth-century materialist philosopher Baruch Spinoza, materialism takes as its premise the need of each living thing to persevere in its being. The philosophy of historical materialism, first formulated in the nineteenth century by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, affirms that human survival depends upon people working together to make whatever is required to meet their needs, and it analyzes the varied forms that human relations have taken in order to do so.² Unlike other traditions, historical materialism understands its philosophy as *praxis* – that is, as offering concepts that enable action that will make social life more just. Historical materialism recognizes that the process of meeting survival needs entails economic relations as well as political and cultural practices, and it offers a critique of capitalism as one organization of social life.

For historical materialists capital is not money or wealth but a social relation that is fundamentally unequal: the relation between those who profit from owning and controlling the means to meet human needs (for instance, land and other natural resources, or property in the form of technologies or finance) at the expense of those who own only their labor.

Feminist work in the historical materialist tradition embraces the premise that meeting human needs requires the labor of cooperation, always in some relation to nature and culture, and it recognizes that historically capitalism has both relied upon and eroded patriarchal structures. Throughout its history capitalism's modernizing tendencies have loosened patriarchal control over women's lives and recruited women into new arenas of labor; at the same time these developments continue to rely upon the devaluation of women and promote racial hierarchies that subject women to new forms of oppression. As capitalism took hold across the industrializing world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women were participating in social movements and drawing upon the discourses of democratic rights to question patriarchal practices. By the late nineteenth century in many countries they were developing organizing efforts as women. At the turn of the century Chinese women were rebelling against foot binding and demanding rights to property and equality with men in other areas of life. In British India women were actively involved in the boycott of British goods and in protesting the dowry system. Modern feminism in northern European countries and in the United States grew out of women's campaigns for rights to education, property, divorce, suffrage, and in the United States and Britain, for the abolition of slavery. Less recognized in the history of feminist movements are theorists whose materialist analyses stress the systemic underpinnings of women's oppression.³

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many of these systemic thinkers were socialist women and men who debated a range of perspectives on "the woman question." In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) Friedrich Engels puts forward a historical materialist perspective that situates the sexual division of labor in the emergence of private property as women's bodies and sexuality came under the control of men. He predicts that women's full emancipation will only arrive with the socialization of housework and childrearing. Writing in the throes of the Russian Revolution, the socialist Alexandra Kollontai disagrees. Her speeches and writings contend that socializing the economy alone will not lead to the emancipation of women's and men's emotional and intimate lives and so she calls for continued efforts under socialism to address the structure of gender and sexual relations. While they may not have considered their ideas to be feminist theory, the writings of nineteenth-century freethinkers and marriage resisters, labor organizers, and advocates of women's rights to education, reproductive freedom, and sexual pleasure also challenged commonsense conceptions of women's place in the world. Many of these feminists saw the abolition of slavery and of women's oppression as twin goals and some called for women to join forces and seize control over the work of social reproduction.

Twentieth-century women around the world participated in labor struggles, socialist organizations, and uprisings against colonial rule. Alienated by the men who refused to take their ideas seriously, many of them began to organize autonomously and to develop critiques of patriarchy that placed on the political agenda topics that had previously been seen as private. By the early 1970s women were meeting autonomously and developing feminist theory in collectives across England, France, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia,

and the United States. Feminist concepts circulated informally and in groundbreaking publications that were redefining mainstream values. Women were educating themselves on a mass scale in grassroots meetings where they read and discussed texts like Juliet Mitchell's "Women: The Longest Revolution" (1966) and *Woman's Estate* (1971), Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), or Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James's *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972) – all of them appropriating, critiquing, and extending concepts gleaned from the ideas of Marx and Engels.⁴

Within two decades, however, the historical materialist tradition that had shaped feminist thought and action was being displaced as a more emphatically cultural materialist analysis was being developed by feminist scholars. This approach tends to focus on gendered subjects, ideology, or nation and state formations, and does not see capitalism as an integrated system or social totality. Feminist analysis that pursues such a cultural materialist problematic draws upon the ideas of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, or other European poststructuralist philosophers who formulate power as diffuse rather than structured and as operating through forms of social discipline, governmentality, or biopolitics. Marxist and socialist feminists critically engage many of these ideas, but they continue to emphasize the fundamental social relation of property and labor through which capital is accumulated, and unlike most male continental philosophers, they address the ways it is historically mediated by gender and race.⁵

Toward the end of the twentieth century feminists began to promote what some have called a "new materialism." New materialism presents itself as a response to advances in biomedicine and biotechnology and to theories of matter developed by subatomic particle physics (Coole and Frost 2010, 3). Several of its features were actually initiated decades prior by feminist theorists who developed analyses of the body as a site of capital investment, ideological control, and political resistance.⁶ Accompanying the new materialism in cultural theory has been an emerging post-humanism that emphasizes inter-species relations and the vitality and agency of the natural world (Coole and Frost 2010, 7). New materialists draw parallels between the logic of quantum physics, with its emphasis on the unpredictable, contingent, and non-linear dynamics of energy and matter, and the complexities of biopower – that is, power over life – by tracing the genealogy of bodies, tracking the management of life and the health of populations, or by dissecting the intimate habits of daily interactions among species. The new materialism promises to bring together research in biology, the environment and ecology, cybernetics, culture, political economy, and everyday life, and in this regard it points to potentially fruitful interdisciplinary directions for feminist theory. In practice, however, it is hampered by a conception of the material as matter, a problematic that is inadequate to explain the lived relation of bodies and the natural world to capital as a structured social relation. Moreover, even when the new materialism's stated interest lies in developing analyses that enable us to better connect a micro everyday level of analysis and a macro or structural perspective, its adherents rarely pursue such a systemic approach (Coole and Frost 2010, 32).

In sum, although feminist theory has embraced and rearticulated various materialist analytics, historical materialism remains a robust and compelling theoretical standpoint for feminist praxis. It understands the materiality of life as always historical and therefore enables analysis of modern life forms that takes into account their

organization and circulation within and against capitalism as a complex and changing totality. As it has been elaborated by feminists, this problematic offers an empowering conceptual framework for understanding the history of living beings – their collaboration with nature and one another, their relation to labor and property, the cultural and political forces that shape their interactions, and the material basis of collective organizing for a better life.

Body: The Labor of Social Reproduction

One of feminist theory's principal critical contributions has been the concept of social reproduction.⁷ Social reproduction includes the biological connotation of reproduction, but feminists emphasize that this is only one facet of maintaining human survival. They underscore that social reproduction also requires other labor-intensive activities that keep bodies alive, healthy, and thriving – like procuring water and dealing with waste, purchasing household goods, preparing and serving food, cleaning, laundering, and repairing clothing, socializing children, caring for elders, providing emotional support for household members, and maintaining community ties. Marxist feminists recognize that these life-sustaining activities entail relations of labor and dependency and that women have been responsible for the bulk of the caring labor that dependency entails. In so doing, they make visible the labor necessary to survival that both traditional economists and Marxist theorists have largely ignored.

Some of the first feminists to call attention to the importance of reproductive labor argued for the transformation of the organization of home life. Between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s three generations of women called for the socialization of housework and child care. They decried the isolated single home as oppressive to women, especially for those who engaged in wage work while carrying out most of the responsibilities of caring for family members at home. They formed housewives' cooperatives, designed and implemented kitchenless houses, and led experiments in communal living. Their writings conceptualized new models for domestic economy and reached a wide audience, and yet they have been unacknowledged as contributors to social theory.⁸

Decades later in the 1970s, a considerable body of feminist theory once more addressed the crucial area of social reproduction in what came to be known as the domestic labor debates. The inauguration of these debates is often ascribed to a much discussed essay in *Monthly Review* on "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation" by Canadian theoretical chemist Margaret Benston (1969).⁹ The debates were fueled by a growing international feminist movement whose scale was unprecedented as feminists across Europe and North America analyzed the relation of patriarchal oppression to capitalist exploitation. Two questions drove their analyses: how to understand the integration of domestic labor and wage labor, and how feminist and working-class struggles might be connected (Weeks 2011, 119). Some proposed that women constitute a separate class exploited by men (Delphy 1984; Wittig 1992); others argued that domestic labor is a source of surplus value (Dalla Costa and James 1972) or that the domestic economy is a separate mode of production (Delphy 1984; Ferguson 1989). Within this work emerged a valuable set of concepts for understanding the racial and gendered face of domestic labor, the family as an economic and cultural arena, and

housework as unpaid labor that enhances capital accumulation at the expense of those who do it, the vast majority of whom are women. While many of the participants in these debates were white women, collectives like the Combahee River Collective, the Third World Women's Alliance, the National Black Feminist Organization, and the Black Lesbian Caucus called on feminists to address racial oppression, particularly in so far as it situated black and white women differently across the history of reproductive labor (Davis 1972; Glenn 1992).¹⁰ Their work remains an important corrective from a black feminist perspective that addresses the interlocking systems of gender and race at home and in the marketplace.

One component of the domestic labor debates was the campaign for wages for housework. In the 1950s and early 1960s women participated in socialist organizations and poor women's campaigns; many, like Selma James and Jonnie Tillman, gave speeches and wrote pamphlets describing the hardships of women's daily lives. Between the mid-1960s and early 1970s black women in the United States and in Britain headed welfare rights movements demanding payment for their labor at home (Triece 2013). Their efforts are part of the historical context for the international wages for housework campaign which aimed to demystify domestic labor and organize women around their exploitation as unpaid domestic workers. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972), co-authored by the Italian Mariarosa Dalla Costa and U.S.-born Selma James then living in England, formulated the campaign's key arguments. Between 1972 and 1974 the campaign fueled demonstrations and calls for general strikes in Italy, Britain, and the United States (Weeks 2011, 113).

The wages for housework position is that domestic labor is essential to the production of surplus value. In developing this claim, Dalla Costa and James contest the notion that wage work and the domestic realm are separate spheres. They contend that the family is a part of the wage system because the unwaged labor of housework keeps formal wages down.¹¹ Although the campaign called for wages for housework, in actuality it was a "struggle for a different relation between life and work," one that rejected the family-centered organization of social reproduction and the gendered distribution of labor (Weeks 2011, 124). As Silvia Federici stresses, the wages for housework campaign was always about promoting a political perspective, not merely getting women a lump of money (2012, 15). Supporters of the original campaign recognized that their improbable demand was less a literal call for housewives to be paid and more a stance that confounded the commonsense division between the formal workplace and the private family. In this respect it offered an aspirational political standpoint based on a fuller representation of the ensemble of social relations needed for living. In her recent reassessment of the campaign, Kathi Weeks (2011) makes the point that it has not been well understood – either too harshly critiqued or dismissed by feminists, left and center, as a misguided, untenable, and narrow demand. She calls for more ample attention to the political power of the demand this campaign put forward as a provocation and an articulation of a desire for expanding needs. In these respects the campaign continues to offer a powerful example of political organizing around work as well as a critical analysis of domestic labor, the family, and the wage.

In redefining domestic labor as the labor that reproduces the capacities workers exchange for a wage, marxist feminists¹² uncover the underside of exploitation and reorient conceptions of the capitalist value system. As the Italian feminist Leopoldina Fortunati asserts, Marx did not realize that "the consumption of the wage's use value

presupposes some other work has taken place – either housework or prostitution” (1995, 95). This “other work” is the bodily and emotional care that is incorporated into the use value of the worker’s labor power. It is surplus labor that hides behind the exchange value of the wage, labor that is naturalized through the race and gender hierarchies of patriarchal cultures, a surplus that the capitalist does not have to calculate into the cost of wages.

As many feminists have pointed out, aside from all of their critical contributions, the arguments put forward in the domestic labor debates also have their limits.¹³ They tend to overgeneralize about the situation of those who do housework, and many of the analyses do not acknowledge women’s differing positions across the history of national and international sexual divisions of labor. Nonetheless, they remain an important, if often unacknowledged, forerunner of research that does address these complexities.¹⁴ Feminist attention to the labor that takes place in the family has enabled a better understanding of the expanding service economy’s flexible workforce and its reliance on the unpaid and underpaid labor of those who care for children, the sick and infirm, and elders. I return to a discussion of these activities that are variously characterized as care work, intimate, emotional, or affective labor in my discussion of affect in the chapter’s concluding section.

Feminist attention to social reproduction also brings into focus the body as a dense transfer point for power. Despite his general neglect of gender, materialist feminists have found a useful analytic of the body in the work of Michel Foucault, and from his concepts have developed analyses of gender as a technology of normalizing discourses and subversive body practices.¹⁵ The vocabulary of the “disciplining of bodies” adopted from Foucault only began to be widely used by feminists in the late twentieth century; however, for decades feminists have addressed the body as a political issue in their critical analyses of patriarchal control over women’s being in the world, their fertility, mobility, sexuality, and appearance.¹⁶ In feminist tracts and in consciousness-raising groups in the late 1960s and 1970s, women brought to the fore the bias in western culture that prioritized and masculinized the rational mind and devalued and feminized the body. Some of the most notable materialist contributions to a growing archive of feminist writing on the body probe the body’s implication in capital accumulation and in class relations, and approach the meanings attached to bodies as a component of the ideological formation of subjects.

Materialist feminist research has made visible practices that target women’s (and men’s) bodies across the phases of capitalist development and colonial history, exposing the persistence of rape, honor killings, sexual abuse, gender discrimination, and other forms of physical and symbolic violence as well as the history of resistance to them. One notable area in this line of inquiry is the research of feminist historians, among them Barbara Bush, Jacqueline Jones, Jennifer Morgan, and Deborah Gray White, who have recast the record of women’s bodies in colonial history, disclosing the value of African women’s reproductive labor to capital and the deployment of women’s bodies as a symbolic field. Imaginary projections upon women’s bodies have fostered the development of ideologies of racial difference and national identity, and justified the subjection of colonized subjects. Crucial to this feminist work on colonial history has been the excavation of women’s practices of everyday resistance.¹⁷

Feminists also have addressed the impact of capital flows across the globe – from Beijing to Bombay, Tokyo to Berlin, Paris to New York – on girls and young women,

creating openings to reject traditional restrictions and embrace new forms of physical mobility, pleasure, sexual and economic freedom, fashion, and attitude. Feminist attention to sexuality has reoriented public discourse on prostitution, drawing attention to sex work as reproductive labor.¹⁸ Much feminist research on the body's wellbeing has been generated and enriched by women's activism, especially the women's health movement, which has led feminists to engage medical and scientific data and to map the history of women's knowledge and treatment of the body, including the specific character of women's embodied capacities of menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause.¹⁹ Embedded in this critical attention to bodies and sexual politics is feminism's longstanding and tangled relationship to sexual liberation struggles, sexuality studies, and queer theory.²⁰

This rich archive is also punctuated by disagreements about how to understand the body's materiality. In contrast to those who stress the impact of historical and social forces on bodies, some feminist theorists have argued that women's female sexual difference constitutes a distinct corporeal materiality, a source of identity, power, and pleasure. French feminists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous stress these features of female embodiment as does the Mexican feminist Marta Lamas (2011). In an effort to preserve recognition of the body as a material entity that features in women's individual and group lived experience, some feminists have turned to phenomenology to craft a corporeal feminism, among them Simone de Beauvoir (1953), Sara Ahmed (2006), Linda Alcoff (2006), Elizabeth Grosz (1994), and Iris Marion Young (2005). The question of whether the body only materializes through the discourses that make sense of it, or instead has a materiality that supplements its discursive construction remains an open and lively point of debate.

Mind: Feminist Knowledge

At the same time that feminists explored the social history of bodies they were also elaborating more nuanced materialist understandings of the cultural production of subjects and knowledge. Some of the most significant research on gender and race approaches culture as a meaning-making system integrally bound to capitalist production and reproduction, and it does so by engaging theories of ideology. One example is the British sociologist Michèle Barrett's groundbreaking *Women's Oppression Today* (1980) that developed Louis Althusser's theory of ideology to explain gender as a cultural system that naturalizes women's position in capitalism's class system. Along with other members of the editorial collective of the London-based journal *Feminist Review*, Barrett emphasized the integral relation between gender ideology and divisions of labor across social institutions.²¹

By the 1980s, an emerging line of feminist critique was exposing the ideological underpinnings of western feminism for its failure to address the relation between knowledge and capital, gender and empire. Critiques of white and western feminism's exclusion of race analysis have a long history, as does the insistence of some feminists that even these blind spots must be understood systemically.²² Feminist theorists, among them Gayatri Spivak (1988, 2007) and Chandra Mohanty (2003, 2012), working in and outside of the one-third world,²³ have disclosed the epistemic violence of western feminism that ignores or misrepresents the lives and knowledge of women of the global South.

These distortions involve multiple exclusions, one of them a pattern of representing two-thirds world women as if they all needed saving by western civilization. Western feminism has also been critiqued for drawing the definition of “theory” so narrowly that knowledge produced by women outside the overdeveloped sectors is unrecognized as theory. Compounding the problem of the North–South traffic in ideas is the publishing industry’s reluctance to invest in translation. Perhaps not uncoincidentally, many of the writings of women from the global South that have circulated internationally offer bold systemic analyses.²⁴

As academic theory in the North turned its attention to postmodern culture, many feminist scholars became so focused on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and other forms of identity and difference that the relation of these cultural forms to property and labor was all but lost in their work. Judith Butler’s early books, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), for example, shifted the ground for gender analysis by opening the possibility to understand gender difference as an unstable cultural construct and identities as dependent upon performative reiteration. Much of the theoretical writing that pursued this tack did not account for the articulation of cultural formations and their knowledge regimes within and across capitalist formations. Nonetheless, even during the upsurge of postmodern feminism, marxist and socialist feminists continued to develop more ample analyses that attend to knowledge-making as a site of gendered and racialized class struggle.²⁵

Among these, and one of the most significant and lasting contributions to feminist epistemology, is standpoint theory. First developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a critique of western knowledge and a guide to feminist methodology, standpoint theory aims to be both explanatory and normative. The concept of standpoint presumes that knowledge is never neutral but always situated in social relations and therefore a crucial political site and stake. What is striking about standpoint theory is that it recognizes both the importance of lived experience in the making of critical knowledge and the social structures and power relations that organize experience. It also acknowledges the “good sense” of the oppressed as a grassroots critical perspective that is available for others to inhabit. Among the initial formulators of standpoint theory were the philosopher Sandra Harding, the political scientist Nancy Hartsock, and the sociologists Patricia Hill Collins, Hillary Rose, and Dorothy Smith, all of them pioneers in their fields.²⁶ They developed the notion of standpoint from the insights of Georg Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, and other Marxists in order to articulate a more coherent explanation of feminism’s authority as knowledge, who it speaks for, and the forces of oppression and exploitation it contests. Standpoint refers to a position in society – a lived social location – that enables critical ways of knowing. The feminist standpoint is a perspective that emerges from women’s lives and aims to explain the historical conditions that shape them. It unmask humanist reason, which for generations had been accepted as the source of universal truth, as actually representing a specific and partial outlook, that of men in the dominant group.

Feminist standpoint theory is grounded in the value of women’s lives. However, it also constitutes a critical perspective on them. This critical perspective challenges the notion that simply to be a woman guarantees a clear understanding of the world and concedes that women’s lived experience can be formulated in terms that are at odds with the material realities of women’s lives. It also recognizes that while “woman” is not a universal category that encompasses all articulations of the feminine or accounts for

women's differences from one another, it can be used strategically to represent women's interests. Standpoint epistemology draws attention to the structures of exploitation that situate women and men differently across geopolitical spaces and class sectors. It displays how ruling ideas uphold and naturalize social relations that subordinate women as a group and also allow some women to dominate others. As a perspective that challenges the devaluation of the feminine in multiple forms – as wives, mothers, and all manner of abjected and disposable subjects – standpoint theory remains a valuable critical resource especially for feminists who bring to new developments in science, technology, and media the critical wisdom of those who are far from the centers of power.

Heart: The Value of Affect and Collective Action

In the past fifty years there has emerged a considerable body of feminist research on affect and emotion, as capitalism found in the human capacity for feeling and sensation a lucrative vehicle for profits in the service economy, global media, advertising, and entertainment industries. Affect refers to corporeal intensities intrinsic to biological and social life that accompany human activity and interaction. Affects permeate the social relations through which needs are met or denied, and they bind us to non-human animals and to the planet. Affects are a component of “living labor” – that is, of the human capacity for action in collaboration, a capability through which survival takes place. Interest in affect, feeling, and emotion has accompanied critiques of modernity's hyper-valuation of narrow versions of rationality and the intensification of capital's colonization of human capacities. The sociologist Arlie Hochschild was one of the first to recognize that the underside of the emerging service economy entailed the management of what she called “feeling rules” and their gendered inflection (Hochschild 1973).²⁷ What Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2010) call “intimate labor” involves an array of affective interactions that take place across waged and unwaged labor in the service of social reproduction. Intimate labor may be of fleeting or long duration and invariably involves affective attention to objects and materials that improve the quality of life for someone, activities such as creating and sustaining emotional ties and providing bodily upkeep, health and hygiene, sexual services, housecleaning, therapy, elder care, and child care. When intimate labor is devalued as feminized, it carries a negative affective charge. Feminist scholarship is making visible the affective relations embedded in new forms of domestic labor and the transnational networks of migration that feed them.²⁸ In her research on twenty-first-century domestic workers in Europe, for example, Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez underscores that affective value is a crucial component of the relational character of living labor embedded in the use value of racialized and feminized subjects, many of them migrants from Latin America or Eastern Europe, who labor in the “trenches of coloniality” where domestic workers perform the necessary labor of care (2010, 147). Anca Parvulescu turns to the wages for housework campaign as a relevant model of political strategizing for migrant workers in these hidden sectors of the care economy.

Feminists have long recognized the relation between knowledge and emotion, and some of the early writings on the topic span disciplines and social locations. Audre Lorde's groundbreaking essay on “The Uses of the Erotic” (1980) underscores the value

of emotion as a critical resource in everyday life. That same year in *Knowledge and Passion* (1980), the anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo challenged the mind–body hierarchy that assigns emotion to the irrational, physical, and feminine. Her path-breaking essay, “Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling,” published four years later, puts forward affect as corporeal and culturally informed cognition. Lila Abu-Lughod’s 1986 study of Bedouin women’s use of poetic conventions to manage conflicting emotions reveals emotion to be culturally scripted and coded rather than spontaneously expressed. The philosopher Alison Jaggar (1989) draws attention to the “outlaw emotions” that accompany feminist insights, and the Chicana feminists Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Cherríe Moraga (1983) plumb the intensely lived emotions that lesbians and women of color transform into critical corporeal knowledge.

Feminist philosophers and social scientists have advanced understanding of emotion and affect as components of the relational, dependent, and collaborative nature of existence. In such an understanding affective interactions among humans and between humans and the natural world span economic, political, ecological, and cultural practices. Affects matter because they are felt intensities that enhance or diminish the body’s capacity to act. Feminists have also turned to phenomenology, in particular the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and its insights on the structures that constrain how subjects live and experience their embodiment as both affective and cognitive (Ahmed 2006; Beauvoir 1953; Young 2005). Others stress the biological, neurological, and psychic features of the body’s ability to regulate itself and to transmit affects in its social interactions (Brennan 2004). Some feminist research on affect engages new materialist approaches to embodied subjectivity, posing it as matter that is vital to life. These vitalist theorists, among them Rosi Braidotti (2013) and Elizabeth Grosz (1994), attend to affect as a corporeal intensity or virtuality that involves the transmission of impulses through the nervous system or other energy fields. In dismantling the dualism of body vs. mind and emphasizing that the body as physical matter is a weave of potential and energy, they are in conversation with the materialism of Baruch Spinoza and the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Feminist approaches that historicize affect and emotion tend to situate it in theoretical frames that are more emphatically social and political rather than interpersonal, psychic, or experiential. They include studies that examine the formation of intimate publics and public feelings (Berlant 2008; Cvetkovich 2002, 2012; Hennessy 2013) or that probe the injuries and losses inherent to modernity (Brown 1995; Franco 2013). This work has ties to the legacy of feminist ideology critique and standpoint theory in its interest in the ways affect circulates through meaning-making practices that are lodged in the history of capitalist relations.²⁹

Feminist social movement scholars have tackled the transmission of affect that occurs when individuals mobilize to act collectively, and some of that research recognizes that attention to emotion was a foundational component of feminism, especially as it featured in the writings of early twentieth-century freethinkers, anarchists, and socialists; in the practice of consciousness-raising; and in late twentieth-century sexual politics.³⁰ Notable among these studies are Deborah Gould’s 2009 ethnography of the affective habitus of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and Francesca Poletta’s (2002) work on the U.S. civil rights movement. My own recent research considers the affect-cultures of labor organizing by workers in the assembly-for-export factories in northern Mexico. Affective attachments have been essential to sustaining Mexican workers’ campaigns

for freedom of association, health and safety, clean air, land, and water. While at times these attachments may be articulated in terms of the strong attractors of sexuality and gender, they also spill into collective bonds that defy available cultural categories. In *Fires on the Border* (2013) I address the affectively laden ability to collaborate as a surplus that is never completely harvested by capital. The labor and community organizing in Mexico have a particular history, but the erotic identifications and attachments that have been integral to collective struggles for dignity and justice there also disclose features of affect-culture and its expressions that pertain to organizing efforts elsewhere.

There is no question that neoliberal ideology has been a powerful and affect-laden soft weapon in a well-organized campaign to suppress radical history and manipulate anti-feminist public opinion. The marginalizing of systemic analysis is one measure of its success (Mohanty 2012), as is the “double entanglement” in which feminism in the overdeveloped world has become trapped: a virulent backlash that reviles and suppresses feminist critical discourse and a new common sense that dismisses some of its most critical concepts as old-fashioned while rearticulating its emancipatory discourse into affirmations of women as ambitious individualized consumers (McRobbie 2009). At the same time post-feminism settles in as the new cultural obvious, across the globe feminized labor remains the single most profitable commodity, violence against women persists, and women bear a disproportionate burden of the work of reproducing life.

Nonetheless, despite and during the leveling of this epistemic violence, if you look to the uneven temporality of feminism’s history you will find that its principles remain alive in the furrows of neoliberalism where women – and men – continue to demand gender justice as a feature of their efforts to reclaim the resources of labor, land, imagination, and collaboration (Federici 2012; Gibson-Graham 2006; Hayden 1981). In many of these initiatives, some local, others regional and international, women are leading organized campaigns to develop collective interests, share knowledge, and forge mutual bonds. As technological and scientific developments continue to alter life processes and adjust human relations to nature, to machines, and to one another, feminism as a standpoint for and from the lives of the oppressed remains a crucial critical perspective for assessing the benefits and costs of modernity. Its uneven temporality holds invaluable lessons for those willing to read the spectral knowledge that haunts familiar stories and to find in its materialist problematic a legacy that can facilitate the crafting of effective strategies for organized action toward a more just and sustainable way of life.

- see CHAPTER 6 (PARIS – BOSTON – BERKELEY – THE MEXICO/TEXAS BORDERLANDS 1949–1990; OR, GENDER AND SEXUALITY); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY); CHAPTER 18 (AFFECT)

Notes

- 1 On this point also see Wiegman (2000, 824).
- 2 For their formulation of the philosophy of historical materialism see *The German Ideology* (in Marx and Engels 1976).
- 3 Two U.S. examples are Maria W. Stewart (1797–1883) and Matilda Joselyn Gage (1826–1898). On Stewart and other early black feminist theorists see Collins (1990).

- Gage's most well-known book is *Woman, Church and State* (1893). For more on Gage see The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation (<http://www.matildajoslyngage.org/>).
- 4 For a critique of racist assumptions in some of these writings see Spillers (1984). For detailed analyses of black women's organizing efforts in this period, among them the Combahee River Collective and Kitchen Table Press, see Springer (2005) and Echols (1989).
 - 5 In other words, a Marxist feminist understanding of class as a social relation between those who own and control capital at the expense of those who do not is quite different from cultural analysts' notion of class as status distinctions among groups.
 - 6 Donna Haraway's 1985 "Cyborg Manifesto" is one example.
 - 7 On this feminist approach see Bezanson and Luxton (2006); Laslett and Brenner (1989).
 - 8 Marie Stevens Howland (1874), Melusina Fay Peirce (1894), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1898) are examples of feminist theorists of domestic labor whose ideas circulated widely and impacted social experiments in urban and domestic planning. See Hayden (1981) on this history.
 - 9 In addition to Benston, some of the key contributors to these debates were Coulson, Magaš, and Wainwright (1975); Delphy (1984); Federici (2012); Gardiner (1975); Molyneaux (1979); Morton (1995); Seecombe (1974). For other examples of 1970s debates on housework as reproductive labor see the collections by Edmond and Fleming (1975) and Malos (1995). For examples of scholarship on domestic labor that continued to develop the insights of Marxist feminists see Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003); Folbre (2004); Federici (2012); Ferguson (1989); Glenn (1992); Parvulescu (2012); Weeks (2011).
 - 10 See Springer (2005) on the history of these collectives.
 - 11 This concept appears later in the writings of autonomous Marxism, a tendency to which this feminist position is closely related.
 - 12 I keep a lower case "m" for marxist feminism in order to signal that it draws from a wide range of historical materialist thought beyond the writings of Marx.
 - 13 See for example Davis (1983, ch. 13); McKinnon (1991, 71–72).
 - 14 See, for example, Mies (1986); Federici (2009); Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003).
 - 15 Some of the contributors to this line of thinking include Susan Bordo (1994), Teresa de Lauretis (1987), and Emily Martin (1995).
 - 16 Bordo (1999) makes this point and refers to early feminist attention to the body in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. For collections of feminist work on the body see Davis (1997); Price and Shildrick (1999); Schiebinger (2000).
 - 17 For other examples of groundbreaking feminist research on slavery see Camp (2004); Davis (1971); Mies (1986); Federici (2009).
 - 18 See Fortunati (1995); Kempadoo (1999); McClintock (1992).
 - 19 *Our Bodies, Ourselves* edited by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective remains a classic example of feminist praxis launched by the women's health movement. See Davis (2007) on the history of the project and the international reception of the book.
 - 20 For some of these debates see Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson (1984); Vance (1984); Weed and Schor (1997).
 - 21 Feminists who developed important contributions to feminist ideology critique include Carby (1989); German (1989); Jackson (1999); Poovey (1988); Spivak (1988). See also Hennessy and Ingraham (1997) and Hennessy (1993) and (2000).

- 22 In addition to the work of black feminists mentioned above, see the critical race work of communist feminists and the writings and speeches of international organizers like Claudia Jones and Selma James.
- 23 This formulation is meant to disrupt misleading ideological and geographic binaries while also recognizing the uneven political geography and history of colonialism and capitalism. It signals a distinction between “minority” groups and communities in economically privileged nations that control property, power, and resources (the one-third world) and the social majority of exploited, dominated, and deprived communities. It aims to capture across a global economy the uneven distribution of capitalist and neocolonial elites and those upon whom their privilege rests (the two-thirds world). For usages of the term see Esteva and Prakash (1997) and Mohanty (2003).
- 24 See, for example, two texts in the Palgrave Theory in the World series (now sadly discontinued), edited by Gayatri Spivak and Hosam Aboul-Ela: selected work of the Mexican feminist Marta Lamas (2011) and selections from the Brazilian theorist Marilena Chauí (2011).
- 25 See, for example, Brennan (2002) on globalization; Davis (2003) and Gilmore (2007) on the U.S. prison industry; Duggan (2003) on heteronormativity; Joseph (2014) on debt; and McClintock (1995) on the cultures of late nineteenth-century imperialism.
- 26 Several of their essays are collected in Harding (2004). See also Hartsock (1998); Collins (1990).
- 27 Lynch and Walsh (2009) recognize differences in the affective components of care as they register in various levels of attentiveness across paid, unpaid, and volunteer labor.
- 28 See for example Anderson (2000); Pratt and Rosner (2012); Weeks (2011).
- 29 On the materiality of affect see also Hennessy (2013, ch. 2).
- 30 See, for example, Alexandra Kollontai (1980); the letters of Rosa Luxemburg (2011); or the essays and speeches of Emma Goldman (1996). See also Barraclough, Rabinowitz, and Bowen Struyk (2014) on the ways that love animates and inflects revolutionary thinking, relationships, and commitments across the Pacific. For additional work on affect in social movement, see Flam and King (2005).

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14

Gender and Queer Theory

Amber Jamilla Musser

Many narratives trace queer theory's inaugural moment to Teresa de Lauretis's edited 1991 issue of *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies* entitled "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." In creating a space for queer theory, de Lauretis differentiates it from "gay and lesbian"/"lesbian and gay" studies and mainstream feminism, both of which come from particular locations that have historically excluded race and class and which deal with gender in particular ways. Much work in lesbian and gay studies, she argues, has been produced about middle-class gay white men, and this scholarship does not grapple with women or issues of class and race. And mainstream feminism, though increasingly diversified, has tended to elide issues of sexuality in favor of focusing on gender. Queer theory is de Lauretis's hope for a turn toward understanding the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and class. To this end, de Lauretis reads Judith Butler's 1990 book *Gender Trouble* as signaling a move toward this new mode of analysis. In these early days, Butler's aversion to identity politics, commitment to combating the idea of naturalized gender identity, and investment in the politics of sexuality lay the groundwork for what falls under the rubric of queer theory.¹

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that gender is the product of historically contingent, continuously reiterated acts; she produces a way of looking at gender beyond the binary of male and female and analyzes the binary itself as a product of the "heterosexual matrix." In the 1999 preface to a new edition of *Gender Trouble*, Butler describes her commitment to broadening our perceptions of what makes a livable subject by "open[ing] up the field of gender" (viii). She writes that "[she] also came to understand something of the violence of the foreclosed life, the one that does not get named as 'living,' the one whose incarceration implies a suspension of life, or a sustained death sentence" (xx). Life on the margins is, according to Butler, "'impossible,' illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate" (viii). Her task is not only to name; she desires transformation. Queer theory in general, and *Gender Trouble* in particular, is about "mak[ing] life possible, and to rethink the possible as such" (xx). Queerness, for Butler, is "never fully owned but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (1993, 228).

While queer theory today is still an overtly political enterprise in that it is invested in life at the margins, it has largely shifted away from questions of sexuality and

subjectivity toward a focus on conditions of vulnerability and precarity. While there are several genealogies of this trend that one could trace, I would argue that precarity, which I define as existence without stability or security, came under more intense scrutiny after September 11, 2001 and its aftermath. While I am wary of further reifying Butler as the central figure in queer studies, I begin with her responses to precarity because they enable us to begin to tease out different ways of understanding this shift. In the preface to *Precarious Life*, a collection of essays that were written “in response to the conditions of heightened vulnerability and aggression that followed from those events” (2004, xi), Butler writes that “US boundaries were breached, that an unbearable vulnerability was exposed, that a terrible toll on human life was taken, were, and are cause for fear and mourning; they are also instigations for patient political reflection” (xii). Butler goes on to detail the vulnerability that these events unmasked: “that we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief” (xiii). In addition to meditating on mourning and the vulnerability of the human, the book signals several main shifts in Butler’s thought and the direction of queer theory. Most importantly, vulnerability and interdependence become foregrounded as ways to understand subjectivity, thereby intensifying a focus on the structures that create the social.

In what follows, I will use precarity to produce a map of some trends in queer theory today in order to outline the stakes of this current intellectual work and ask how it can be used to rethink sexuality. In outlining the current stakes of precarity, I am most interested in the groupings that can be described as *queer of color critique* and *public feelings* because both of these spaces have enabled complex theoretical and political discussions centered around precarity. Further, both introduce alternative historical framings of queer theory. By orienting their contributions to queer studies around precarity, the scholars in these groups are asking both how to live with this condition and what formations have produced this situation of liminality and vulnerability. Overall, I argue that this emphasis on precarity, which can be seen in earlier iterations of queer theory, has made certain tensions surrounding the place of difference within queer theory visible. An emphasis on precarity also prioritizes the role of structures, particularly neoliberalism, which is a particular nexus of collusion between the state and formations of capital, at the expense of theorizing the individual.

Public Feelings: Affective Responses to Precarity

The scholars working within the Public Feelings project turn to affect to show the ways in which feelings produce politics. Ann Cvetkovich narrates communities formed through trauma and the recuperation of a form of agency in depression, Lauren Berlant grapples with the fantasies that underlie neoliberalism, and José Esteban Muñoz turns to queerness as a repository for thinking modes of life outside of neoliberalism. Questions about how one endures life under neoliberalism when agency feels either unattainable or meaningless turn into questions of how one can foster hope and recalibrate understandings of change away from revolution toward feeling. In restructuring what we understand to be alternatives to neoliberalism, these projects alter perceptions of what possibilities we have for the future and what agency can mean; they give us new ways to cope. In lieu of woundedness, we have hope, utopia, and fantasy.

In the introduction to her book *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Cvetkovich situates her project as part of a collective scholarly engagement on affect that emerged from the political malaise after the elections of 2000, the events of September 11, 2001, and the ongoing wars and political divisions that wracked the United States in the aftermath of these events. Rather than focus on the geopolitics that underlie these events, Cvetkovich and others aligned with the Public Feelings project are invested in their emotional dynamics. Cvetkovich frames the salient questions thusly: “What makes it possible for people to vote for Bush or assent to war, and how do these political decisions operate within the context of daily lives that are pervaded by a combination of anxiety and numbness? How can we, as intellectuals and activists, acknowledge our own political disappointments and failures in a way that can be enabling? Where might hope be possible?” (2012, 1). This investment in finding the other side of failure comes from what Cvetkovich describes as “the sense that customary forms of political response, including direct action and critical analysis, are no longer working either to change the world or to make us feel better” (1). The turn to affect, then, is about “generating new ways of thinking about agency” within a situation where conventional forms of resistance have been foreclosed (2). In lieu of revolution or revolt, solutions to the oppressions caused by neoliberalism are “the slow steady work of resilient survival, utopian dreaming, and other affective tools for transformation” (2).

In this understanding of precarity, it is a condition of everyday life (and not extraordinary circumstance) because the state and capitalism have colluded to rewrite the possibilities for the individual. In contrast to Butler’s understanding of precarity as rooted in human vulnerability, precarity here functions as the acknowledgment that individual agency means very little in the face of neoliberalism. This means more than Michel Foucault’s argument that individuals are produced by disciplinary structures; it means that the sense of one’s agency has diminished even as the state and capitalism endeavor to shift toward a model that emphasizes personal responsibility without acknowledging the very real constraints that have been placed on individual choices and mobility by these very same structures. By approaching this type of precarity on a visceral level, the Public Feelings project aims to understand how to deal with this condition of impasse, stasis, and depression. This project aims to depathologize negativity, unpack survival strategies, and create pockets of hope through affect.

In many ways, this rescripting of negative affect continues work that Cvetkovich began in an earlier text. In *An Archive of Feelings*, she draws attention to the formation of lesbian communities around the trauma of everyday life. She describes the formation of lesbian publics around the culture of caretaking and mourning within AIDS activism, therapeutic culture, and butch/femme sexualities. Cvetkovich describes the book as diffuse: “it approaches national trauma histories and their cultural memory from the unabashedly minoritarian perspective of lesbian cultures. Its sites of investigation – lesbian sexuality, migration and diaspora, and AIDS activism, among others – are intended not to constitute an exhaustive survey but to represent examples of how affective experience can provide the basis for new cultures” (2003, 7). In these local histories, pockets of hope and agency are retrieved from spaces of hurt and pain. This depathologizes negative affect. In lieu of seeing trauma (or later, depression) as solely pernicious, Cvetkovich asks what can be created from these moments of pain – how do good and bad feelings mix together? In this redemptive arc, we recognize a similarity with the Public Feelings project. We need, however, to mark an important distinction here

between thinking about Cvetkovich's project in *An Archive of Feelings* versus her work in *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Though the narrative – finding hope in hopelessness – is the same, *An Archive of Feelings* grapples with lesbian communities as spaces that are made robust because of their friction with the minoritizing forces of homophobia and heteronormativity. This is a narrative that privileges individual agency and collectivities and can be read as (small-scale) triumph over (large-scale) adversity. *Depression: A Public Feeling* retreats from the language of minoritization in order to construe a violent world order in which oppression is omnipresent. There may be different orders of precarity – for example Cvetkovich describes racism as causing a particular form of depression – but precarity's attendant affects of stasis and depression are something with which everyone must learn to grapple.

Berlant's discussion of cruel optimism adds a twist to Cvetkovich's understanding of living with precarity. In contrast to Cvetkovich's assertion that the dominant feeling under neoliberalism is depression, Berlant focuses on the optimism that people continue to experience despite their circumstances. *Cruel Optimism* is about the production of structures of hope that hide the reality of precarity. Describing moments of imagined agency and desires for material representations of power in the face of powerlessness and slow death, Berlant uncovers the spaces of fantasy and optimism that attach to neoliberalism. Berlant writes, "In cruel optimism the subject or community turns its treasured attachments into safety-deposit objects that make it possible to bear sovereignty through its distribution, the energy of feeling relational, general, reciprocal, and accumulative" (2011, 43). These fantasies are both spaces of hope for a different future and denials of a present that occludes the actualization of these possibilities. In Berlant's unpacking of the structures of desire that neoliberalism enables, we find precarity and repositories of individuality – though this is not necessarily articulated as agency. Cruel optimism illustrates both the affective and material harms of neoliberalism and the resilience of desire, both for a different type of life and for the ability to attain it. As Berlant writes, "Fantasy is an opening and a defense. The vague expectations of normative optimism produce small self-interruptions as the heterotopias of sovereignty amid structural inequality, political depression, and other intimate disappointments" (2011, 49). For Berlant, surviving neoliberalism is about intimate negotiations; even as the conditions of precarity are structural, both disappointments and optimism happen on the scale of the individual.

Muñoz's work picks up the thread of a life otherwise in his discussions of utopia. After exploring the affective spaces of individuals occupying multiple positions of marginality in *Disidentifications*, Muñoz investigates the possibilities of people coming together in transient and precarious ways in *Cruising Utopia*. These collectivities act as a direct affront to neoliberalism by mobilizing queerness to create alternatives, to create liveliness. Muñoz writes, "Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (2009, 49). In contrast to Berlant's fantastic spaces or Cvetkovich's maneuvers to recuperate depression, Muñoz moves us toward the utopian by highlighting the importance of the collective. Most importantly, these alternatives are not about a deferred future, but the present: "we must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and to feel a *then and there*" (1). Here, the drab and difficult reality that Cvetkovich chronicles and the impossible future that Berlant describes is met head-on with resistance in

the form of present queerness. As Muñoz writes, “outposts of actually existing queer worlds ... defiantly public and glimpses into an ensemble of social actors performing a queer world” (49). This collectivity opens into alternatives to neoliberalism, not by dwelling on idealism, but by working with difference and elaborating the ways in which difference can form the bedrock for coming together. This focus on difference in the face of the oppressive nature of neoliberalism allows for a reconsideration of what agency is and what it might mean to feel hopeful.

Despite their differences, I group these projects because of their commitment to using affect as an analytic tool for understanding our present moment of structural precarity. In this era of neoliberalism when the state and capitalism have a heavy hand in dictating the movements of everyday life, looking to affect offers a way to recuperate agency and find ways to survive. Cvetkovich describes the mixed emotions permeating life under neoliberalism, working with negative affects – not to glorify them, but to see what positive effects (alongside the negative) they might be able to produce. Berlant focuses on the respite (optimism) through which fantasies of power obscure knowledge of neoliberalism’s violence and the precarity of the individual. This tactic of imagining life in a different mode is pushed furthest by Muñoz who sees queerness not as a site of precarity, but as a repository for an alternate politics, manifest as a different modality of experiencing the present and unexpected ways of forming collectivities. If precarity is the precondition for this mode of theorization, we see that attention to affect produces a politics that opens into alternate modes of envisioning agency, life, and creativity.

Rethinking Terms: Queer of Color Analyses and Precarity

But what about sexuality? As queer theory moved from discussing sexual minorities as positioned precariously within a larger population to discussing precarity as a condition of contemporary existence, discourses of sexuality have shifted. For the most part, sexual minorities are no longer the objects of theoretical scrutiny; theorists have trained their eyes toward a more thorough understanding of the structures of oppression. This has bifurcated discourses on sexuality. On the one hand, it allows some, like Muñoz, to mine the political potential of discourses of minoritarianism for alternatives to neoliberalism. Here, I refer to the fact that his discussion of queerness encompasses the sexual (devoting one chapter in particular to “sexual avant-gardist acts whose ideological projects are both antinormative and critical of the state” [2009, 56]) in the service of disrupting the temporality and feeling of neoliberalism. Though it also traffics in precarity, this formulation of queerness as a space of potentiality differs qualitatively from Butler’s earlier marking of queerness as a space forever on the edge of liveability. On the other hand, theorists have been preoccupied with those who would historically have been labeled sexual minorities owing to sexual preferences, but whose lifestyles situate them very much within the thrall of neoliberalism. In other words, what does one do when the discourse of sexual minoritization no longer correlates to liminality and, in fact, is part of the machinery of the state? In neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual responsibility (despite the removal of the possibility of actual agency), citizenship becomes something that one can attain through disciplined exertion. Brenda Cossman elaborates on this: “the privatization, familialization, and self-disciplining of citizenship are often inseparable processes. In the new modality of sexual citizenship, subjects are

required to self-discipline according to the logic of the market. The good citizen emerges as enterprising, self-regulating subject who manages his or her own risk" (2007, 15). This new formation of citizenship makes homosexuality, liberalism, and nationalism compatible in unprecedented ways.

Within queer theory, then, there has been an investment in making explicit the costs of opening the gates of sexual citizenship. In *Terrorist Assemblages*, Jasbir Puar uses the term homonationalism to explore the exclusions produced by the nationalistic embrace of homosexuality in the United States. Puar writes, "national recognition and inclusion ... is contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary ... Further, this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects" (2007, 2). David Eng explores a similar dynamic of exclusions in *The Feeling of Kinship*, arguing that the relatively recent mode of inclusion, which he terms queer liberalism, which "articulates a contemporary confluence of the political and economic spheres that forms the basis for the liberal inclusion of particular gay and lesbian US citizen-subjects petitioning for rights and recognition before the law," has sharp political costs (2010, 2–3). Eng writes, "queer liberalism does not resist, but abets, the forgetting of race and the denial of racial difference" (4). This forgetting of race and racial difference manifests itself as colorblindness, which is to say that race is assumed to be a category of analysis that no longer matters for contemporary research; the assumption is that it is a historical entity without effects in the present because people can always work their way toward equality. In contrast to a broadly disseminated sense of precarity, Puar and Eng draw attention to the particular types of exclusions that this discourse of normalization produces. Here, there is a difference between queerness and homosexuality. While Muñoz frames queerness as a path toward a utopic coming together, Puar and Eng are more invested in the precarity of exclusion and in unpacking the various structures (racialization and nationalism) that produce these outside spaces. Puar analyzes the ways in which racialized bodies and their stigma of sexual otherness work to shore up the normativity of the American homosexual while Eng looks at the ways in which these discourses of normativity work to erase difference within the population, producing an imaginary and pernicious sameness.

While Puar and Eng are also invested in the affective dynamics that these historical exclusions produce (and are therefore also linked to the Public Feelings project), here I draw on their attention to the production of precarity as an effect of the historical linkages between sexuality and racialization because it brings us into another space of queer theory – queer of color analysis. Emerging from a tradition of materialist analyses, this scholarly project is invested in challenging how sexuality has been framed and aims to draw attention to the racialized historical foreclosures of imagination. From this vantage point, precarity is a term that is inadequate to the violence that neoliberalism produces because it assumes subjectivity and rights where queer of color analyses dwell on spaces where these are foreclosed. Here is Roderick Ferguson's description of this queer of color project: "we need a study of racial formations that will not oblige heteropatriarchy, an analysis of sexuality not severed from race and material relations, an interrogation of African American culture that keeps company with other racial formations, and an American studies not beguiled by the United States" (2003, 29). In Ferguson's statement, it is clear that queer of color analyses do not emerge from the same space as the

Public Feelings project. While neoliberalism and gender are important, the thrust of this work is analytic to illuminate broader questions of structure and epistemology. Instead of resistance and individual agency, which are central to the Public Feelings project (and which we might understand as legacies of the project's embeddedness in feminism), we have a politics of knowledge production.

In the introduction to *Freedom with Violence*, Chandan Reddy describes his epistemological approach to understanding the ways that the formation of sexuality as a discourse has operated in tandem with racialization in the United States. Though the rhetoric of colorblindness and exceptionalism is part of Reddy's overall critique, he focuses on the construction of sexuality. The framing of sexuality as a human right, which is to say, something that institutionalizes the precarity of sexual minorities, Reddy argues, erases other spaces of queerness. It does this by universalizing a U.S.-centric understanding of sexuality as embodied by the sexual minority who is subject to discrimination. This flattening of the discourse of sexuality into something that is only legible as a legal right makes it difficult to see other forms of discrimination vis-à-vis race, gender, geography, and class. At issue in this understanding of sexuality is the relationship between sexuality and the state. Here, the state begins to understand itself as something that works to protect sexual minorities in tandem with securing its role as benevolent protector. The discourse of precarity, here, reifies state power. Further, Reddy sees queer studies as participating in this entrenchment of precarity, writing "queer studies has focused on the politics of liveability as a primary cultural and political inquiry" (2012, 169). In contrast to seeing precarity as the precondition to state paternalism, Reddy urges us to analyze the exclusions produced by the formation of these categories (the state, the vulnerable, etc.), rather than dwelling on *who* falls into the categories. This attention to the structure of knowledge that produces precarity opens in turn toward alternate narratives of queerness and knowledge. Reddy writes, "Yet what if we remind ourselves that political modernity in the United States regulated not only citizens and whiteness but racial aliens, alien citizens, black citizens, tribal citizens, the undocumented, and the racialized formations those categories mediated?" (176).

Reddy's move to destabilize our understanding of sexuality and its particular attachment to precarity within queer studies resonates strongly with Ferguson's call for an epistemological intervention. In bringing our attention to the structures of knowledge that produce precarity, queer of color analyses destabilize narratives of normalization and draw attention to what is excluded from them. Though these exclusions could be described in terms of emblematic figures – the welfare mother, the drag queen prostitute, the gay Pakistani immigrant – this approach is not invested in broadening the scope of inclusion, but highlighting the mechanism behind these omissions. In this way, the individual and his or her struggle with sovereignty are not at issue, but the ways that categories are produced and deemed important are. These critiques are invested in the politics of knowledge production – they unpack the ways in which false universalisms have created neoliberalism's ethos of colorblindness and they work to bring our attention to racial difference and the multiple modes through which race can be (and has been) articulated in the world.

The kinship between queer of color analyses and the Public Feelings project can be found in this amplification of difference and multiplicity. Both seek to trouble the hegemony of neoliberalism by highlighting alternative modes of being. The Public

Feelings project does this by emphasizing mobility in the present and the possibility that negativity can offer, while queer of color analyses do this by calling attention to historical processes that could have been otherwise. Though produced by very different means, both rely on the idea that calling attention to queerness – the spaces that are inhabited or could be inhabited by living in a mode distinct from the prevailing ethos of neoliberalism – is political and important.

After Sexuality?

Despite the prevailing emphasis on queerness, we are still at an impasse concerning sexuality. It is clearly not reducible to queerness, but what does it mean to think about sexuality when our conventional modes of understanding the category have been problematized? There has been a plethora of journal issues devoted to asking this question – “After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory” (*South Atlantic Quarterly*; Halley and Parker 2007), “Rethinking Sex” (*GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*; Cvetkovich, Jagose, and Love 2011), “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” (*Social Text*; Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005) – and it seems difficult to escape the idea that traditional formulations of sexuality have attached it to whiteness, nationalism, and liberalism. In the concluding section of this chapter I ask: is there still a way for sexuality to be political?

This impasse regarding sexuality is further complicated by the fact that one of the dominant discourses within queer theory for thinking about sexuality – the anti-relational – has been strongly criticized by both the Public Feelings project and queer of color critique. Emerging from the context of the AIDS emergency and working through Foucault’s notion that bodies and pleasures provide resistance to the disciplining norms of society, Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman script individual pleasure and sexuality as a countervailing force. Pleasure, which had been viewed as a symptom of hedonism and moral degradation, was rewritten as protest; and sexuality, which had been seen as a symptom of pathology, was rewritten as a way to move outside of the confines of the state and liberal subjectivity. Bersani argues that orgasm, which he connects to the psychoanalytic concept of *jouissance*, shatters the self. This is partially because gay male sexuality is connected in the public imaginary to penetration and assuming a passive position, a formulation that Bersani links to both Foucault and Catharine McKinnon and Andrea Dworkin: “*To be penetrated is to abdicate power*” (1987, 212). Bersani’s tethering of anatomy and passivity links sexuality to masochism and invites *jouissance* as a mode of self-shattering into the picture. In the conclusion to “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani writes, “Male homosexuality advertises the risk of the sexual itself as the risk of self-dismissal, of *losing sight* of the self, and in so doing it proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* as a mode of asceticism” (222). Somewhat in alignment with Bersani’s understanding of gay male sexuality and suicidality, Lee Edelman fleshes out a version of queer *jouissance* in *No Future*, writing of the sinthomosexual who asserts itself “*against* futurity, *against* its propagation, insofar as it would designate an impasse in the passage to the future and, by doing so, would pass beyond, pass *through* the saving fantasy futurity denotes” (2004, 33). This sinthomosexual is driven by death and connects *jouissance* with suicide.

Though their aims are different, Bersani and Edelman both illustrate the precarious position of the individual in the face of sexuality. Bersani’s essay emphasizes the radical

possibilities of embracing the pleasures of non-subjectivity while Edelman provides a politics that is not centered on reproduction or the guarantee of a future. It is this commitment to questioning the value of sociality that is described as anti-relational. In their understanding of society, sexuality, and, more specifically, anti-normative sexuality create a shared politics of marginality, which we might understand as keeping with Butler's formation of queerness in "Critically Queer." Bersani and Edelman see anti-relationality as a way to resignify an already-marginalized space.

While this approach to sexuality has produced many intriguing theories, the anti-relational hypothesis has been criticized for not taking difference seriously and for perpetuating an investment in negativity without reprieve. It offers none of the hope that the Public Feelings project seeks to identify, nor does it allow for a rich discussion of difference or the politics of marginality in a way that would work with a queer of color analysis. Cvetkovich writes that the Public Feelings project seeks to "resist the reductive binarisms between the social and the antisocial and between positive and negative affect, as well as paranoid critical tendencies that are on the lookout for premature forms of utopia or futurity or that presume the superiority of negative affect" (2012, 6). Muñoz describes this work as "distancing queerness from what some theorists seem to think of as the contamination of race, gender, or other particularities that taint the purity of sexuality as a singular trope of difference. In other words, anti-relational approaches to queer theory are romances of the negative, wishful thinking, and investments in deferring various dreams of difference" (2009, 11). Reddy echoes Muñoz's argument and pushes it further to argue that discourses on sexuality silence possible discourses on race by suturing a link between subversion and sexuality, rather than taking subversion to be about relationships to power. While Reddy does not reject the anti-relational hypothesis itself, he urges us to historicize it in order to open the possibilities of subversion to other types of queer figures. As normativity spreads, liminality "is not absorbed but displaced onto other cultural subjects and figures ... Surely one meaning of the queer ought to be a figure that reveals the corrosive vitality of the death drive that coincides with the establishment of a universal social order" (2012, 76). In short, this history of reading sexuality as a space of subversion has disavowed difference in its quest to decenter the subject. This is the omission to which Muñoz and Reddy allude. Other markers of difference are either forgotten or marginalized with this type of focus on sexuality.

In order to open alternate understandings of sexuality distinct from anti-relationality's emphasis on subversion, queer theory could disentangle itself from the anti-normative and focus instead on augmenting multiple experiences of sexuality. Both Annemarie Jagose and Sharon Holland call for scholarship in this vein. Jagose argues that the turn toward normativity and other configurations of sexuality might actually offer more potential for queer analysis: "Pushing against the commonsense plausibility that credits certain transgressive acts and identities with resistant potential, I am suggesting instead that the more valuable insight afforded by Foucault's call to bodies and pleasures is the recognition that one's relation to the disciplinary system of sexuality is necessarily articulated with regard to historically specific and bounded sites of contestation" (2012, 196–197). In *The Erotic Life of Racism*, Holland draws attention to the importance of avoiding a discourse of fixity when it comes to sexuality. By paying heed to flesh, Holland writes, "we might be able to reach an epiphany of sorts – one that would allow us to see just what we did and do to one another at the moment of our intimate

interactions – erotic, racist, and otherwise” (2012, 93). What these twin impulses attempt to do is produce sexuality as embodied and multiple. In this way, while it cannot function as the sole repository of politics, it might also contain the possibility of new modes of relationality.

Some of this work to theorize embodied and precarious sexuality has drawn on the work on Audre Lorde, whose concept of the erotic is embedded within a discourse of black feminism even as it speaks to queer concepts of community, survival, and difference. Lorde’s work has gained traction because it does not theorize sexuality as attached to a particular subjectivity, but allows us to consider the erotic as a mode of collectivity where sexuality resides in and around bodies as a relational term rather than something that one possesses (or doesn’t possess). Lorde describes the erotic as a space of mutuality and collaboration; the erotic “provid[es] the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person” (1984, 56). Importantly, the erotic is based on communal affective bonds – specifically joy – outside of the parameters of identity: “the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference” (56). This formation of community through affective flows puts the erotic in conversation with the Public Feelings project. Given that one of the impulses behind this work is to unpack the link between structural forces and the individual, a discourse on feelings allows us to examine and problematize divisions between the public and private, and individual and social. As Cvetkovich writes, “global politics and history manifest themselves at the level of lived affective experience” (2007, 461). Lorde’s discussion of the erotic draws on that connection, but it increases the emphasis on relationality, creativity, and the possibility of joy.

By finding alternate ways to theorize sexuality, work on the erotic has led to theorizations of sensation as a way to integrate individual and structural modes of precarity, thereby bridging the gap between queer of color analyses and the Public Feelings project. Importantly, this work positions black feminist theory as central to the genealogy of queer theory and its negotiation of sexuality, precarity, and difference. My own work in *Sensational Flesh* draws on these theorists and their different understandings of precarity to write several local histories of masochism in order to foreground the sensations that accompany different types of responses to power, powerlessness, and difference. This move toward Lorde and other feminisms of the 1970s and 1980s is part of a larger trend within the Public Feelings project and queer of color analyses. Cvetkovich calls for “thinking about the politics of affect within the longer history of feminism ... and its deep-seated wish, as manifest in practices of consciousness-raising, that emotional expression lead to good politics” (2012, 10), and Ferguson is explicit about his interest in women of color feminisms as a discourse that “attempted to devise notions of culture and agency that would alienate heteropatriarchy and liberal ideology ... as antagonisms to contemporary globalization” (2003, 116). This glance backward is therefore an important part of reconfiguring the narrative of queer theory’s emergence and augmenting its spaces of multiplicity.

Perhaps unexpectedly, neoliberalism’s overt and overwhelming production of precarity as a condition of everyday life has proved generative for queer theory. In the decades following the AIDS emergency, queer theory has reinvented itself as a place to dwell on the relationship between agency and structure and to move beyond a discussion of

sexual minorities to grapple with broader issues of power, race, and feeling. Within the Public Feelings project, the current climate of despair provides an opportunity to imagine slivers of agency and possibility elsewhere. For queer of color analyses, interrogations of precarity work to decenter prevailing paradigms of sexuality and race. In the wake of both of these projects, we see a queer theory that opens itself toward thinking about the relationship between the body and power in unexpected ways. They conjoin as an epistemic problem, a political feeling, and a new way to sense the world.

- see CHAPTER 6 (PARIS – BOSTON – BERKELEY – THE MEXICO/TEXAS BORDERLANDS 1949–1990; OR, GENDER AND SEXUALITY); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 18 (AFFECT)

Note

- 1 Clare Hemmings describes the overwhelming influence that Butler and *Gender Trouble* have had on narratives of feminism and queer theory thusly: “it is an indisputable fact that Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* was published in 1990, but its relentless citation as that which precipitates feminism into a new era of critique serves a much broader narrative function” (2011, 23).

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15

Social Divisions and Hierarchies*Randy Martin*

Societies as we know and live them are divided against themselves. Those who possess the preponderance of wealth drive for ever more while multitudes seek to position themselves for just enough. Those who cling to the reins of power feel their grasp challenged by those they would claim to rule. Knowledge, expertise, and cultural expressions abound, but are treated unevenly, without necessarily establishing consensus, trustworthy authority, or common sensibilities. Our worlds are complex. We are different from each other in so many ways; yet varieties of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, religiosity, and ability are rendered into hierarchies of value, of those deemed more or less worthy of entitlement based upon where they sit in a classificatory pecking order. Divisions and hierarchies cut and cleave, harm and hurt, bear and bare the violence by which those who benefit are sorted from those from whom benefits are demanded. To speak of these partitions in their force and fragility, however, is to recognize that they are not fixed or eternal. Division and hierarchy are persistently contested and renegotiated by movements for social change, government reforms, popular revolutions, applied creativity, and engaged innovation.

For centuries, many among the beneficiaries of privilege have recognized the need to spread some measure of the wealth and cultivate the hope that those presently excluded might one day join their ranks. Divided societies have promulgated a kind of secular faith that over time things would improve for the many – perhaps not today, but that in the future opportunities and possibilities would expand sufficiently so that the many, too, might join the ranks of the beneficiaries of wealth. In this grand promise, the sting of inequality, injustice, and devaluation would be ameliorated as plenitude replaced parsimony and abundance overcame scarcity. In this fundamental social grammar, which organized the premises and pronouncements of social thinkers and politicians, philanthropists and reformers alike, time was linear and space was expansive. Hence as time marched on and formerly marginal territories were incorporated into the world of the “modern” or “developed,” past divisions would fade and old hierarchies would relinquish their vertical ordering of heterogeneous identities and sensibilities.

The promise of overcoming social divisions, of spreading the wealth in its various modes and meanings – economic, political, cultural – was never realized. Today, instead, that grand project lies in tatters, largely abandoned over the past forty years, a

period during which global capitalist society has become increasingly dominated by financial protocols and perquisites. Central to this financialization, whose logics extend from banks and businesses to governments and daily life, is the pricing of risk by means of options on future outcomes; these are called derivatives, which parse divisions and mine hierarchies in new ways (Martin 2002). The future no longer awaits and growth is no longer assured; security for all has been traded for the gains of risk taking that accrue to the outliers – those who profit at and from the margins of others. What comes next seems less assuredly directional and more persistently volatile. The world remains a deeply divided place, but the old categories of hierarchy no longer appear to operate the way they once did to effect the shared orientation of past, present, and future. As much now as in the past, however, what predominates and asserts itself as the order of things does not go unchallenged. What presently sorts winners from the disposable and dispensable at the same moment generates fresh approaches and understandings of how scarcity-inducing divisions might be revalued as an abundance of difference and new forms of wealth from which society might be reordered. That is the premise that I will elaborate by means of a rereading of the classic theorists of social division and hierarchy associated with capitalism – Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx.

Abundance from Scarcity

If a fable be told, the promise of capitalism was to wrest abundance from scarcity. Abundance itself would be fruitful and multiply, for it would refer not only to economic growth, but also to political progress and cultural development. Indeed, these three domains – economics, politics, and culture – would be interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Markets would spread wealth; free exchange would promote democratization; and well-cultivated individuals would unleash creativity that would in turn spawn technological innovation, driving markets forward. This virtuous cycle would roll merrily along, diminishing social divisions and hierarchies and hastening an ever-brighter future. Certainly there would be hiccups along the way. For those newly entering the market, opportunity might first have to pass through exploitation. Horizons for democratization might first need to pass through abrupt colonization. Even the birth of civilization would sometimes detour through mass and social death. Rationalization was not without unreason and solidarity could not avert certain abnormal forms, and as populations were pressed into relations of exchange, mutual interdependence or socialization would also be rife with conflict. Yet if there was always more to go around, the irregularities could be smoothed out. Those deprived of material goods, political freedom or cultural recognition would be rewarded fairly according to their capacities and, eventually, with patience and adoption of appropriate civilizing methods, everyone would get their just deserts (Rostow 1952; Hirschmann 1981).

No doubt for those told they needed to wait, scarcity itself was the thing that was abundant, and the great counter-movements to capitalism have tied their fates to the ability to demonstrate that poverty, injustice, and denigration are endemic to (and not simply by-products of) capitalism. Until recently, it seemed as though such movements were losing their traction as the promise of abundance muted their audibility. But, in the aftermath of a number of recent developments, much looks different for this fable of abundance. These developments include the rippling financial woes of 2007 and

2008; the uprisings in the Arab world, starting with the street protests of the Iranian election in 2009 and the ouster of rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in the years following; and the massings of students around the world in response to higher education cuts, and the movements known as “Occupy” that have begun to craft a politics around questions of debt (Mason 2012). If the ways in which economics, politics, and culture were once entangled appeared straightforward (or at least simpler to narrate), the current dynamics of capital movements and social mobilizations are considerably more complex to track and to evaluate. But if something now appears broken, it is the promise that capitalism can still deliver abundance from scarcity as universal and global values through the virtuous interplay of growth, progress, and development that transcend its own history of internal divisions (Fukuyama 1992; Gibson-Graham 1996).

What has changed? Certainly some enjoy more wealth than ever before, and many have surpassed the harshest measures of poverty, but debt and deficit block the path to a future of cumulative growth (Kuttner 2013; Lazzarato 2012). Similarly, progress hardly seems to be the end of social change, as the tendency and consequence of popular mobilizations remain difficult to decipher. If development once meant that colonized peoples should follow in the footsteps of their former colonial masters, in the era of global neoliberalism the credibility of that prescription is rapidly dissipating (Escobar 1995). If capitalism as it had once been imagined no longer touts abundance but invites a normalization of scarcity as its dim horizon, a significant crossroads has been reached. Scarcity, an invented origin from which moderns sought escape (Xenos 1989), can be accepted as a common fate with each constituency going its own way as best it can, depending on its capacity to exclude others. Embracing such a turn leads to the most woeful readings of the current conjuncture as descending into pits of fundamentalism – religious, market, survivalist, or otherwise – and an absence of means to even imagine, let alone muster, the political will to reverse this course.

Alternatively, we can be compelled to ask how to move from scarcity to abundance, how to see in present conditions the possibility of garnering what we might actually want to have more of. If there is indeed more wealth, change, and creativity than ever before, then the issue may lie with how we reconfigure what we have, reassess how it is made, and change our means of valuing what we are capable of. In so many ways abundance already lies to hand; it is not an ever-receding shoreline to be reached, but even if we are already standing upon it, we need to reorient social life around our existing capacities to transvalue what we have. For such a realm to be made available, the ever-looming threat of scarcity – and the insistence that the time is not yet, that there is still not enough of what we seek, the coercive and diminishing imaginary of constitutive lack – would need to be removed so that we might see what else can be derived from the present. Abundance, it should now be plain, can no longer be a simple expansion of the horizons of nature, whether human or planetary; nor can it be a steady accretion of more and more working over of input into output. Unexamined expansion can no longer serve as the means and end of social life. If we can no longer take wealth, progress, and development for granted as affirmative norms for overcoming division and hierarchy, how might we interrogate each to devise a way of revaluing what they might be? What would be required analytically to begin to notice abundance where vast deserts of scarcity have been proclaimed?

Such a rerouting of thought requires a grasp of what has changed in the basic relations of capitalism – those relations that first inspired the emergence of fundamental

approaches in social theory. Such grand theorizing now seems almost quaint, and the energy for explanations of our world is now more likely clustered around mathematical models or philosophical concepts (Kahneman 2011; Meillassoux 2010). Both tendencies, for all their contributions and explanatory force, leave aside the engagement of the social on its own terms, and elide consideration of society as a project that could constitute the ultimate horizon of human capacity. Intellectually and politically, we may be suffering the abandonment of the project of society that cultural and social theory and its concomitant movements had placed on the agenda. This project emerged through a critical engagement with what capitalism had wrought, how it operated, and what fundamental social arrangements it engendered when treated as the outcome of a particular and contested historical trajectory that could be made differently.

Derivative Logics

Reengaging this critical enterprise means doing no less for contemporary manifestations of capitalism, which, while still very much in pursuit of market dreams, has morphed in key aspects of its logic and its relations to populations. Without doubt, vast continuities remain, not the least of which is the voracious hunt for realms where profit can be pursued and human activity entwined in the disciplines of labor. Capitalist markets expanded initially by monetizing the unmonetized and pricing the unpriced. Now the operations of price have expanded the frontiers of accumulation by focusing on risk, i.e., the departures from measurable expectations of return. Pricing risk is recursive and flows through ever-widening spheres. Yet through those various domains of social life run a common form and a shared logic, which here will be understood to be that of the derivative. Just as the commodity was both a unit of wealth and the portal through which the creation of abundance could be understood, the derivative bears that double salience as a financial instrument and an underlying social relation. As financial forms of hedging risk, derivatives are contracts to exchange a particular variable aspect of a given amount of an asset – such as its currency exchange rate, interest rate, likelihood of default, etc. – at a specific time in the future; these derivative contracts themselves become objects of further exchange.

A derivative social logic describes social relations based upon the bundling together of attributes once attached to a given setting or social category, recombining them, and setting them in motion. The social categories of identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, are in this respect derivative of some putatively integral form of individual selfhood, just as sampling in music or video is a derivative cultural expression, or a small group of activists who incorporate certain features of a broader social disquiet constitute a type of political derivative. In all these examples, derivatives deliver value to risk yet also amplify volatility that in turn destabilizes the very values in question. Financial derivatives could be priced because they were linked to the movement of the market as a whole, yet they also engendered a systemic risk that the market would stop moving and become insolvent. Similar problems are posed in the arenas of cultural and political evaluation where an abundance of expressions seems vertiginous and makes the cultural and political realms appear to be in a persistent state of crisis, where technical knowledge is insufficient to deliver mastery and stability (Martin 2013).

Clearly, these are enormous claims that need to be exemplified and elaborated. For now it is important to make explicit that a derivative logic is not meant to provide an analogy between finance, politics, and culture, but rather to suggest that a fundamental social relation suffuses and spreads across these realms. Certainly, this was what the market and its attendant commodification once signaled; namely, that commodity relations had spread across various domains of social life while also transforming the very manner in which people were connected to one another, so as to make a distinctive form of society. Commodification was not simply what capital did to labor, but what labor, pressed into abstractly equivalent mutual association, bore as a claim on social wealth or the surplus value collectively wrought. Derivatives provide a way of speaking to that common claim on socially entangled debt and wealth: they both interconnect and aggregate where abundance comes from, with how and where it is applied or invested. While the commodity brought society to the market, derivatives generalize markets to the point at which they reposit the question of what could be meant by society.

The general claim, then, is that the derivative orders value today, much in the way that the commodity had during the prior centuries of capital's formation. Derivatives move us across different spaces and times, materialities and imaginaries of valuation, and without collapsing those concrete differences (any more than commodities made all use values the same) render them inter-commensurable and subject to a common claim beyond the limitations of a particular medium of exchange (Bryan and Rafferty 2006). Commodity production has not gone away by any means, but even the making of goods and services, and the realization of their value in the marketplace, are increasingly suffused with derivative forms and logics. Admittedly, finance is an inducement to production and derivatives are also commodities – that is to say: things made in order to be sold. But their thingness, their making, and their selling are significantly distinct from traditional commodity production (which is itself substantially reoriented through the widespread application of derivatives). Risk now is integral to the dynamics of production and liquidity orients the processes of circulation.

Rationalization, Solidarity, Socialization

One way to rethink these changes is to read them through the most comprehensive accounts of societal transformation to be found in the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim. Needless to say, the intellectual and historical ambition of these three accounts remains in many ways unsurpassed even as reengagement with them through the lens of contemporary issues and subsequent developments in capitalism itself remains altogether far too rare. More damaging perhaps is that this trio is most conventionally read as belonging to discrete political or disciplinary traditions rather than being read in dialogue with one another as a way of restarting the critique of capitalism from within its most prevalent contemporary categories. Therein lies the intellectual project before us. The perspective of the three could be stated most synoptically as follows: Marx (1967) had used the commodity as the key to grasping capitalist wealth; Weber (1958) divined a calculating attitude that animated capitalist spirits; Durkheim (1984) identified organic solidarity as what made for the market society's integrative division of labor.

Hewing closely to what will be unpacked as a social logic of the derivative allows a transvaluing of these key terms of social theory – rationalization, solidarity, and socialization – by which we may again bring to notice, albeit in a different key, what would now count as abundance in our world. Those who have made the most money trading them esteem financial derivatives. At the same time, investors such as Warren Buffett cautioned that derivatives are dangerous “weapons of mass destruction” and they are considered parasitical to the real economy by many on both the left and right (Wolfson and Epstein 2013). Both the celebration and the denigration of derivatives leave them largely unexamined as social forms with cultural and political resonance. It is vital to get close enough to the calculative operations of derivatives to see how they are made and to grasp what they are made of, but doing so requires something other and more than the standard homeopathic approach that only treats them technically or insists that as epiphenomena to the real economy, their internal logic matters little. Hence it becomes important to move the value of the derivative from inside its peculiar idiom to project it out as a larger principle of assembling what we find worthy. The technical stature of the derivative as a machinery for profitably and reliably pricing risk is a kind of social accomplishment, but its overall social prevalence and impact are not self-evident. Indeed, any conception of society assumes that the means by which a particular form gets generalized as standing for and as the animating principle of human association must itself be explained and situated.

Transvaluing names this process by which key aspects of conceptual and societal worth are taken from one context and placed in another. This move brings to mind an analytic equivalent of the derivative as such. So far, two transvaluations of capitalism itself have been named here: one from the commodity to the derivative as the prevailing form of wealth, and a second the shift from rendering exchange into a money equivalent to be able to price risk as any future variable outcome, so as to generate streams of liquidity (which is precisely what derivatives seek to accomplish). To these a third can be added which speaks to the political forces through which societies are formed – if indeed they are not simply formed by the introduction of certain rules or logics that then operate independently of any human agency. Of course, the notion that people forge a social order by contesting what they find with an array of emergent understandings, orientations, dispositions, means of mobilizing and organizing is an essential feature of any robust social theory.

Yet perhaps the most piquant phrase for this mutually transformative process was captured by the moniker class struggle. The term, of course, was far more complex in its introduction in Marx’s analysis of political revolutions than it came to be wielded as an objective position in a social structure with a subjective impetus to act upon the somehow generalizable contradiction laid bare by that very struggle. Too often, class struggle begged the question it sought to name and collapsed where actors are mapped in the social order with how they might organize themselves to act upon what they took as that map. Add to this the category slippage of class itself from an analytic category to an identify formation, and therefore a confidence about who those actors were and what their actions looked like (the white male industrial proletariat), and the question of how to value something as struggle seemed to vanish altogether from accounts of class (Wright 2005). This, then, suggests the need for the third transvaluation of class struggle into a process of contestation whose forms might lend them to a process of discovery.

Decolonizing Divisions

The utility of the derivative logic for this task is that it undoes the unity by which historical and political categories of division and hierarchy had hitherto been understood. Michel Foucault is closely associated with the analysis of various encapsulating categories of man, the household, institutions, race, and the like into what he termed the enclosures of disciplinary society (1977). His point in doing so was to insist that such enclosures were not permanent achievements but themselves historical formations. In these broad terms what was enclosed or colonized came increasingly to be unbounded or decolonized. This dialectic of colonization and decolonization names the derivative not simply as a social logic but as part of a historical process, as mobilizing an active force of societal transformation.

Naming decolonization as the social root of the derivative inverts the self-accomplishment of financial dominance as the technical invention and dissemination of derivative forms, suggesting instead that finance was able to partially appropriate a social process of which it was not the author, nor could it fully contain. Indeed, decolonization was key to the unmaking of the international financial architecture called Bretton Woods that is widely treated as the predicate of the expansion of derivatives in finance. Importantly, movements of decolonization are not confined to national liberation, but extend across the range of social movements to come out of the 1960s – feminist, queer, racial, religious, environmental, ethnonational, popular cultural – that unbundled and dispersed the enclosed and colonizing unity which Foucault called man (1970). It is certainly not possible to celebrate these myriad and discrepant movements as progressive – subject and agency have been set in motion in too complex a fashion – any more than one could be assured that going short or long on an options trade can be forecast by an assurance of continuous growth. Yet that is precisely the point: growth, progress, and development no longer move in lock step along a single axis. Rather, derivatives are made in the spaces opened by the divergence of these economic, political, and cultural registers of abundance.

These three transvaluations – from the commodity to the derivative, from exchange risk, and from class struggle into new modes of political contestation – in turn can be keyed to three problematics posed for the process of society-making explicated by Weber, Durkheim, and Marx into which a derivative logic might be inserted. For Weber, the quandary of capitalist society lies in the relations between instrumental and substantive reason. The advent of a calculating attitude to ascertain whether life's underlying values had been fulfilled through the realization of a particular calling were disseminated widely through market relations and bureaucratization, but met a tragic end when the technical instrumentalities of expertise became unmoored from orienting purposes and specialists without spirit were trapped in what he referred to as an iron cage. Charismatic leadership might compensate for dull adherence to rules by the masses but rationalization as a whole would suffer the weight of the contradiction between its two expressions as the protocols of quantity would prevail over considerations of social qualities. The paradox Weber identified was that rationalization was progressive but that it bleached progress of the capacity for self-critical reflection on the ends of its incessant movement or accumulation.

The derivative as form and logic could be taken as a deepening of this predicament, but also as a possible opening beyond capitalism's tragic self-enclosure and colonization

of the spirit of a more expansive sociality. The derivative operates as a hinge between these two moments of rationality, shuttling between its position as the epitome of mathematizable risk and the social value of what should be our shared orientation. Indeed the work of Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee (2004) demonstrates that this shuttling could undermine substantive values of democratic orientation or reinvest processes like industrial design, as in the case of Apple products, with the inclinations of dynamic renegotiation. The problem with the rise of technical rationality through the spread of professional expertise through a credentialed professional managerial class was, in the terms of the most influential contemporary critical Weberian, Jürgen Habermas (1985), that such knowledge served its own self-advancement and came to colonize the life-world. But while the ranks of the professional managerial class continue to grow, this knowledge-based autonomy has itself been subordinated to the mastery of external measures of performance that are indifferent to these norms of expertise.

Managerialism now colonizes professionalism and technical knowledge (be it financial, engineering, or political) and fails to control the risks it faces. Expertise must confront both indifferent masters only concerned with increasing productivity and a skeptical public who increasingly make their own claims and counterclaims on expertise, thereby raising volatility and amplifying noise in the information markets over which experts once held sway. This is a circumstance ripe for arbitrage in which all manner of participants seek minor differences between similar values (e.g., schools for children, medical services, mortgage interest rates or investment portfolios). As a collective engagement with information rather than a solitary decision taken by an individual investor, this proliferation of arbitrage renegotiates relations between instrumental and substantive reason. Bits of technical understanding are assembled amongst all participants, while qualitative values are asserted through the organization of these arenas for creating and circulating life forms.

Indeed, such a reworking of instrumental and substantive rationality is in evidence in local food movements, artists' collectives, squats, neo-entrepreneurial endeavors, crowdsourcing, do-it-yourself, moshing, and mixing of cultural forms in music and video. Abstract and concrete are not polarized in the way in which the modernizing division of labor had imagined them, but aspects of technical understanding and attributes of practical understanding are bundled and disseminated across what otherwise appear to be merely local sites of what must be taken as an increasingly global phenomenon. Derivatives combine local attributes with global valuation schemes not only in financial markets, but also in the emerging networks in which value in the qualitative sense is the leading indicator. The Weberian scheme of rationalization was progressive at its root, but the proliferation of rules ultimately occluded consideration of what progress could be. These derivative economies may indeed provide some basis for a reconsideration of what values move us and move in our midst.

Rendering risk priceable by means of derivatives was meant to be the ultimate form of solidarity. Derivatives, after all, are touted as forms of insurance, which in turn operate on the basis of confidence that means of protection are adequate to the potential dangers, and on the trust that premiums tendered will be returned in case of need. The irony of the 2008 financial bailout is that the mechanisms of solidarity, the common rules by which risks would be priced so that assets could continue to serve as sources of liquidity, became the very objects of risk aversion. This, Perry Mehrling (2011) reminds us, was the root of the contemporary derivative in currency swaps to get around the

contradictions of Bretton Woods currency controls and national exemptions that began to emerge in the 1950s. Fifty years later, this aversion of constraints to liquidity had driven the disintermediation of regulatory processes to the point to which the entire public trust, the tax base of the U.S. economy, was offered as collateral to restore the liquidity of financial markets. But because the liquidity of these markets could no longer be trusted to provide opportunity for general economic welfare, the virtuous cycle of restitutive or juridical rule that underlay Durkheim's organic solidarity was ruptured. As Robert Meister (2010) has pointed out, the proceduralism of such restitutive approaches escaped from the justice that was its founding premise, a problem that might be critically ironized if injustice were to be reconciled on the model of an option whose liquidity would continue to restore memory and value. Yet for the present broken public trust, what was supposed to be an abnormal form of solidarity – its black swan – became normalized as a government intervention on behalf of the public interest that made public goods (like education, pensions, and health care) unspeakable.

While the bailout brought this contradiction of public and private into sharp relief, it is always latent in market arrangements and threatens to treat the solidarity rendered by social insurance or the safety net as always a hostage or system risk to what counts as solidarity for the market. How does a private, price-making market in risk make the dangers that risk generates bearable and acceptable to a population asked to endorse and participate in such markets as if they held life together? Whereas pricing is unvoiced, the market, as Arjun Appadurai (2013) shows, had relied upon some figure of collective representation by which solidarity assumes voice and through which the parts are embodied in some whole. The trope of development could be seen as precisely the body of organic solidarity, the means through which the whole world would be brought together in its different stages and moments, and integrated toward some rights-based, juridically reliable organism.

Yet while the world has certainly become more interconnected and interdependent, organic integration scarcely appears to be the result. How then to notice that we are together but not one – that collective representations proliferate, but they do not align? What would be the look and feel of solidarity under these circumstances? Here, the derivative pushes us to consider what succeeds Durkheim's organic solidarity. If parts are no longer reflected in the figure of the whole – such as representative national government leaders – and even the ultimate fetish figure of the market, and the rich and famous cannot stand for the general principle of abundance toward which we would aspire to develop, how then is attachment of multiple attributes to be made legible and valorized? This we could recognize is precisely the work of the derivative, and applying this logic to the question of development might allow for myriad forms of connectivity without the presumption of a singular expression.

Finally, we might see in the movements of decolonization some attention to the limit/outlier or extreme by which existing forms are repurposed and some other modality of debt can be registered and calibrated in our midst. Such a shift would approximate the contestatory process by which what Marx called a society of the producers comes into being (Marx 1967). Labor, he observed, produces not only commodities, but also itself, its own sensuous activity. A society of producers would not simply be an amalgamation of toil, but a certain quality of debt among those who will never meet, whose own self-makings, when placed in circulation, become entangled to the point at which the value of what gets made together can attend to every conceivable eventuality. What

derivatives promise to do for risk they might also come to do for society as such – to render liquid and generalizable the debts incurred without end. At stake in this transvaluation of the derivative from capital's dealer to labor's mutual assurance is a rupture of the tautology in which amassing wealth is both the means and ends of human association. Marx effected this rupture by means of disclosing the source of value in the production of commodities through mutually associated labor – a process which the generalization of markets itself hastened, thus inducing capital to flee the sources of its social wealth and place its profits in peril.

Deriving the dialectic of colonization and decolonization from the enclosure of class struggle entails both rereading and elaborating Marx's own critical categories so as to move from a special case of articulating labor into the form of the working class to the more general condition of expanded value-making activity that extends labor or interdependent associated productive activity into arenas of culture, social reproduction, creativity, and cognition (Moulier Boutang 2011). This is the series for labor of monetizing the unmonetized, pricing the unpriced, and treating self-expansive activities such as knowledge-making along the decolonizing lines of risk. As argued above, enclosure, in its foundational relation to the emergence of capitalism, is the means by which the industrial proletariat in the West is formed, and where it gains its aspiration and capacity to act as a revolutionary and universal class. Enclosure was an active process of composition and decomposition which went along with territorial displacement and concentration, whether pushing European peasants from their commons, enslaving Africans to inhabit the lands of those displaced in the New World, or the myriad permutations of indebtedure and subsumption through which a globally abstract or interchangeable labor is amassed (Federici 2004).

While this historical process continually unsettles itself as populations affiliate along one axis only to be pushed apart along another, the category of class more frequently froze into units of classification – into groups fixed on a map of differential wealth and interest. Class became its own category of enclosure: a unit whose end was its own unity of action based upon unanimity of interest that was an axiomatic tied to its objective location in a fixed structure. Class struggle, rather than naming the active means through which boundaries were torn asunder and redrawn, became a figure of collision between already constituted and subsequently unaffected entities – like commodities that contained within them a determinate amount of value. Marx's own class studies were of specific political contests and bore little resemblance to the systems logics of functionally interconnected parts and whole that came to inform latter Marxist sociologies. Classes in decomposition, like, for example, the French peasantry that Marx treats in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, cannot represent themselves but must be represented through an increasingly violent and self-destructive "Bonapartist" state (Marx 1969a).

Certainly we see elements of that class decomposition and anthropophagic state today, but the class in decomposition is named the middle class, or what has been referred to here as the professional managerial class, and the state, by attacking itself, acts hyper-vigilantly on behalf of financial capitals. If the professional managerial class was enclosed by its own self-governing mastery of credentialed knowledge, the present tendencies toward its decomposition pertain to that loss of autonomy as knowledge itself is industrialized and mastered by others. Yet there is also a moment of recomposition along the lines of the very managerialism or performance-based outcomes by which professional labor is priced and made commensurable on a global scale.

The knowledge work that goes into making derivatives would be one instance of this socialization, but so too would doctors employed in health maintenance organizations and professors engaged in distance learning and massive online courses.

Thinking through the lineaments of socialization under these conditions cannot proceed as a matter of shared interest, for this version of intercommensurability allows different particularities of knowledge labor to be priced together without losing their specificities or applications. The commodity labor power when translated into labor was variable capital or self-appreciating at the point of production but not circulation, condemning labor to suffer the scarcity of its productive abundance by secreting away surplus value. Labor now is in many respects assuming a form that is decolonized from the labor process, especially in the forms of work–home arrangements, free labor, and do-it-yourself activity where the circulation of knowledge adds to value as it extends laboring activity beyond the workplace. Indeed the formulation of a public good modeled on knowledge omits labor altogether, whereas the labor intensity of those who are engaged in actually making derivatives provides a considerable revision.

The old distinction between productive labor that creates surplus value and unproductive labor that creates values not placed in circulation has diminished in a world where finance and industry interpenetrate. Marx's example in *Theories of Surplus Value* (Marx 1969b) of the distinction was illustrated by the piano tuner whose labor adds value to the piano, and the pianist, whose work ends in performance – certainly a circumstance that no longer obtains. Further, knowledge work is priced not so much along measures of central tendency as in the industrial wage, but very much along the lines of derivative risk logics, which justify investment of greater salaries in those outliers – stars and celebrities, market makers and charismatic leaders – who both model and maximize labor as a departure from expected return. Loss of autonomy does not evacuate knowledge but decolonizes the enclosures of professional association into the potential of a mutual indebtedness of what needs to be assembled to create a valuable world.

Reclaiming the Wealth of Society

Presently, knowledge is abundant without naming what that abundance might be for, other than the kind of faith in technological advancement that segregates political participation from decision-making. When one looks at the problem of scarcity in the face of abundance from the perspective of the capacity for knowledge making, the discrepancies seem all the more perverse. If anything, there is a surfeit of specialized expertise while people are deprived health care and education, food and dwelling, sustainable community and meaningful work. At the same time, too much harm has come from the expansion of knowledge *per se* to sustain a conviction that it could deliver the power to make such a vision of society come to pass. Wealth derived from such knowledge and knowledge that pushes toward further wealth would both need to grasp their limit, their mutual debt, and their capacity to decolonize their own self-interest. A derivative socialization, one which does not demand unity of interest and action, that links attributes of specific variations and differences into broadly circulating flows, might aspire to achieve just that.

Rationalization, solidarity, socialization: these three key values derived from Weber, Durkheim, and Marx, grand theorists whose grandeur has faded over the years, may begin a process of restaging an argument on behalf of what society might be and what it could become if mounting divisions and hierarchies were reappraised and traded in for other wealth logics that can be found in our midst. We need ways of taking stock of our differences and debts; we need a means to bring to notice how our volatilities and dispersions adhere and coalesce; and we need to repurpose wealth as an abundance to which all can make a claim. Derivative logics suggest a mapping and a route to trans-value scarcity as abundance, mindful this time of where the promise of enclosure, wholeness, and integration went awry. Certainly such an argument would need to be insinuated in and animate social movements; it would require political organization and a will to contestation that joins a long history of contesting and refiguring devices of partition and exclusion. That will, at least, increasingly swirls around us. Social theorizing might begin to brave that rough weather and to elaborate the significance of what we value most so that more can be made of it. Theoretical liquidity would hedge the multiple directions of thought that the present bequeaths us in the name of an uncertain future.

- see CHAPTER 8 (PETROGRAD/LENINGRAD – HAVANA – BEIJING 1917–1991; OR, MARXIST THEORY AND SOCIALIST PRACTICE); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 20 (THE EVERYDAY, TASTE, CLASS)

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16

Work and Precarity*Jason Read*

The current economic crisis has returned work to the center of politics. This return is ambiguous and contradictory. Occupy Wall Street, and the various occupations around the globe, framed the question of work in terms of a divide between Main Street and Wall Street – a divide between those who work, producing goods or services that could be useful and beneficial to society, and those who only exploit this labor by elaborating complex formulas for generating debt, and thus have no productive value or worth in society. It is a division between productive labor and unproductive labor, workers and parasites. This division is mirrored (which is to say reflected and inverted) in the rhetoric of austerity, which has led to cuts to social services and unemployment benefits, cuts which are almost always framed in terms of “putting people to work,” i.e., ending the programs that have coddled the retired, disabled, or lazy, allowing them to parasitically live off of the hard work of others. We are no longer haunted by the specter of communism, but by the specter of the freeloader, though who this freeloader is varies across the political spectrum. Work is thus the basis for a left populism *or* right populism: in each case “work” represents the people, the masses, the majority, whose interest and efforts need to be defended against a parasitic minority of either venture capitalists or state employees, the unemployed, and retired. Between this war of competing populisms there is the economic and technological transformation of work, the growing realization that the jobs, especially those that sustained the idea of a “middle class,” jobs that provided a degree of comfort, security, and stability, might be gone for good, replaced by some combination of technology and outsourcing. Work has come to be located at the center of political life, defining the people, at the exact moment when its technological and economic conditions are becoming more precarious.

It might be more correct to say perceived as precarious. While some have argued for the disappearance of work, work’s demise is, once again, greatly exaggerated. Precarity should then not be understood as some actual transformation of work. Although it includes the increasing creation of surplus populations, it also includes technological and economic conditions that have made work temporary and contingent (what is often referred to as the “gig economy”), and, ultimately, the affective conditions that have made access to work appear more insecure (Endnotes Collective 2010). In short, what I am proposing here is an overdetermination of precarity, grasped not as a new class or

as a generic human condition, but as the overlapping effect of technological, economic, ideological, and affective conditions (Standing 2011, 12).

The task then of any critical-theoretical investigation of work in the age of precarity would be less a matter of trying to define work, to claim what it is on some ontological or anthropological level, or what it should be, defining in advance some ethical norm or political program, than it is a matter of working through the antinomies that define not only the current political moment, but labor as such. The general idea of these antinomies I will outline here is borrowed from Kathi Weeks's *The Problem with Work*, even if the specific antinomies are not. These antinomies situate labor as an economic reality, fundamental to the production and reproduction of the goods for our survival; an ethical matter, a necessary component of the formation of responsibility and character; a political matter, situated between collective conditions and individual striving; and a fundamental existential condition where individual striving situates and is situated by institutions and structures. In what follows I will look at the antinomies around labor through three different philosophers: Hegel, Marx, and Spinoza. In each case my goal will be to look at what they say about work, focusing specifically on their ability to sort through the conflicting and different meanings of the concept, placing the tensions and contradictions of the concept against the present. Like Weeks I am interested in the particular historical mutations that these antinomies have undergone not just in terms of the current politics of austerity, but also in the broader shift from Fordism to post-Fordism. Finally, I should add that the term antinomies is drawn from Weeks, who stresses "the effectivity of their internal conflicts without presuming their dialectical resolution and teleological trajectory," but, as I will argue below, it is not clear that all the philosophers listed below share this view that the dualities internal to labor cannot be subject to dialectical resolution (Weeks 2011, 42).

Hegel

The most well-known articulation of the contradiction of work is perhaps found in Hegel's famous "Master and Slave" dialectic in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel asserts that man's self-consciousness is grounded in desire, but this desire cannot be the desire for the necessary material objects, food and water, that form the basis of natural life, but the desire for recognition. Recognition, however, is not possible without struggle, a struggle predicated on the idea that to be recognized, to be seen as human, is to risk your life for recognition. This struggle ends with humanity split into two, between a master who has risked life in order to be recognized and a slave who has surrendered recognition in order to live. But this is really only the beginning of the story. Hegel shows how this appearance is contradicted by its reality, by the actual logic of recognition.

With respect to recognition, the master finds herself in a position that is the opposite of what was first intended. The master becomes a master through struggle, through the assertion that being recognized as an independent consciousness is more important than life; but she ultimately finds herself recognized by one that she cannot recognize in turn. It might be possible to say that the opposite is true of the slave, that she first chooses life, but ends up finding recognition through the master. However, such a neat reversal is not possible; the slave never receives recognition from the master. At the

point where the master is revealed to be a slave, and vice versa, the reversal turns as much on the relation to the object, to material existence, as to the relation to the other: the master is ultimately a slave, not just because she is recognized by one whom she cannot recognize in turn, but also because her relation to the object is as a pure object of desire. The slave works on nature, transforming it and transforming herself, while the master just consumes, and in doing so remains slave to the same desires, desires that Hegel argues always return with the recurrence of natural dependency. The master is a slave to nature, and dependent on the slave; a life free of work is a life free of negativity and transformation. As Hegel writes, “Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing” (Hegel 1977, 118). Work coupled with the fear of death proves to be another direction for recognition, at least in part: the slave is not recognized, but comes to recognize herself through a world that is the product of labor. Whereas Hegel’s passage on self-consciousness begins with a rigid division between appetite and desire, between relations with the world of objects and the world of subjects, desire for things and desire for recognition, the overturning of the relation of master to slave obscures this very distinction. What is more important to Hegel is less the sharp division between the desire for recognition – what we might want to call intersubjectivity – and the relation with things, than the fundamental negation of one’s determinate condition: to be recognized is to be seen as something more than this determinate existence, a point that can be arrived at through the instability of fear and the determination of work as much as it can through recognition.

When work appears in Hegel’s system again, in the *Philosophy of Right*, its sense has profoundly shifted. In the section dedicated to civil society, work, labor, is no longer seen as the externalization of the self, but as the internalization of social norms and commands. Work is a process of education, an education inscribed in the materiality of things and the interconnectedness of social relations. As Hegel writes:

Practical education through work consists in the self-perpetuating need and habit of being occupied in one way or another, in the limitation of one’s activity to suit both the nature of the material in question and, in particular, the arbitrary will of others, and in a habit, acquired through this discipline, of objective validity and universally applicable skills. (1991, 232)

Work sands off the rough edges of particularity, making individuals interchangeable, dependable, or, in a word, disciplined. It is possible to grasp a contradiction between these two different texts written fifteen years apart. In the first, work is seen primarily as externalization, as an expression of one’s thoughts, potential, and discipline onto the world, an expression that makes possible a reflection and recognition of that potential and of oneself. In the second, work is no longer an expression of individuality, of a particular self, but an education of the self into universal habits and norms. The contradiction between these two ideas of work – expression and education – does not just bear upon Hegel’s philosophy, but touches upon the nature of work itself. We are forced, as is often the case with respect to Hegel, to admit that both sides are true, that work is both an expression of ourselves and a construction of ourselves, and search for some sublation, some resolution, of this contradiction. “What do you do for a living?” is more than just a cliché of small talk, but a question of both our place in the world and our

subjective identity. The question is a cliché for a reason: it encapsulates both one's expression and determination, the way that we make ourselves in what we do but also the way in which we are made and shaped by a history that we do not choose.

The central contradiction of labor of the *Philosophy of Right* implicates this contradiction between the individual and social dimension of labor from another angle: not from the contradiction of its aspect of externalization and educational, or expressive and formative aspect, but its social contradiction between its ethical dimension – the role of labor in forming habit and character – and its economic aspect of producing goods. This contradiction comes to light in any attempt to resolve the crisis of unemployment and overproduction that is endemic to civil society. Hegel argues that as technology and the division of labor develop, they necessarily produce a mass of unemployed people, rendered obsolete by these changes. The rabble are not just unemployed, without economic means, but have lost the fundamental connection to the formative activity of labor (Ruda 2012, 64). The rabble brings to light a central contradiction not only of civil society but, more importantly, of work itself. As Hegel writes:

If the direct burden [of support] were to fall on the wealthier class, or if direct means were available in other public institutions (such as wealthy hospitals, foundations, or monasteries) to maintain the increasingly impoverished mass at its normal standard of living, the livelihood of the needy would be ensured without the mediation of work; this would be contrary to the principle of civil society and the feeling of self-sufficiency and honour among its individual members. (1991, 267)

To provide resources without work is to overlook its fundamental ethical role, and would create individuals who have all of their needs met except their need for recognition and belonging. The opposite solution is just as one-sided, just as flawed. Providing the unemployed rabble with work, with discipline and belonging, overlooks its economic aspect, overproducing goods and putting out of work those who have jobs (and places in the estates). Work's status as simultaneously economic and ethical, providing for needs both material and spiritual, means that any attempt to focus on one side of the relation has disastrous effects for the other dimension. It is impossible to have work as an ethical task of discipline without effects on the economy just as it is impossible to provide needs without undermining the ethical dimension of work. Thus, Hegel concludes, "despite an excess of wealth, civil society is not wealthy enough." Only the state can solve this contradiction of civil society, but it does so only by displacing it. The state sets up colonies to employ the unemployed and absorb the excess goods.

Hegel's contradiction is interesting for what it reveals not only about his thought, but about work in general. The contradiction between the ethical and economic dimension of work, between work as that which shapes individuals through discipline and character, and that which produces goods and services, can be seen in the history of some of the earliest responses to the instability of capitalism, the workhouses and forms of public assistance. Throughout the history of this contradiction one could chart two different trends in this response. First there are those who focus on the ethical dimension of work, insisting that people must be given work in order to learn responsibility and self-respect. From this point of view, as Kathi Weeks points out, "work is not just defended on grounds of economic necessity and social duty; it is widely understood as

an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation” (2011, 11). As such, any attempt to give resources, or access to resources, without work is an ethical crisis. In contrast to this, there are those who focus on the economic dimension of work and who argue that if the increased productivity of labor leaves a mass of people unemployed while simultaneously providing for sufficient resources, then the resources should be reallocated. Work is understood economically, as a task that is only necessary if basic needs are not being met. However, the labels “ethical” and “economic” must themselves be examined, as this contradiction, like that between the master and slave, reverses itself. Much of the ethical focus on work, the critique of welfare that focuses on the demoralizing effects of dependence, is itself underwritten by the economic interests of those who would like to see state expenditures and thus taxation reduced; while the “economic” understanding of work, which focuses on its changing productive power, is itself underwritten by (an often unstated) ethic of human flourishing. What Hegel demonstrates is that work is always an economic and ethical concept, caught between the production of goods and the production of subjectivity.

Marx

To shift from Hegel to Marx on the subject of labor would seem to be the shift from a preface to the body of a work, from a philosopher who has had a few things to say about labor, to one who made it his central concern. While it should be clear by now that Hegel was not silent on the concept of work, charting its contradictions in a way that exceeded his intentions, this is nothing compared to Marx. Marx’s examination of the contradictions of work, from the critique of alienation of the early writings to the contradictions of abstract and concrete labor in *Capital*, far exceeds the space I can allot it here. My interest, following the discussion of Hegel, is to chart one of the ways in which Marx explores and reveals a central duality of labor, a duality that is perhaps better described as an antinomy rather than a contradiction. Whereas Hegel stressed the gradual realization of the contradictions of civil society that lead to its realization in the state, Marx stresses the antinomies of labor as requiring a necessary violent and disruptive resolution.

What Hegel presented as civil society was in some sense unified despite the contradictions of work. One less known distinction between Marx and Hegel is the former’s assertion that the economy has to be understood as encompassing two different spheres, that of the sphere of circulation, the market where goods (including labor power) are exchanged, and what he sometimes referred to as the “hidden abode of production,” where not only commodities, but the capital relation itself is reproduced. The shift from circulation to production, market to factory, profoundly alters how work is seen. The market, including the labor market, is predicated on the principle of individuals seeking their own self-interest, negotiating for the best possible price for what they are buying or selling. As Marx writes in a particularly rhetorically dense passage in *Capital*:

The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labor-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, equality, and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labor power,

are determined by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law ... The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. (1977, 280)

Two points follow from this passage. First, Marx's somewhat sarcastic connection of the "Eden of innate rights of man" with the market suggests that our ideals of freedom, especially as they are defined in terms of free choice and autonomy, are the reflections of market relations. In the market, as consumers, we perceive ourselves to be free, isolated, and independent, subject to no constraints except the ones we willingly enter. This idea is extended into the labor market, becoming its spontaneous ideology, as the exchange of labor for a wage becomes yet another exchange of money for a commodity. This brings us to the second point. Marx contrast this Eden with what he calls "the hidden abode of production." In this hidden abode the apparent equality of buyer and seller is transformed into the asymmetry of capitalist and worker. Marx's passage illustrates this inequality graphically, stating that the worker has "brought his own hide to the market and now has nothing to expect but – a hiding." Understood prosaically this "hiding" is the extraction of the maximum amount of labor, the maximum value, from the labor power once it is purchased. In the sphere of circulation capitalist and workers meet as equals, as buyer and seller, but this very equality – that worker and capitalist are each entitled to the equal rights of commodity exchange – demands that they come into conflict. The capitalist, the buyer of labor power, is motivated to get the most for his money, while the worker is trying to get the most for the commodity. The fundamental problem is that what the worker is selling is not a thing at all, but labor power, time, and thus this conflict is not some kind of haggling or search for bargains in the sphere of circulation, but a conflict over labor within the hidden abode of production as the employer seeks to make labor power more productive. "There is here therefore an antinomy, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides" (Marx 1977, 344). The transition from the sphere of circulation to the sphere of production is the transition from a domain of equality to a domain of asymmetrical forces.

The difference between exchange and production is not exhausted in the difference of equality and force. Exchange and production are also distinguished in terms of how social relations come to be apprehended. In exchange individuals interact as isolated individuals, contracting and struggling for their self-interest. In contrast to this, the sphere of production, especially as it is increasingly industrialized and subject to the division of labor, is irreducibly collective. This collective dimension is not explicitly lived as a collective project, or political unity, as Marx argues the collective increase of workers' power has multiple causes – from imitation to competition – but what matters, what it adds up to, is a total greater than the sum of its parts. As Marx argues,

[T]he special productive power of the combined working day, is under all circumstances, the social productive power of labor, or the productive power of social labor. This power arises from cooperation itself. When the worker cooperates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of this species [*Gattungsvermögen*]. (1977, 441)

As Étienne Balibar argues with respect to this passage, “not only is labor socialized historically, so that it becomes transindividual. Essentially it always was, insofar as there is no labor without cooperation, even in the most primitive forms, and the isolation of the productive laborer in relation to nature was only ever an appearance” (2014, 85). Production is always the production of a collective power, of the force of social relations, cooperation, and coordination. If one adds to this Marx’s thesis that all labor, from the most simple to the most complex, involves a necessary mental aspect (thoughts, habits, and conceptions) that encompasses the shared knowledge of mankind (what Marx calls “the general intellect”), then it is possible to say that this cooperation exceeds those that are physically present, encompassing shared social knowledge.

We can then add another contradiction, or another antinomy, to Hegel’s dialectic of the ethical and economic dimension of labor: that of the individual sale and collective power of labor. This is a contradiction between the social relations determining the way in which labor is sold as an individual contract, and the way that it is performed, as a necessary collective and social process. Marx summarizes this antinomy in the opening of the *Grundrisse*:

Only in the eighteenth century, in “civil society,” do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. (1973, 84)

In the realm of exchange, in the market, the world confronts us as a mere means to our private purposes, but in the sphere of production we put to work the entirety of the developed relations of mankind. As with Hegel’s contradiction between the ethical and economic dimension of work, this antinomy between the individual and social aspects of work defines a long history of political struggle. In this case the struggle is split between a capitalist tendency to reduce the social dimension of labor to a purely individual market relation, and an opposed tendency, which could be described as proletarian, to transform the implicit shared cooperative and social dimension of labor into solidarity. The current political and economic order, what is often referred to as neoliberalism, can be understood as an extreme individualization and competition of labor relation. Workers are increasingly encouraged to see themselves not as a class, less of all as a class with nothing to lose but its chains, but as companies of one, entrepreneurs of themselves and their own potential. In this current imaginary, solidarity – the shared recognition of one’s condition as a collective condition – is by definition suspect, as there are only individuals engaged in competition and society does not exist. As Michel Foucault writes, “*homo economicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself” (2008, 226). The division is no longer between two different spheres, exchange and production, but the different ways of viewing the labor relation itself. It can be viewed as a competitive relation between individuals seeking the best return on their human capital, or as a necessary transindividual process that puts to work the collective intelligence of humanity. In the first society is made up entirely of entrepreneurs (of capital or human capital) while in the latter it is made up of increasingly social workers (Negri 1989, 206).

Spinoza

Of the three philosophers addressed here, Spinoza seems to be the most unlikely to include in a discussion of work. The letter of his texts say nothing about work, and the spirit of his writing would seem to be attuned to contemplating God or nature *sub specie aeternitatis* without room for the historical contradictions of labor. While it is true that Spinoza does not offer anything like a specific contradiction between the ethical and economic dimension of work or its collective and individual aspect, he does, however, offer a way of thinking about the larger question underlying each of these contradictions – the relation between our individual striving and the reproduction of the social order. As Weeks argues, one of the central antinomies of labor has to do the rationality and irrationality of labor, labor as the rational pursuit of one's self-preservation and irrational preservation of a social order that may thwart self-preservation. Spinoza's philosophy helps us to understand this antinomy, which is one of the reasons why so many thinkers have turned to his thought in recent decades.

At the center of Spinoza's ontology is the idea that everything is defined by its particular striving, a striving that, in the case of humanity, is aligned with desire. This striving, what is called the *conatus*, has led some readers to see in Spinoza a conceptual precursor to contemporary neoliberalism. The *conatus* would explain the irreducible struggle for self-interest, defined in terms of pleasure or pain, which underlies every desire and action. However, much of the recent interest in Spinoza from such thinkers as Antonio Negri, Étienne Balibar, Frédéric Lordon, and others is in how his work articulates a concept of subjectivity, that is rigorously transindividual. In different ways they all argue that such a "neoliberal" reading overlooks the matter that what is strived for is not some natural object, such as survival, or even the teleology of power itself. Striving is determined by affects, by the increases and decreases of power to act perceived in terms of joy and sadness. These fundamental affects of joy and sadness are extended to include a more complex articulation of affects; joy becomes love when it is extended to an object that is perceived as its cause, while hatred is oriented towards the perceived cause of sadness. The affects become increasingly complex, which is to say increasingly relational or transindividual, as they encompass not only an object of love or hate, but also the vicissitudes of this relation and relations to relations. As Spinoza argues, we love what others love, and hate that which seems to cause harm to the object of our love. Far from asserting the primacy of self-interested striving, Spinoza's anthropology of human interaction asserts the fundamental relational aspect of all striving – the objects and goals of which situate our desire and striving through the myriad ways in which we have been affected. As Spinoza argues, "it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it" (1994, 76). Our desire is always situated, always composed, in and through its capacity to be affected and relations with others. The complex circle of relations entails an increasing degree of ambivalence, as the same object, the same person or thing, becomes both the object of love and hatred, hope and fear. These complex and ambivalent affects fundamentally orient the *conatus*, forming the basis of what we could call its affective composition.

It is from the perspective of the affective composition that we can examine the antinomy that combines rationality and irrationality, the individual striving to persevere in one's being and the reproduction of the social order. Lordon argues that the

fundamental transformation necessary to bring Spinoza's affective composition into the present is the fundamental separation between striving, activity, and its object that follows from the separation of the workers from the means of production. This separation is less a fundamental loss (as it is in most accounts of alienation) than it is a fundamental transformation of activity. There is an indifference to the activity itself, the goals of the particular activity are stripped of their meaning, their particular orientations of good and bad, perfect and imperfect. As much as we might affectively attach ourselves to any particular job, developing our potential and relations and becoming the cause of our joy, this is secondary to the desire, and need, for money. There is thus an affective split at the core of the labor process, between the possible love of my own activity and its results. What we could call the affective composition of labor is how, at a given moment in time, these two aspects are valued or devalued – how much joy is sought in the activity of labor itself, or how much is sought in terms of the accumulation it makes possible. This shift between activity and object is complicated, both cause and effect of the changing relations of hope and fear in a given historical moment.

Lordon offers a sketch of this history of the affective composition of labor, framed in terms of the shift between Fordism and post-Fordism. The first period, that of Fordism, is defined by its intersecting transformations of both the separation of activity from value and the affective investment of consumption. Labor is simplified and fragmented, stripped of the pleasures and mastery. This is the work of the assembly line. At the same time the sphere of consumption is expanded. Ford's famous "five dollar day" increased the spending power of consumers (Lordon 2014, 29). The affective composition of Fordism could be described as a fundamental reorganization of *conatus*, of striving, away from labor, from activity, and towards consumption. The worker's activity is fragmented, made part of a whole that exceeds it, becoming as much passivity as activity. The sadness of work, its exhaustion, is compensated for with the joys of consumption. This transformation from an affective investment in work to an affective investment in consumption could also be described as a shift from active joy – joy in one's capacity to act – to passive joy.

Pascal Sévéric has argued that passive joys – increases in one's power of which one is not the cause – function as a fundamental barrier to becoming active (2005, 330). Sévéric thus fundamentally modifies a general picture of Spinoza's affective politics. It is not a matter of a stark opposition between sadness and joy, passivity and activity, in which the task would simply be the switch from sadness to joy, from passivity to activity. As Sévéric argues, the idea of a passive joy, a joy of which one is not the cause, fundamentally transforms this stark opposition. All modes, or manners, of existing have their specific joys and loves. Spinoza is attentive to the particular pleasure of the drunk, and other passive joys, such as those of the infant or the gossip. Sadness is not a necessary component of passivity. This is not to say, however, that all joys are equal. There is still a fundamental inactivity, a pathology, to these passive joys, but they are nonetheless joys. Sévéric's reading has two primary effects for an understanding for the affective composition of labor. First, it offers clarification for what is meant by activity, activity is not some specific action, nor a generic norm of activity, but a capacity to transform the very conditions of activity. In other words, active joy is not a norm but the capacity to create new norms. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Sévéric argues that passive joys function as a barrier to becoming active. This argument is based on Spinoza's understanding of the partial nature of passive joys. Spinoza argues

that such joys can be excessive because of their attachment to one “part of the body which is affected more than the others” (1994, 139). As Sévérac argues, parts in this sense can include not just the body’s organs, such as those of taste or sexual pleasure, but also impressions, memories, and their corresponding ideas. Just as passive joys focus on one part of the body, passive ideas are isolated from the common relations of ideas. Passivity is less a sadness or an alienation than it is the fixation on idea or memory, even one that brings one joy, that is outside of one’s control. It is from this perspective that it is possible to think of not only the passivity at the heart of the fixation on money, an idea and passive joy, but also of the pleasures of consumption. These pleasures are not only passive, subject to the marketing and control of others, but are also partial, engaging this or that pleasure rather than the capacity to produce and transform the very possibility of becoming active.

The Fordist compromise can be distinguished from later, post-Fordist, articulations of affects, transformations that can also be described through an alteration of work and consumption. Broadly speaking, these transformations can initially be described as a dismantling of the security and stability of work. The Fordist compromise carried with it a dimension of security and stability, brought about by collective bargaining and the centrality of the contract. Post-Fordism, as it is defined by Lordon, is first and foremost a transformation of the norms and structures that organize and structure action. As such it is fundamentally asymmetrical: workers are exposed to more and more risk, while capitalists, specifically those concerned with financial capital, are liberated from the classical risks of investment. This loss of security for the worker fundamentally changes the affective dimension of money. It is no longer an object of hope, the possible means of realizing one’s desires, but becomes that which wards off fear. Money becomes part of the desire for security, the only possible security: one’s skills, one’s actions, will have no value in the future, but money always will. One could understand this shift from Fordism to post-Fordism as a shift from a regime of hope (tinged with fear) to a regime of fear (tinged with hope). Spinoza argues that hope cannot be separated from fear or vice versa. Any idea of what we hope to happen cannot be separated from the fear that it might not come to pass. It could be argued that precarity is best understood as an affective concept. It is less of a matter of some objective shift in the status of security than it is a shift in how work and security are perceived. If precarity can be used to adequately describe contemporary economic life it is less because everyone is working under some kind of temporary or part-time contract (although these have become significant) than it is because a constant sense of insecurity infuses every work situation. Precarity affects even stable employment through its technological transformation: it is always possible to be working or at least in touch with work, and a generalized anxiety infuses all of work, as stock prices replace productivity goals. Work is further abstracted, not just from its object, but from the activity itself as the activity loses any internal standard from which it can be judged. It is no longer an assembly line where the cars can be added up at the end of the day. This loss of any intrinsic standard gives rise to endlessly proliferating metrics and measures, new standards and targets, and new demands. Productivity is less something that can be measured than something that must continually be demonstrated anew as one must prove to be productive again and again. Working becomes itself a kind of perpetual job interview as one has to demonstrate one’s capacity and willingness to work.

Thus, to complete the set of contradictions at work, we could argue that the picture painted here by Spinoza addresses the contradictory relation between activity and passivity. Work is an activity but it is an activity defined by a fundamental passivity. The history of this passivity begins with the separation from the object, with wage labor, which subjects the striving to preserve one's existence to external conditions and relations. It then passes through the Fordist destruction of the laboring body, completing a fragmentation of the laboring body that began with the factory. What is specifically Fordist is the compensation of the sad passive affects of fragmented labor with the joyful sad affects of consumption. From this general schematism, the current economic order can be understood as a paradoxical revalorization of the activity of work through a devalorization of its particular activity. The ideal subject of the current economic order is one actively engaged in the very activity of work or finding work, in networking, risk, etc., but not in the content of a specific kind of work. The rise of the term entrepreneur as a generic term captures this paradox; to be an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of oneself, is to be actively engaged in the risks, the perils, and the possibility of work, but completely disengaged in the concrete activity. The affective composition of precarity is precisely this paradox – it is the complete and utter self-identification with work, with the activity taken in the abstract, coupled with a decreased identification with the concrete activity. “Will work for work” is the motto of internships and working for exposure.

Conclusion

Presenting Hegel, Marx, and Spinoza in this manner certainly risks obscuring their specific historical differences, as well as the very real differences of their specific ontologies. In this instance my goal has not been to explore the productive similarities and differences between Hegel, Marx, and Spinoza, but to locate in each a way of thinking about a particular contradiction or antinomy of labor, a particular way in which work crosses between ethics and economics, individual and collective, and active and passive. The ultimate merit is not simply to suggest that work “is spoken of in many senses” – as ethical discipline and economic necessity, individual service and collective inheritance, active striving and passive subjection – but to see the political and economic vicissitudes that privilege one term, one aspect, over the others. The merit of these contradictions seems to be that from them one can begin to construct a picture of the paradox that I started with, the increased imperative to “get a job” proposed as a solution to both economic collapse and austerity. This imperative can be understood as a particular way of privileging one side of the respective contradictions, focusing on economic discipline rather than economic necessity, individual service rather than collective relation, and passive fear rather than active hope.

We could argue that we are in the grips of a political imaginary that privileges the moral, individual, and passive dimension of labor. Work is seen as a moral responsibility, valued morally but not economically; an individual and competitive relation, rather than a collective project; and a form of passivity in so far as the ceaseless activity, the ceaseless striving, can never transform its conditions. Work is something that one must do, and this imperative is more moral than pragmatic. It is the idealism, isolation, and idealization of work. As such, it follows the abstraction and isolation of contemporary society (Rodrigo 2014, 76). As much as the moralizing, individualizing, and passivity of

work can be understood to be the product of specific ideology of austerity, its conditions stem from not only the isolation and fragmentation of contemporary work, but also from the increasing disconnect of work from the immediate conditions of survival. Work becomes increasingly spiritualized as it loses its biological imperative and material conditions.

We could then ask what would it mean, and how would it be possible, to shift the terms of the relation, valorizing work as an economic act, rather than a moral discipline; as a collective endeavor, rather than an individual project; and as an activity that joyfully increases power, rather than acts passively, struggling to adapt to conditions. Such a transformation would not just be a revalorization of work, a restoration of its supposed dignity, but its utter transformation if not destruction. Work freed from its moralism, individualism, and passivity would be a fundamentally different activity under the same name, and more importantly, it would entail a fundamental reorganization of social relations. It would counter the prevailing spiritualism with materialism, and instead recognize work as material, collective, and active, capable of transforming its conditions. This is not a revalorization of work, a return to its recognition as a source of productivity and value. As Weeks argues, a critical philosophy of work must contend with both its devalorization and its moralization and metaphysical elevation (2011, 13). Work is seen as secondary, as something provided by “job creators” and necessary, as fundamental to any ethical worth. This is in some sense the fundamental antinomy of precarity. The material, collective, and active perspective charted here moves against both sides of this antinomy, positing work as both productive and collective, which is to say politicizing work.

- see CHAPTER 8 (PETROGRAD/LENINGRAD – HAVANA – BEIJING 1917–1991; OR, MARXIST THEORY AND SOCIALIST PRACTICE); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM)

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Section B: Being and Knowing

The apparent eclecticism in the topics addressed in this section disguises underlying methodological conversations that have become increasingly pronounced with the continued expansion of the purview of critical and cultural theory. As cultural theory has become less and less firmly tethered to the linguistic, textual, and representational problematics through which semiotic (signification), psychoanalytic (fantasy/desire), and Marxist (ideology) projects initially found common ground, new and sometimes discordant methods, objects, publics, and logics of critique have emerged. Even before the explicitly anti-disciplinary project of British cultural studies, critical and cultural theory was always sensitive to, and often innervated by, unfamiliar modes and methods of critical inquiry. Given the inherently capacious impulse of theory – continuously reaching outside the existing territory of its object to garner its insights – this sensitivity has sometimes become a form of promiscuity, where the exhilaration of discovery outpaces rigor. While the past decades have witnessed increasingly deliberate and well-founded interventions into fields of study quite removed from any traditional understanding of culture, the invigoration of cultural theoretical research through cross-pollination with fields such as political economy, science and technology studies, data and information science, neuroscience, and environmental studies has itself compounded older methodological challenges. For many today, the project of cultural critique, which always proceeds through a dialectical relation to the historical present, appears to have touched upon a certain contemporary limit to the incorporative drive that has defined its development over the past half-century.

The long history of meta-theoretical eschatologies – the end of history, the end of politics, of humanism, of the human, of philosophy and theory itself – cautions us to take intimations of limits or thresholds with a grain of salt. Yet, as Bruno Latour's 2004 polemic "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?" registers, there is a widespread sense today of an adjustment in the modality of cultural critique in response to the emergence of very real thresholds, or at least tipping points in humanity's relationship to the planet, to our technologies, and to the systems of government and knowledge production that direct our collective energies. Latour's question – why has critique run out of steam? – is provoked by a situation in which climate change skeptics, neoracist libertarians, and so-called anti-vaxxers marshal populist derivations of the same critiques of scientific facticity, racial essentialism, and enlightenment rationality that have become standbys in critical theory. Facing this situation, Latour wonders if it is not a form of strategic empiricism, a "stubbornly realist attitude," that most conforms to the progressive project of critical theory in the present (Latour 2004, 231). While the force of Latour's diagnosis and proposal aligns with a range of emerging (and hotly contested)

movements in contemporary theoretical inquiry, what should interest us is less the content of his claim and more the form of its address and what it discloses about critical theory.

The title of this section, “Being and Knowing,” suggests one usefully blunt way of characterizing the fundamental question at stake in Latour’s article. At its core, the development of a critical theory of culture occurs at the complex, ever-shifting conjunction of these two terms, between being and knowing – that is, in how we should or might understand the relationship between what we know and what is. Though subject to constant redefinition, “culture” in its broadest sense has come to name the material objects, practices, and habits of thought and feeling that mediate this relationship and its always-contested reproduction over time. Such a definition of the purview of the “cultural” risks summoning a category so expansive as to be meaningless (an example if there ever was of Hegel’s night in which all cows are black). If critical theory must be given a pragmatic function, it is perhaps that of revealing the points of particular density and lines of relative intensity within this field called culture, around and along which being and knowing are calibrated into consistent, self-organizing worlds. To study culture in this way reveals a complex process of becoming, a world in which, as Priscilla Wald so concisely puts it in her contribution to this section, “values circulate as truths; identity blends into existence.”

Being and knowing are daunting categories to hold onto and the theoretical practice of clarifying their relation no less so. While critical and cultural theory has come to be associated in popular understanding with a narrowly epistemological subjectivism and relativism that insists on the “construction” of our realities – exactly the popular “success” that prompts Latour’s anxiety – its true object has arguably always lain elsewhere, in the limits of our social ontologies and the impoverishment of being. There is something initially counter-intuitive in an intellectual project that looks to culture, discourse, language, and image to grapple with “being,” particularly given how distant critical and cultural theory often is from the more formally philosophical staging of this problem. Why, in other words, consider the painting of a hammer to understand the existence of the real hammer that is lying right there? This is obviously simplifying matters; yet, it identifies a core problem that unifies the apparently disparate concerns of the chapters that follow.

Consider the rich tradition of theorizing “the everyday” addressed by Ben Highmore. While theories of everyday life take a wide range of forms, what remains fundamental to all of them is the act of uncovering a world hidden in plain sight, an unnoticed or at least unvalued world of unremarkable objects, routine encounters between bodies and matter, and the quotidian thoughts and feelings that adhere to these objects and encounters. For all the intellectual pleasure of revealing this withdrawn existence of the everyday, the lasting critical force of this gesture remains its capacity to expose the narrowness of our experience and the deeply political interests at work in the reproduction of this narrowness. Raymond Williams’s well-known claim that “culture is ordinary” is, in this sense, less an injunction to recognize the social and aesthetic complexity of football spectatorship, Saturday morning cartoons, or watercooler conversations (though it is absolutely also this), than an indictment of the poverty of a bourgeois world in which these practices are disappeared from official history and excluded from what “counts” as culture. This critical gesture is repeated in the chapters in this section: in Veit Erlmann’s archaeology of what goes unheard in the study of sound, Wendy Chun’s

attention to the habits born of new media and data cultures, and Toby Miller's critical account of what is dangerously lost and obscured in visual media studies today. We discover this same gesture in Jerilyn Sambrooke's careful excavation of the layers of assumption, association, and belief that work to both enforce and conceal the entrenched categorical distinction between the sacred and the secular. In our present moment of resurgent sectarian mobilization and identitarian panic, it is difficult to imagine a more salutary example than Sambrooke's chapter of the way in which such critical archaeology might directly inform political practice at large.

If the exposure of unseen, unheard, and forgotten worlds is one form of critical inquiry into being and knowing, a second, subtly different mode of this procedure is also apparent in this section. No less concerned with the relationship of knowing and being, the latter tracks the concretion of forms of knowing in the world around us. The proposition that, as Louis Althusser famously put it, "ideology has a material existence" is one that is now hardwired into critical theory (Althusser 2001). The semantic slippage from "being" to "matter" here signals a shift in the conceptual framework at work, aligning with materialist approaches to social and cultural critique. Marx's reading of the commodity form remains a decisive starting point for entire subfields of theoretical inquiry, rooting ever-evolving analyses of the way human labor incorporates and externalizes systems of value and knowledge in a world of objects and material "things" – from the garments we wear, to the technology we use, to architecture of our homes, schools, banks, and houses of parliament. Thus, Anna Mollow's chapter on disability reminds us of how utterly a stairwell, or the design of a subway car, can express and also enforce deeply exclusionary assumptions about which bodies should be admitted into social life and which bodies should not. As Rauna Kuokkanen powerfully reaffirms in her chapter on "Indigenous Epistemes," the university today stands as one of the most concentrated and consequential sites for this transformation of particular ways of knowing into social ontologies. As the university is ever more deeply imbricated in the reproduction of the "knowledge economies" of late capitalism, its social function is paradoxically both intensified and obscured. Marking this fact clearly, Priscilla Wald's chapter exposes a rich vein of research that captures the increasingly dispersed institutional structures – academic journals, NGOs, government funding agencies, hedge funds, military engineering labs, etc. – through which specific knowledges become hypostatized and proceduralized as scientific and governmental common sense.

As Marija Cetinić and Jeff Diamanti's revealing account of affect theory reminds us, attending to the brick-and-mortar materialization of ideology in institutional and infrastructural networks should not blind us to the way in which the body remains the primary material nexus for the concretion of ideology. Indeed, the critical importance of affect in theoretical inquiry today lies, at least in part, in its capacity to articulate a space between matter and ideation, between embodiment and cognition, between being and knowing. The formation of a "trans- or supra-subjective" space that Cetinić and Diamanti trace through theories of affect underlines the way in which grappling with being and knowing in contemporary theory so often breaks with the narrow subjectivism and relativism that is rightly or wrongly associated with the cultural studies of the 1980s and 1990s. The chapters gathered in this section address problematics that are centuries old and others that are still emerging as discrete topics; yet all suggest ways in which culture and critique themselves are being reimagined and reconstituted in the always emergent relationship between being and knowing.

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17

Religion and Secularism*Jerilyn Sambrooke*

For scholars who work on the place of religion in contemporary life, it has become increasingly important to take up the category of religion itself as a central object of inquiry. To start by asking what counts as religion quickly leads to asking by what logic such a determination is made. How might that definitional act operate not simply to identify religious practices but also to regulate, censor, and reshape them? What assumptions about social and political life animate such processes? Historically, under what circumstances did the category of religion become politically salient and analytically operable? These questions challenge us to investigate the historical emergence of religion and, relatedly, the conceptual framework that lends coherence to the category.

The category of religion is often defined against the secular, as the very title of this chapter attests. The presumption that these are distinct and opposed categories has a long history, and this presumed opposition continues to inform much of public discourse and academic work. It is not uncommon to encounter arguments that aim to reveal the religious underpinnings of practices or ideas that have been characterized as purely secular.¹ Comments about partially secular countries, peoples, or regions similarly rely on an assumption that we can distinguish clearly between the religious and the secular and that social formations and people can be located along that spectrum. Over the past twenty years, scholars within the emerging field of secular studies have reoriented our approach to studying the categories of religion and the secular, as well as the complex relation between them. An argument that aims to unmask an ostensibly secular phenomenon or concept, thereby revealing its religious core, problematically grants a stability to both the secular and the religious, leaving the categories themselves unexamined (Asad 2003, 22–23). This chapter aims to demonstrate, instead, how the production and the redefinition of these categories is a distinctive feature of secularism.

One way of parsing the recent scholarship on the secular is to identify two related lines of inquiry: the first focuses on the dynamics of political secularism and the second focuses on secularity – the social, cultural, and political conditions that give rise to and sustain such arrangements.² Political secularism conventionally refers to an arrangement that institutes political and legal neutrality with regard to matters of religion. We commonly speak of the separation of church and state, law and religion, and, perhaps more precisely, of ecclesiastical and political authority. Contemporary scholars have

contested this narrative of neutrality, arguing that secularism presupposes new concepts of religion, ethics, and politics and entails a reorganization of religious, social, and political life (Asad 2003; Mahmood 2015). Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have directed inquiries into secularism such that these shifts and changes become visible. Some have approached this question through close analyses of the law, pressing on the idea of religious freedom. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan has taken up this question in an American legal context: how, she asks, does the state's attempt to secure a space in which one can freely practice one's religion paradoxically require courts and judges to determine which practices count as "legally religious" (2005)? Tisa Wenger traces a more historical dimension of this question in her investigation of the Pueblo Indian dance controversy in the 1920s. She argues that by claiming that their ritual dances constituted a religious practice, the Pueblo Indians gained the freedom to perform them but, in the process, lost much of their tribal autonomy (2009). Taking up the question of law in contemporary Egypt, Hussein Ali Agrama analyzes particular cases from family law courts, which use Shari'a law, to demonstrate the paradoxes that secularism generates as it attempts to govern religious subjects (2012). The political project of secularism, as these and other scholars have shown, entails a high degree of state involvement in defining and demarcating religion even as it claims to secure an autonomous realm for the practice of religion.

To capture the breadth of contemporary investigations of the secular, we will briefly consider what is at stake in distinguishing between secularism, which often foregrounds explicitly political questions about particular projects of governance, and secularity, which refers to the sensibilities, norms, attitudes, and conditions that characterize secular subjects and societies. Charles Taylor finds the term secularity particularly helpful in his influential book *The Secular Age* (2007), in which he asks what it means to say that we live in a secular age. How is it, more precisely, that at one time it was virtually impossible not to believe in God and yet now faith appears as "one human possibility among others" (3)? He describes this as a significant shift in the conditions of belief, and he takes secularity to include both matters that are explicitly and widely formulated (such as the plurality of options of beliefs) and those that "form the implicit, largely unfocused background of [religious] experience ... its 'pre-ontology,' to use a Heideggerian term" (3). This second aspect that Taylor outlines here has proven particularly generative for scholars. These conditions of belief, as Michael Warner phrases it, "structure the question of religious adherence in ways not usually present to consciousness" (Warner 2012). The analytical challenge, in other words, is to investigate the grounds on which such choices present themselves. John Lardas Modern, a scholar of American religious history, phrases it well: how do we investigate the environment in which particular understandings of the religious become "matters of common sense" (2011, 7)? This entails looking at the myriad ways in which, as he says, religion has become a "recognizable and vital thing in the world" (7).

In what follows, we will explore in more detail the relation between the secular and religious that is common to both of these lines of inquiry. This chapter will, first, demonstrate why the category of the religious cannot be invoked as a stable, analytical category; it will then turn to some of the implications of this argument for contemporary analyses of secularism. We will begin with early critiques of the secularization narrative that challenge the idea that some aspects of religion persist into the modern, secular age. Contemporary scholars have built on these arguments to further problematize the

idea that religion contains an essence that allows us to identify it as a discrete aspect of social life. We will focus, in particular, on how Talal Asad advances this argument in relation to anthropological definitions of religion and how Tomoko Masuzawa offers a more historically inflected argument about the problematic rise of “world religions.” The final section will highlight the importance of these arguments and distinctions for the study of contemporary secularism. Mayanthi Fernando’s study of second- and third-generation Muslims in France – whom she describes as “Muslim French” – demonstrates the contradictory way in which French republican secularism, even as it claims to be inclusive of religious difference, works to alter Muslim practices, thereby creating a version of Islam that can be “secularized.” We will conclude by briefly considering the particularly difficult case of the headscarf. Saba Mahmood’s work will prove incisive in reorienting the standard positions rehearsed in these debates, demonstrating what it means to take into account the complex arguments about the relation between religious practice and secular governance that this chapter will present.

Narratives of Secularization

The arguments that emerged in the debates about the narrative of secularization in the 1950s and 1960s – concerned with particular theories of history – set the parameters for much of the debate about secularization that followed in the 1990s and 2000s. As such, they provide a helpful introduction to the analytical concerns of the contemporary theorists that will feature below.

When Hans Blumenberg wrote his tome, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* in 1966, he was writing against a trend that he had noted amongst historians. Why, he asked, was the notion of secularization enjoying such broad circulation and receiving so little critical attention? In a move he saw as widely accepted at the time, historians were problematically invoking a particular notion of secularization to explain historical change. He offers an example that he takes to be a model one for the secularization theorem: “the capitalist valuation of success in business is the secularization of ‘certainty of salvation’ in the context of the Reformation doctrine of predestination” (1983, 10). Blumenberg captures this theoretical move in the neat formula, “B is the secularized [form of] A” (4).

Blumenberg’s argument was explicitly challenging several prominent intellectual figures. Foremost among these was the philosopher Karl Löwith, who had advanced a strong secularization thesis in *Meaning in History* (1949). There he had argued, in brief, that the modern notion of progress could be understood as a secularized version of the Christian theological concept of eschatology. All kinds of injustices and colonial violence could thereby be excused as the inevitable working out of progress. Löwith characterized modernity, on this account, as illegitimate; Blumenberg’s title signals his critique of Löwith.

Another significant interlocutor for Blumenberg is Carl Schmitt, whose well-known argument in *Political Theology* (1922) also exemplifies this problematic rendering of secularization: “All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts” (2006, 36). Schmitt defends this claim both on a historical level – concepts were transferred from theology to the theory of the state – and on a systematic, structural level: “The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle

in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries” (36). This appeal to analogy proves problematic for Blumenberg. What, he wants to know, is the precise relation between these two concepts, the exception and the miracle? Schmitt draws on the logic of secularization to assert this analogous relation so that he can go on to develop a timeless, absolute, and impersonal notion of sovereignty.³ Assertion, however, does not constitute argument, and Blumenberg posits a different theory of history.

While Blumenberg directs his critique most pointedly towards Löwith and Schmitt, the other figure in the background here (even though explicit citations are rare) is Max Weber. When Blumenberg lists a few examples of the weak historical argument that he is criticizing, he begins with the following: “The modern work ethic is secularized monastic asceticism” (1983, 4). Weber summarizes his own argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) in precisely this way: “A constituent part of the capitalist spirit, and not only this but of modern culture, namely, the rational conduct of life on the foundation of the *idea of the calling*, was born (as this essay shows) out of the spirit of *Christian asceticism*” (2002, 120; emphasis original). This form of historical argument in which economic and political practices and ideas come to be “cut off from [their] religious roots” (119) is precisely what Blumenberg sets out to complicate.

The central question that emerges here, which will return us to the question of religion, concerns the grounds of historical continuity. In a historical narrative that posits B as the secularized version of A, it is assumed that the essence of theological idea A persists through time, becoming available for secular, political purposes. Blumenberg rejects the idea that historical continuity lies with the concept in this way. He argues that questions, problems, and functions, rather than answers or “substance,” account for historical continuity:

What mainly occurred in the process that is interpreted as secularization [...] should be described not as the *transposition* of authentically theological contents into secularized alienation from their origin but rather as the *reoccupation* of answer positions that had become vacant and whose corresponding questions could not be eliminated. (1983, 65; emphasis original)

Theology, in other words, created specific “answer positions” in an earlier historical moment in which it made sense to speak about the totality of history or the origin of man. In the modern moment, when an appeal to the transcendent to answer such questions is no longer a viable approach, we do not have the luxury of simply casting aside the questions themselves. They persist, despite the impossibility of our answering them.

Constructing Religion

By reformulating secularization in terms of questions rather than concepts that persist through history, Blumenberg argues that neither religious concepts nor religions themselves contain an essential core that exists independently of history. This critique of the essence of religion challenges the idea of secularization as a historical process in which religious concepts are put to secular, political use, and it also challenges the idea that

religion can be identified as a discrete sphere of social life – distinct from politics, economics, and culture. In what follows, we will look at how Talal Asad and Tomoko Masuzawa both challenge the idea that religion can be observed as a unique aspect of social life. They build on Blumenberg’s critique and argue that religion is constructed rather than observed or discovered.

Talal Asad’s work has been foundational for many discussions of secularism and religion, particularly in his home discipline of anthropology. His early essay “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” published in *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), opens by pressing precisely on this longstanding idea that religion exists independently from politics or culture, an idea that he takes to be particular to the modern period. He notes how anthropologists have relied on the ability to distinguish these conceptual categories in order to render religion analytically identifiable. A scholar must be able, presumably, to identify a religion correctly even if its function or social extension changes. Its essence, in this view, remains unchanged (28).⁴ We have already considered Blumenberg’s critique of this essentializing move, but will turn to consider how Asad’s critique, situated within anthropology, challenges us to reconsider some of the most basic assumptions about religion and religious life (and its study) that we have.

To specify his argument, Asad takes up a more particular object of critique – Clifford Geertz’s reigning definition of religion as a complex system of symbols. At stake here is not only (or even primarily) a critique of Geertz and his assumption that the anthropological observer can identify the essence of any given religion. Asad focuses on a broader problem, namely that the “theoretical search for an essence of religion invites us to separate it conceptually from the domain of power” (29).⁵ How might one approach the study of religion, he asks, without separating it from the questions of power and authority that are so central to the workings of both religion and secularism? Asad’s point is not to show that religious symbols are inherently social and that they therefore change in step with their surrounding society (a simple historicism). Similarly, he is not interested in laying bare how religious symbols work to support or occasionally resist dominant political power (a form of ideology critique). Rather than analyzing a symbol to determine its meaning, Asad directs our attention to the complex web of social relations that produce not only a symbol’s meaning but also its effectiveness – its power, we might say. To turn our attention to the relation between power and religion is, of course, to flirt with dangerous territory in which religion has often been “unmasked” and shown to be only an effect or a ruse of power. Asad’s point is otherwise, however, and it carefully retains a space for the concerns of the religious person:

[E]ven a committed Christian cannot be unconcerned at the existence of truthful symbols that appear to be largely powerless in modern society. He will rightly want to ask: What are the conditions in which religious symbols can actually produce religious dispositions? Or, as a nonbeliever would put it: How does (religious) power create (religious) truth? (33)

The emphasis here falls on the processes by which meanings are constructed (43). Where Geertz prioritizes belief and understands it as a state of mind – a formulation of religion that would have “horrified” medieval Christians (45) – Asad invites us to see it as a “constituting activity in the world” (47).⁶ In other words, religious representations

(like any representation) can acquire their identity and their truthfulness only within a field that also already contains other kinds of social practices and discourses. This is not to say that the meaning of religious practices and utterances can be found in social phenomena. It is to say that the possibility of these religious practices and their authoritative status are to be explained as “products of historically distinctive disciplines and forces” (53–54). Asad’s challenge to the accepted wisdom that discovers religion in its distinctive sphere is to take up the study of religion precisely in terms of its relation to other practices and discourses. He challenges scholars who study religion to shift their analysis from reading symbols to analyzing practices. In his concluding remarks to this essay, Asad offers a decisive assessment of the implications of his argument for the category of religion. Asad argues that this preoccupation of defining what is and is not religion emerges from a “particular history of knowledge and power [...] out of which the modern world has been constructed” (54).

Since Asad’s essay’s publication in 1993, many scholars have taken seriously his insistence that one cannot study religion by separating it from the power relations that constitute it. In what follows here, we will consider how Tomoko Masuzawa’s influential study, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (2005), helps us grasp the significance of Asad’s argument for the study of comparative religion today. Masuzawa investigates the historical specificity of the category of world religions in light of Asad’s insistence on studying religion in relation to power. How, she asks, does the term “world religions” imply a plurality of religions and an equality among them even as it secures the dominance of Christianity? Her answer takes us to the nineteenth century when religion was emerging as a distinct phenomenon in the imaginations of Europeans. She locates this ability to identify a religious sphere of life as part of a particularly European story of secularization:

When religion came to be identified as such – that is, more or less in the same sense that we think of it today – it came to be recognized above all as something that, in the opinions of many self-consciously modern Europeans, was in the process of disappearing from their midst, or if not altogether disappearing, becoming circumscribed in such a way that it was finally discernible as a distinct, and limited, phenomenon. (19)

Masuzawa notes this emergence of religion within European academic circles, and she traces how this category became useful for describing peoples over whom religion still held sway – the “superstitious urban poor,” non-Europeans, and Europeans of the pre-modern past (19). She argues that the category of world religions was initially developed in the European academy and then quickly became an effective means of “differentiating, variegating, consolidating, and totalizing a large portion of the social, cultural, and political practices observable among the inhabitants of regions elsewhere in the world” (20). Masuzawa is quick to point out that the act of identifying these various practices as “religion” is far from an abstract academic exercise; it carries significant political consequences. To take social practices and specify them as religious is to “spiritualize” these material practices, ascribing to them an ahistorical essence and turning them into expressions of something eternal that exists outside of time. In short, it dehistoricizes and depoliticizes them.

Masuzawa's arguments not only demonstrate how the category of world religion emerged, but they also render suspect the appeals to religious pluralism that permeate our public and academic discourses today. When we consider the long, apparently inclusive list of world religions that, for example, might be found on a university syllabus, should we consider this a "triumph of the pluralist ethos" (28)? Masuzawa challenges us to ask: by which logic are these disparate practices being brought together under this category? What sort of equivalence is being established amongst these "religions," and what kind of political labor is being performed by this move? The problem here is not only that disparate things are being made equivalent. Masuzawa is making visible the historical contingency of the very idea of world religions: such a category only becomes possible within a secular imaginary. The category of world religions cannot be assumed to possess universal significance, which is precisely what it claims to have.

Contemporary Secularism

To this point, we have been focusing on the historical contingency of the category of religion and now we will turn to the implications of these arguments for analyzing contemporary secularism, particularly in relation to ritual practices. Mayanthi Fernando joins other contemporary scholars who have been drawing attention to the various paradoxes, excesses, and contradictions that characterize secularism (Agrama 2012; Modern 2011). One such paradox was briefly mentioned earlier and will become the focus of the following discussion: if the secular state prides itself on securing the freedom for individuals to practice their religion freely (i.e., without state interference), then why does it find itself so deeply involved in defining what counts as religion and in determining the extent to which religious practices can be regulated without violating the religious freedom the state offers? The preceding discussion has already shed some light on this question, having shown how religion only became identifiable under particular historical and epistemological circumstances. What remains to be explored, however, is how the contemporary, liberal state claims to order public life by creating a private space for religion even as it actively involves itself in cultivating precisely the kind of religion that can appropriately occupy that space. As we trace how Fernando advances her argument through an analysis of various rituals that the secular state works to alter and reorganize, it will become apparent why Asad's insistence on studying religion in terms of practices rather than symbols is so important and yet so difficult. To open up this point, we will conclude by briefly outlining some of the main positions in the debates surrounding the Muslim practice of veiling and how Saba Mahmood's arguments about ritual practice and piety reorient our perspective on this debate.

In her book *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (2014), Fernando deliberately uses the slightly awkward phrase "Muslim French" to name a particular population of Muslims in France who are seen to pose a specific problem to republican secularism. They are not immigrants (though their parents or grandparents may have been), and her analysis clearly parts from the dominant mode of theorizing these political tensions in terms of immigrant-integration (15). Muslim French do not simply claim that one can be both Muslim and French (i.e., that they are compatible identities) but, rather, that "Muslim *is* French" (62). Their claim

clearly problematizes any neat separation between public and private and between politics and religion. Fernando presses on this point in order to push back against the rhetoric that implies that Islam itself is the problem because it simply cannot exist within a secular arrangement. Fernando argues, instead, that the secular, public sphere presumes a universality that denies its own particular histories and attachments, and that these particularities become visible in these encounters with Muslim French:

By refusing to make themselves invisible and by demanding why their Muslimness is subsequently read as excessively visible, as insolence or impoliteness, Muslim French reveal the particular ethno-racial, religious, and cultural attachments embedded in the republican universal and the supposedly neutral public and political sphere. (62)⁷

This argument aims to make visible the specific ways that secularism asserts itself as universal even as it overlooks its own particularities. This is a problem neither of hypocrisy nor of double standards on behalf of the French state. This dynamic, rather, characterizes republican secularism, and Fernando traces various contradictions that emerge from its workings.

One such contradiction concerns how the French state works to cultivate a version of Islam that can be “secularized.” How is it, Fernando asks, that Islam can be reshaped and made to occupy the space allocated to it as a religion? Islam, in short, must be made “open” even as openness is offered to it.⁸ Much of this work is neither planned nor organized but happens, rather, within the terms of inclusion, diversity, and tolerance. Fernando’s ethnographic study traces how Muslim ritual practices like prayer and fasting are altered even as space is granted to these practices. Once a space for ritual prayer has been provided, for example, it is expected that it be used, thus justifying the banning of public prayer. The celebratory meal that ends a day of fasting during Ramadan, known as *iftar*, can be enjoyed by practicing and non-practicing people alike, so long as the explicitly religious aspects of the practice (such as the call to prayer) are replaced with more neutral, cultural elements (like music). Fernando’s extended analysis of situations like these shows how the very attempts to include and celebrate Islam in the name of tolerance and religious diversity work to shape it into something that can be identified as such. Her arguments clarify how the conventional understanding of secularism as the arrangement of social life into independent spheres is not one to be taken for granted but is one that is actively constructed and maintained.

Fernando’s focus on ritual practices demonstrates how the inclusiveness offered by the French state is predicated on particular assumptions about how those rituals will be practiced and how they are to be understood. The headscarf, in this arrangement, poses a unique challenge. It can be transformed neither into a shareable cultural practice like *iftar* nor relegated to a private space like prayer. Fernando demonstrates how the headscarf, “an unsharable ethical practice,” becomes, in this framework, a form of “religious fundamentalism, defined as an excess of religion that is neither religious nor cultural, but rather political” (139). While a detailed analysis of the debates around the headscarf exceeds the bounds of this chapter, even a brief consideration of the arguments and their presuppositions will demonstrate the contemporary political importance of the distinctions and arguments that this chapter has developed.

Fernando's reference to the headscarf as an "unsharable ethical practice" recalls Asad's distinction, discussed above, between theorizing religion as a system of symbols that provides believers with a particular order of meaning and instead theorizing it as a complex network of practices that have been rendered authoritative according to specific historical narratives. The difficulty of approaching religion in terms of embodied practices rather than symbolic meanings has been particularly visible in discussions of the headscarf. Debates on the topic often explicitly approach the veil as a symbol. Whether criticizing or defending it, both sides repeatedly ask what the veil means. Does it symbolize patriarchal oppression (and therefore should be banned)? Or does it stand as a symbol of a woman's choice to do what she chooses with her body (and therefore should be celebrated)? In this framework, the only reasonable defense of the veil stems from a woman's choice to wear it. The arguments of those who would explain veiling as part of a religious doctrine or as an ethical practice make very little sense on these terms. Women who make such claims are often described as victims of false consciousness, "mired in a traditionalism that leads them to mistakenly internalize the opinions of misogynist jurists whom they should resist" (Mahmood 2006, 343). To conceptualize this differently, we might follow Asad's lead: rather than asking what the headscarf means, what would it look like to analyze it as a practice?

In *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2005), Saba Mahmood takes up precisely this challenge. She places pressure not only on this symbolic reading of the veil but also on the theories of agency and subjectivity that undergird it. In her analysis of a grassroots piety movement among various mosques of Cairo, Egypt, she complicates the way that certain practices like veiling and praying are often approached in political studies as vehicles for the expression of a group interest. Rather than asking what these practices express or signify, she asks what work they perform in crafting a subject. She argues that the exterior ritual practices undertaken by these women in the mosque movement do not serve as "expressions of their interiorized religiosity but rather also [as] a necessary means of acquiring it" (147).⁹ Ritual action, in other words, is both a means to pious conduct and an end in itself, in so far as the act itself is pleasing to God (133).

By demonstrating how these ritual practices provide a way of cultivating a pious self, Mahmood challenges the more narrow understanding of rituals that sees them as requirements of the community that constrain individual freedom. By problematizing this distinction between the individual and collective authority, her argument has far-reaching implications:

How does one rethink the question of individual freedom in a context where the distinction between the subject's own desires and socially prescribed performances cannot be so easily presumed, and where submission to certain forms of (external) authority is a condition for the self to achieve its potentiality? What kind of politics would be deemed desirable and viable in a discursive tradition that regards conventions (socially prescribed performances) as necessary to the self's realization? (149)

These questions significantly reorient the standard positions in the well-rehearsed headscarf debate. Once we loosen our grip on the assumption that the veil works primarily as a symbol – even in a "positive" sense that reads it as marking a woman's

choice to follow a particular religion – we begin to investigate a more complex scene in which the practice of veiling is seen as necessary to the self’s realization. The autonomous individual who makes choices in line with her own desires (which are presumed to be distinct from social conventions and norms) no longer provides the starting point for the conversation. Mahmood introduces us to a conceptual world in which religious practices like praying and veiling enable a markedly different ethical-political imaginary. It is insufficient to exercise tolerance and accept that someone might choose to engage different religious practices than we might. Mahmood encourages us to ask a more difficult question of ourselves: can we conceive of individual freedom in a way that posits a relation other than resistance to external authority and social norms?

Fernando and Mahmood, in their different but complementary analyses of ritual practice, demonstrate how secularism cannot easily be taken to refer to a clean separation of religion from politics, but has been shown to “presuppose new concepts of religion, ethics, and politics” (Asad 2003, 2). Secularism, as Fernando demonstrated, may very well secure a space in which one may practice one’s religion, but one must first be made into the kind of subject who accepts all that this entails. Ethical practices such as veiling challenge this construction of the subject, as Mahmood argues, and require us to consider how religious practice does not simply mark a subject’s choice but rather entails a way of cultivating a particular kind of subject. By focusing here on ritual practice and its relation to the subject, we have been able to see more clearly how secularism does far more work than simply dividing church and state. Mahmood offers a succinct statement of precisely this point:

The political solution that secularism proffers, I am suggesting, lies not so much in tolerating difference and diversity but in remaking certain kinds of religious subjectivities (even if this requires the use of violence) so as to render them compliant with liberal political rule. (Mahmood 2006, 328)

This discussion of the anthropological studies of Fernando and Mahmood has demonstrated the importance of investigating the assumptions that underlie the liberal values of tolerance and diversity – not so that we implement them with more nuance, but so that we can see how they are productive of the very religious practices that they claim to tolerate and celebrate.

Conclusion

This chapter has gestured towards the complexities and problems that attend some of the most basic assumptions we have about religion and secularism, namely that we can know what religion is and that the state can guarantee the ability to practice it in a variety of ways. In light of these unsettling arguments, we find ourselves confronting a difficult question: what happens, as John Lardas Modern phrases it, when the “categorical difference between the religious and the secular is shown to be historically contingent, politically expedient, and, most perversely, a product of the very era and imaginary this differential is now called upon to analyze” (Modern 2013)? This chapter has set out

some of the central debates that inform this question. In closing, let us pause for a moment and consider what it would mean to offer an answer, however preliminary. How might we reflect on the ways in which our lives and our thought are structured by this categorical difference between the religious and the secular?

One way into this question is to dwell on the provocative question posed by Charles Hirschkind: is there a secular body? Is there, he asks, “a particular configuration of the human sensorium – of sensibilities, affects, embodied dispositions – specific to secular subjects, and thus constitutive of what we mean by ‘secular society’?” (2011, 633). The question quickly opens onto myriad complications, but its provocation to attend to the secular body intersects with observations of other scholars who take the body as an important site of inquiry. Talal Asad’s work on pain, torture, and suicide bombing has opened up a rich discussion on this point (2003, 2007). Joan Wallach Scott’s writing on gender, sex, and secularism in her piece entitled “Sexularism” (in Scott 2011) works in a markedly different context, Enlightenment France. Her historical analysis aims to complicate the narrative that we tell about the regulation of female sexuality by religion. Such a focus on the secular body directs scholarly attention to the ways in which the secular operates at a visceral level (Connolly 1999), further complicating the ways in which we might think that conscious choice and autonomous agency clearly mark the secular order.

Another prominent line of inquiry into this difficult analytical task has emerged in conversation with literary studies. Reading practices and the politics of reading have generated a range of innovative scholarship that investigates how secular and religious subjects practice various ways of reading texts and of meaning-making more generally. What, these scholars are asking, becomes of critique when the practices by which we critically engage our objects of analysis are themselves products of a world that relies on the distinction between religion and the secular? Tracy Fessenden explores these questions in her wide-ranging study of early American print culture that shows how literary texts and reading practices worked to establish Protestant culture in America as an “unmarked category” (2006). John Lardas Modern’s *Secularism in Antebellum America* similarly demonstrates a sensitivity (both in the form and content of its arguments) to the ways in which the literary and the imaginative open up particular kinds of inquiries into the dynamics of secularism. Michael Allan’s study of reading practices in colonial Egypt, *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt* (2016), investigates the category of world literature by reflecting on the putative opposition between reading practices based on memorization, embodiment, and recitation and those based on reflection, critique, and judgment. Saba Mahmood has also turned her attention to the literary, examining the protests that erupted in Egypt following the publication of a particularly contentious historical novel (2013, 2015). This array of recent publications attests to the importance of carefully considering the role that reading practices play in shaping our understanding of what critique does and how we situate ourselves in relation to it.

This chapter has looked both backward and forward as it has mapped out some aspects of the complex relation between religion and secularism. As we consider the arguments that contemporary scholars have made across a wide variety of disciplines, we find that concepts and political positions like religion and secularism are not as stable as they sometimes appear. It is a daunting task to capture the nuanced

ways in which they shape one another, but this chapter has demonstrated some ways in which scholars have grappled with and responded to this academic and political challenge.

- see CHAPTER 27 (CULTURAL PRODUCTION); CHAPTER 30 (HUMANISM)

Notes

- 1 For a critique of these kinds of arguments, see Talal Asad's "What Might an Anthropology of Secularism Look Like?" where he analyzes Michael Taussig's effort to demystify the contemporary state by laying bare its sacred and mythical elements (Asad 2003). In brief, Taussig argues in *The Nervous System* (1992) that the Weberian notion of the rational-legal state's monopoly of violence fails to account for the "auratic and quasi-sacred quality" (Taussig 1992, 116, cited in Asad 2003, 22) created by the unique coming together of reason and violence in the modern, secular state. Taussig implies (on Asad's reading) that once this rational-legal mask is removed, "the modern state will reveal itself to be far from secular" (Asad 2003, 23). Asad's point is that such an argument leaves the category of the secular itself unexamined.
- 2 For a helpful discussion on the distinction between secularism and secularity, see the exchange between Michael Warner and John Lardas Modern in the section "Rethinking Secularism" on the *Immanent Frame* blog.
- 3 For a succinct overview of the contributions by Schmitt, Weber, and Foucault with the more particular aim of starting a discussion about the relation between global capitalism and the resurgence of religion, see Wendy Brown, "Is Marx (Capital) Secular?" (2014).
- 4 William Cantwell Smith in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962) was the first to advance a rigorous critique of the ways that an essence has been ascribed to the category of religion. He traces the history and uses of the term religion and its Latin root, *religio*, to show how the category is a modern construct. To get around this faulty category, he advocates the adjective "religious" over the noun "religion." Asad wrote a lengthy response to Smith's arguments, and there he notes Smith's lack of interest in the adverb "religiously" (2001, 207). What is the role of practice, Asad asks, in this account of religion? Secondly, Asad asks what is at stake in Smith's treatment of religion without considering the centrality of secularism for that critique (206).
- 5 This line of inquiry is, of course, heavily indebted to Michel Foucault's work that demonstrates the importance of asking how specific power relations generate particular forms of knowledge. Both the historical specificity and the generative dynamics of power that Foucault emphasizes have come to inform many of the influential studies that have followed Asad's work.
- 6 The point here is that Geertz's understanding of religion is indebted to a uniquely Protestant history and that it does not even capture what Christianity itself was in the medieval period. Asad's essay offers a strong historical argument that emphasizes the significant shift from early Christianity at the time of Augustine to the seventeenth century where he locates the early attempts to produce a universal definition of religion that emphasized belief and individual interiority.
- 7 In her critique of Balibar, Fernando clarifies the unique situation of Muslim French by showing how he, like other prominent French academics, conflates the categories of

citizen and foreigner: “some citizens are classified as foreigners even when the point is to critique their treatment as second-class citizens” (64). Fernando analyzes a speech by Nicolas Sarkozy that performs a similar gesture of simultaneously offering and denying citizenship to Muslim French. He “renders Muslim French citizenship conditional even as he welcomes Muslim French into the republic. In short, he outlines a *contrat d'accueil* for those who are already at home” (66).

- 8 Fernando explains at some length how European Jews also encountered such paradoxical offers of “inclusion” that similarly entailed a complex relation between culture, race, and religion: “The recognition and incorporation of Jews was premised on a process of secularization that would turn Judaism into a religion, one that could be separated from political citizenship so that those who were once Jews could become French citizens. But the inherent concatenation of race and religion in the figure of the Jew made that separation impossible. Jewish emancipation split the Jew across the categories of race and religion while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between those categories as well as between the domains of religion and politics” (114). Gil Andijar has written extensively on this point, as Fernando notes. See *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- 9 Mahmood develops this argument through an analysis of specific ritual behaviors such as the invocation of weeping during prayer. Weeping, undertaken with the correct intention, instills the cardinal virtue of the fear of God such that it will eventually infuse all of one’s actions and become part of one’s “natural” disposition and issue forth spontaneously (130). Ritual worship, engaged in this way, is both enacted through and productive of intentionality and volitional behavior. This complicates many anthropological approaches to ritual that see it as a “theater in which a preformed self enacts a script of social action” (131). In this case, ritual is one of a number of sites where the self both acquires and gives expression to its proper form.

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18

Affect*Marija Cetinić and Jeff Diamanti*

According to the results of a basic search on the Modern Language Association (MLA) International Bibliography, there were no fewer than 163 articles or books published in 2013 with the word “affect” in the title. Nearly two decades after the veritable “turn” to affect in the humanities and social sciences, the challenge of isolating, defining, and mobilizing a concept of affect is still very much in contest. What’s challenging about affect is its simultaneous proximity to emotions, which are typically associated with the subject that experiences them, and some other force that is produced and circulates in the space between subjects. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg suggest that affect “is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations” (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1). In their Spinozan account, Seigworth, Gregg, and a whole host of others define affect as a force; as relational; and not located at the level of consciousness, even if we become consciously affective. What distinguishes affect across the multiple methodological approaches to it is that its definition, as well as its conceptual and political possibilities, is usually answered with recourse to some substance that saturates the space between subjects, like a mood, the weather, or some other relational force: the force of history, politics, culture, gender, race, class, and so on have all been rethought in terms of affect. If affect’s operative concept and the theoretical problems it poses are tied to the methods with which it is approached, then what’s at stake in affect theory is both the question of its concept, and the problems and projects it makes available. Affect therefore means and does different things depending on where it is located – the body, the social, the atmosphere – and we will suggest here that four methodological orientations in particular dominate the problem of affect since the turn to it in the 1990s: romantic; realist; speculative; and materialist.

To the extent that one could identify its origin precisely, what humanities scholars have been calling “affect theory” since sometime in the 1990s was one whose object sat precisely in the middle of two rarely reconcilable traditions in philosophy: analytic and continental. On one side, affect – or the precognitive register where body meets an

impression from the world – animates the outer limits of thought through Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, and Silvan Tomkins. For this analytic tradition, affect requires its own mode of inquiry because its logic, more immediately universal than its specific context, occurs primarily at the level of sensors, preempting those more cognitive features of meaning-making. On the continental side, affect inherits much of the critical and political weight once borne on the non-linear formation of “consciousness” through Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson, Pierre Macherey, Pierre Bourdieu, and most explicitly in the work of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. Both traditions, while by no means without internal division, position understanding or thought itself opposite affect or the sensations associated with either neurological stimulation or material forces.

Very few categories thus offer the critical and historical capaciousness that affect does in and for the history of philosophy and critical thought. Central to accounts of what happens during and after thought, in other words, is what happens immediately *before* the rational subject starts the work of rationalization, the work of cognition. Our suggestion here is going to be that the quantitative success of affect theory in the past two decades is wholly tied to what is implicitly trans- or supra-subjective about affect, and what is therefore also implicitly common and potentially connective about experience as such. It will turn out, in other words, that affect is a kind of inalienably *public* property in the critical accounts that take it seriously. This then is our premise: that the many affective standpoints (which we organize below into four genres of affect criticism: romantic, realist, speculative, and materialist) amount to a critical corral, in the center of which resides a notion of *ordinary universalism* where affect itself is what is common, while the bodies that experience it are what give affect its difference. Though as we shall see (and our purpose here is to energize this transition), the fourth genre is at once a resolution to the contradictions of the first three and a position from which an ordinary universalism is made once again political, which is to say contested rather than seamless and peaceful.

Romanticism/Realism

What, then, of the so-called turn to affect in the mid-1990s? What of its impacts on what, until then, was both a critical common ground and a formative impasse (as we shall see) in the history of philosophy? What were the conditions for such a “turn” if affect had enjoyed not only a privileged place in trans-Atlantic philosophy, but also represented something of a public piazza in the marketplace of ideas? One condition, suggested by Patricia T. Clough (see “The Affective Turn”) and Rei Terada, was the dissatisfaction after poststructuralism, especially in the American academy, with the deficit in discourses about the bodily experience of subjectivity. Few had patience for anything other than theories of decentered, fragmented, or indeed dead subjects in the so-called poststructuralist era, in Clough and Terada’s accounts, and thus that most subjective qualities – feeling, emotion, affect – had been disjoined from the bodies that experienced it. Affect theorists would endorse a version of this disjunction: Deleuze’s famous “body without organs” is a body not limited to, but also not in excess of its own organism. However, that affect would name the body’s involvement with its own experience of a world not of its own making. Affect theory’s return to the bodily,

to matter, and to a concept of “matter’s capacity for self-organization in being informational” would then, in Clough’s words, “point just as well as poststructuralism and deconstruction do to the subject’s discontinuity with itself,” except now the subject was as much a result of its own matter as it was the discourses that contoured it (Clough 2010, 207). How, theorists began asking, could language *not* be first embodied, produced, and reproduced by those subjects it sought to efface? This refrain – that affect theory is at root a materialist theory, a theory of dynamic “matter” – will for our considerations here prove the most encouraging of claims to emerge from the affective turn, but will likewise form the basis upon which we will offer an account of why affect theory’s origins may not be adequate to its aspirations.

The other, more analytic estuary from which 1990s affect theory found its source was similarly interested in the body and its capacity to interface with the world prior to thinking about it. Following from its analytic commitment to empirical methods, affect theory took a most unexpected interest in the nameable and verifiable typology of those earliest seconds in which a body is immersed in a world. Silvan Tomkins’s mid- to late-century studies in *Affect Imagery Consciousness, Volumes 1–3* (1962, 1963, 1991) mapped the nine primary affects experienced by humans in their encounter with the social world. Unlike more durable and decidedly attached *emotions* to which an external object serves as the cause (say, another subject in the case of mourning, or a new phone for the insatiable consumer), affects contain no logical or traceable correlation to their external triggers. In fact, in the analytic version, affects differ from both emotion and feeling in that the form they take betrays nothing of personal or even meaningful understanding; Tomkins followers Paul Ekman and Donald Nathanson are routinely cited for their lab work on this point. Affect, in other words, is the world before meaning. “There is nothing about sobbing,” Nathanson will insist, “that tells us anything about the steady-state stimulus that has triggered it; sobbing itself has nothing to do with hunger or cold or loneliness” (Leys 2011, 438). In the leading continental account of this, Brian Massumi will (at least on this point) agree: sobbing is pre-personal, a moment before consciousness sorts the affect into a personal-historical plot where meaning intervenes to make the public affect a private feeling or projected emotion (Massumi 1987). The subject, in this account, happens upon affect.

While Massumi represents an important early exception, convergence points between analytic and continental philosophy, or in this case neuroscience and philosophy, are few and far between. And yet, as Ruth Leys has recently argued (in what quickly became a heated exchange between her and opponents in *Critical Inquiry*), “what fundamentally binds together the new affect theorists and the neuroscientists is their *shared anti-intentionalism*” (Leys 2011, 443). By anti-intentionalism, Leys means a shared understanding of affect as being distinct from and, indeed, prior to cognition, and thereby excluded from any sense of an intentional act upon, or response to the world. The transcultural “truth” of a face full of fear is, for Leys and other commentators including some within the STEM fields, exactly the kind of cultural and scientific reductionism that gives state authorities their “objective” license to discriminate based on non-narrative qualities.¹ The autonomy of affect, in other words, spells the heteronomy of the subject. Herein lies the first generic distinction between two standpoints of affect criticism: in the anti-intentionalism of Tomkins, Massumi, et al. the body is attuned with a transcendental energy external to the will and desire of subjecthood, and is thus committed to an affective romanticism – a kind of universal force or spirit with a will

of its own – whereas the latter, what we'll call affective realism, understands the production of affect and the production of subjectivity along the same historical axis. The stakes are not just juridical, but also cultural. If *anti-intentionalism* is the theoretical and scientific commitment to separating meaning in the world from a subject's immediate experience of the world, then *intentionalism* is the idea that both immediate and mediated experiences take place in a world that is shaped by history, and that our automatic responses to it are no less historical than our more measured ones.

If this first way of framing the problem of affect has to do with the subject's relation to meaning, a second takes up affect as a response to what looked like the loss of artifacts in political economy and critical theory alike. For what the intentionalist vs. anti-intentionalist debate reveals is that the critical response to decades of strong poststructuralist thought was one deeply anxious about the kind of materialism that would help make sense of the structural changes unfolding in the 1980s and 1990s. If part of what necessitated the turn to affect was, on Clough's account, a need to bring "matter" back into the critical fold, it is because even the most conservative commentators were, by the beginning of the 1990s, celebrating the veritable *dematerialization* of labor and the objects upon which laborers worked. In other words, affect appeared as a way to return to matter at a moment when poststructuralism had not only begun to exhaust itself conceptually, but had become politically suspect as a result of its conceptual coincidence with state and corporate logistics. At the same time, affect also seemed to name a crucial site of capitalist accumulation in the post-industrial economy where human capital, more than any other resource, became the source *de rigueur* of economic growth.

Even so, it is usually neither the history of capital nor the post-industrialization of philosophy that gets credited with the affective turn, but rather a return to Spinoza, and more specifically Spinoza as reread and redeployed by Gilles Deleuze in both *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*.² For Spinoza, the "intensities of the present" are always in relation to other intensities in a condition of continual variation. The encounter with another intensity might lessen the feeling which the focal body brings to the encounter; or, it might encounter something that doubles its feeling, such that it moves from its original state to a more intense one. For Spinoza, a body is simply a capacity, both in what it can do and in its openness to be both affected and affecting. The body as capacity for relation can encounter bad relations, relations that reduce altogether the body's capacity for relation; this is what it is to be affected with sadness. Or the body's capacity may be increased productively when it encounters a good relation, one that maximizes the capacity to be affected. Such a variation or increase of the capacity to act is named an affect of joy. On offer in Spinoza is this premise of a transindividual bedrock in which social and political life consists of affects, rather than a hostile history characterized by the struggle for consciousness.

Spinoza's insistence on the immanence of experiences bound to bodies would prove foundational to a young Gilles Deleuze looking for, as he put it, a "new consciousness, a new vision, a new appetite for living" (Deleuze 1988, 13). He finds it in Spinoza, or specifically in Spinoza's concept of the *conatus*, which for Deleuze is the capacity for joy, a power to affirm or maximize joyful affects. This privileging of the active and the joyful comes to mark the explicit affirmationism of most affect theory. Deleuze sums up Spinoza's philosophy: "The *Ethics* is necessarily an ethics of joy: only joy is worthwhile, joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to the bliss of action. The sad passions always amount to impotence" (1988, 28). The rendering synonymous of *conatus* with

“an effort to augment the power of acting or to experience joyful passions” prioritizes the transformational and expansive power of affective ties, the capacity to escape social determination (101). Not exactly the same thing as individualism, Deleuze’s hope for an affirmative disposition makes other forms of social determinations – namely, class, race, and gender – residual. In Clare Hemmings’s critique of precisely this tendency in affect theory, she argues that the interest in “the good affect that undoes the bad” of theorists like Brian Massumi and Eve Sedgwick overlooks the ways in which affect “manifests precisely not as difference, but as a central mechanism of social reproduction in the most glaring ways” (2005, 550–551).

Hemmings offers a countertendency in affect theory that both recognizes the critical capacity of affect as a concept, and returns it to the social world from which romantics such as Massumi wish to distinguish it. In Hemmings’s realist account, affective experiences are certainly not reducible to consciousness. Yet affect is nevertheless experienced by a body that arrives socially coded. Hence, what it means to encounter the rage that circulates in a black community after police murder black citizens depends on the historical nature of the bodies in question. White bodies may very well experience a kind of rage in solidarity, yet the same repetition of fear and rage that a disproportionately policed black body does not contour the privilege of whiteness. Affective experiences, in short, are anchored to history like every other experience, which is a claim about experience more generally that comes not from Spinoza but from his adversary, Hegel.

What Pierre Macherey’s *Hegel or Spinoza* made clear in 1979 was that the stakes in such a genealogy – where the turn to Spinoza required a reinterpretation of Hegel’s philosophical hostility to Spinoza – had more to do with how we age Marx than how we liberate contemporary critical theory from its bad habits. Which is to say that, at least in Macherey’s estimation, the transition from Spinoza to Hegel and back again is the transition in philosophy to a genuinely *historical* materialism shed of its idealism, and that any materialism worthy of its commitments is one that actually concludes a sequence opened up by Spinoza (i.e., the contradiction between Spinoza and Hegel) and not Hegel (who could not abide by Spinoza). The philosophical genealogy which affect depends upon for its conceptual matrix, in other words, is punctuated by the tension between Spinoza’s ostensibly ahistorical method and Hegel’s historicization of consciousness and spirit. Macherey captures this tension in his qualification of the Spinoza with which his French contemporaries were enamored in the 1960s and 1970s. Affect as it is anchored to Spinoza makes available a wild form of speculation philosophically since it appears to unmoor the subject that experiences it from concrete and historical determinations. It is at root the possibility of an *anti*-historical mode of speculation that Hegel finds so incomplete in Spinoza, but what makes Spinoza, for Macherey and others, the real historical materialist *after* Hegel. “What,” Macherey asks in the conclusion to his book, “is the limit that separates an idealist dialectic from a materialist one?” And here the answer brings us back to what makes Spinoza the essential thinker of affect (and what affect might have to do with matter and materialism in our current historical moment):

What is or what would be a dialectic that functioned in the absence of all guarantees, in an absolutely causal manner, without a prior orientation that would establish within it, from the beginning, the principle of absolute negativity,

without the promise that all the contradictions in which it engages are by rights resolved, because they carry within them the conditions of their resolution? (Macherey 2011, 213)

Macherey's ambition for a materialist form of speculation inspired by Spinoza is to bring subject and substance into approximate and uncertain unity in order to establish an external world *in* the world, outside but wedded to thought, as it were. What makes Spinoza so motivating is thus not the freedom his method gives us to speculate, but rather the capacity to recognize the fundamentally universal fabric in which otherwise individuated experiences take place historically. If the turn to affect is at the same time a return to and invention of a materialism hostile to reason's capacity to arrest it, then what we want to isolate are some of the incompatible and thus politically active directions this form of materialist speculation (or speculation on matter) has taken in recent years, and where it might take us in the near future.

As the foremost theorist of affect's cultural economy in the United States, Lauren Berlant has recently turned her attention to those more mature affective structures that reproduce attachments to impossible economic fantasies of the good life. These affective structures are mature because they have been writ large on the American imaginary of individual success since at least the early postwar years. They reproduce attachments because their structure and promise have changed very little since their inception. And they are impossible, in Berlant's book, for historically specific reasons that are immediately linked to an economic tide change. "Cruel optimism," the title of her project, is what she calls those specific attachments that block access to the object that initially produced optimism (Berlant 2011, 1). Here we thus have maximization of affective realism where the historical impasse of an affective structure now nearly exhausted explodes across cultural and political forms. After a privileged treatment of the joyful and productive affects in Deleuze and Massumi, Berlant emblemizes a turn towards ugly and hard feelings housed in what has become the Chicago School of affect criticism (known as the Feel Tank). Upward mobility, for instance, motivated by a cultivated individual entrepreneurialism – rather than say a commitment to collective struggle – will without some other variable, such as a trust fund, be no match for a labor force structured precariously.

Thus for something like cruel optimism to capture an affective tendency of the present, it must take its cues from a version of history mediated in equal part by economics and cultural production. Berlant's project redirects critical attention away from affect as a transhistorical feature of the world before thought and brings it back to what Raymond Williams called "thought as felt and feeling as thought" (Williams 1977, 132). This version of affect – where affect is mediation between thought and feeling rather than with something that precedes it – is a departure from the analytic tradition in two respects. For one, Williams's "structure of feeling," on which Berlant and the Chicago School of affect build, is a sociohistorical category (rather than an anthropological universality as in the analytic tradition) designed to address the structural and shared qualities of subjective experience that develop in a given historical space and time. Second, Williams's attention to affect resulted not from a disavowal of class difference but from a commitment to finding its most vivid contours. His claim in the chapter in which his concept of a "structure of feeling" first appears is that only through attention to this lived dimension of social life can critics avoid putting their cultural and social objects in the

“habitual past tense” (128). Affect, or the “structure of feeling” in which a subject finds herself, is at its core a category intended to index something about the present.

It is no accident that Berlant’s project aims itself at “the affective present” – a present conditioned by economics but not reducible to it. Instead, affect is “a thing that is sensed and under constant revision, a temporal genre whose conventions emerge from the personal and public filtering of the situations and events that are happening in an extended now” (Berlant 2011, 4). The present thus makes itself available in an aesthetic variety rife with historical contradiction, and it is this contradiction – the coexistence of competing narratives and competing forces in an immediate now – that, in Williams’s version, requires a tripartite division of the cultural present. The problem for Williams is that the present is expressed first culturally – as fads, novelties, avant gardes – but that the tendency for cultural historians is to explain the cultural present in light of its dominant features. “A new class,” however, “is always a source of emergent cultural practice, but while it is still, as a class, relatively subordinate, this is always likely to be uneven and is certain to be incomplete” (Williams 1977, 124). Thus what in Berlant is an anxiety about how best to think the present is originally in Williams a claim about how most accurately to read class conflict – the uneven and incomplete emergence of its cultural expression – in the present. In the 1970s, this was an increasingly difficult procedure, because of “changes in the social character of labor, in the social character of communications, and in the social character of decision-making, the dominant culture reaches much further than ever before in capitalist society into hitherto ‘reserved’ or ‘resigned’ areas of experience and practice and meaning” (124).

What Williams is already forecasting is the rapid reorganization of class relations in those advanced economies replacing their manufacturing base with service and creative industries. Berlant and Williams sit on either end of a historical sequence that others have called the post-industrial turn – the era of communicative, cultural, or late capitalism. Spinoza’s invention of an open or speculative materialism pinned on an affective ontology becomes, by the time economists pick up the trail of social capital, a theory of post-industrial class composition, and it is this forecast internal to Spinoza’s thought that explains the current fascination with him. Framed this way, it makes sense that what in the 1990s were two traditions newly interested in affect became three, as more explicitly labor-based critiques of social life began to twist, as it were, the turn to affect. Only this time, affect would no longer index life *before* class difference, but would be instead the very thing that both animated it and held the promise of its abolition. This development gave life to the third genre of affect criticism, where the antagonism between romanticism and realism gives way to the speculative standpoint.

Speculation/Materialism

Maurizio Lazzarato’s “Immaterial Labor” in 1996 was by no means the first time political theorists had sought to name the new engine of social life under late capitalism, but his idea that the new economy was driven by affective labor did more than anything before it to introduce what would quickly become known as the key insights of the Italian Autonomia (or Italian Autonomist Marxism) to the English-speaking world. *Radical Thought in Italy* (the book in which it appears) opened with Michael Hardt’s provocation that, while “revolutionary thought” in Marx’s time synthesized German

philosophy, English economics, and French politics, revolutionary thinking under late capitalism instead draws on French philosophy, U.S. economics, and Italian politics (Hardt 1996, 2.1). Along with Franco Piperno's contribution to the volume, Lazzarato bridged the gap separating Italian (or continental) struggles and the political economy of U.S.-style capitalism. Immaterial labor sought to name a paradigm common to advanced economies where "the new forms of the organization of work" – dominated by immaterial rather than material forms of labor – were reshaping the social relations and forms of labor preformed in social and economic life, and the distinctions holding the two apart (Lazzarato 1996, 132.4). What in Williams was the emergent social dynamics of an increasingly dominant class of workers whose "'resigned' areas of experience" were put to work became, in Lazzarato's estimation, paradigmatic.

In Lazzarato's quick sketch, immaterial labor expresses two parts of working-class composition:

On the one hand, as regards the "informational content" of the commodity, it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers' labor processes in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication). On the other hand, as regards the activity that produces the "cultural content" of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" – in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion. (1996, 132.4)

This last feature of immaterial labor – the capacity to collectively fix "cultural and artistic standards" etc. – is why an account of affect becomes central to any attempt to map the political economy of post-industrial production. For Lazzarato and others affiliated with the Italian *Autonomia*, the affective infrastructure of post-industrial capitalism is one and the same as the affective infrastructure of post-capitalism, because for "social labor" to remain valuable at the urban scale, it must too remain "independent and able to organize both its own work and its relations with business entities" (1996, 132.4). Affective work is also the work of speculation in this mode of affect criticism. In its relation to the business cycle, affective speculation becomes the paradigmatic form of production in post-industrial society, which in the *Autonomia* position is both suffocating (all life is work) and liberating (the means of production have been socialized). Social work, in this account, is turned into a source of value, but only because it is not fully calibrated to the formal logic of economic accumulation. Affect is tapped like an oil well, but the cost of exhaustion is the social bedrock upon which post-industrial value is formed. Hence the moniker *Autonomia*: what makes the new class dynamics of post-industrial workers valuable to business owners is what also imbues them with revolutionary potential.

To be fair, there is no shortage of critiques that question both the assumed novelty and the privileged geography of immaterial labor (Brown and Szeman 2005). However, what has proved most energizing for what might be termed that "affective twist" was Silvia Federici's rejoinder to a masculine amnesia implicit in the affective speculation of Lazzarato and others. On Federici's account, the utopian promise of affective, creative, and immaterial forms of labor in the work of Hardt, Negri, Virno, Lazzarato, and many others is the result of a gendered and geographical division of labor, one that is difficult

to glimpse from the creative centers of the global economy. Federici's first rejoinder is therefore that "capitalist development is always at the same time a process of underdevelopment" (2008, 5), meaning that the difference between the software programmer at Apple and the pieceworker at Foxconn is an intensifying rather than shrinking difference.³ Her second point, which squares the triangle of affect theory, sews the gender-neutral genre of affective speculation (all life is production, but revolutionary potential too) back to a Marxist feminist politics of *reproduction* developed contemporaneously with 1960s and 1970s Italian Marxism:

When we said that housework is actually work for capital, that although it is unpaid work it contributes to the accumulation of capital, we established something extremely important about the nature of capitalism as a system of production. *We established that capitalism is built on an immense amount of unpaid labor, that it [is] not built exclusively or primarily on contractual relations; that the wage relation hides the unpaid, slave-like nature of so much of the work upon which capital accumulation is premised.* (2008, 7)

In the Marxist feminist position, the moment labor power, or the exchangeable character of the worker's mind and body arrives on the market is not the beginning of social division, but its result. Post-industrial class relations have without dispute altered the kinds of narratives that put class conflict at the heart of history, but only because the work done to make work (which is to say workers) a market reality persists as a representable feature of those narratives. Reproductive (and unpaid) labor in the domestic sphere, which Federici here aligns with the affective and physical capacity to give and nurture life, is the material condition of possibility for all other forms of labor, at least until capitalists start growing their own workers. Affect is threaded through both industrial and post-industrial forms of labor, not just because it forms the social bedrock upon which information and innovation flow, but because for every paid worker there is a concealed and unpaid quantity of affective (understood here as reproductive) work. And even more so when women are historically "emancipated" from the domestic sphere, because their workload is then, on Federici's account, effectively doubled: not only is her affective labor drained into the reproduction of the domestic sphere; both her physical and affective labor are sold in the sphere of production, too.

It is this fourth vantage point, where affective labor is both the precondition for other more exchangeable forms of labor power (every factory worker requires a house worker, even if those two functions are assumed by the same person) and a fundamental site of social mediation, that allows if not the narrativization of affect, certainly is historicization. For the emergence of both analytic and continental investments in affect is rendered as partial viewpoints by the affective materialist reintroduction of unpaid spheres into the recent political and economic history of affects. In other words, it is only in this fourth encounter with affect that it is possible to truly understand the significance of its historical reemergence in critical thought. Affective materialism changes the game because it positions affect as an active feature of the history of capitalism. Not just the critical concern for an operative concept of affect, but the challenge of locating its shape and force between subjects.

What both analytic and continental traditions share is a surprising attraction to the non-cognitive experiences of the world, which is to say those moments or forces

immune to thought's claims on them. This is also, at the same time, a shared (and we might note unique) hostility to the historical specificity of affect, and the social tensions affect masks with its appearance as a common and non-cognitive force. That this hostility has been most frequent in disciplines historically wed to narrative, such as philosophy, literary studies, art history, and media studies, tells us something about the ways in which affect is as much a solution to an impasse (where, for instance, interpretation seems not to hold any answers) as it is a cause. When affect stands in for a historical account of social contradiction – when, for instance, affect is understood as an ontological immediacy before cognitive machination – it blocks the very narrative sequence out of which the veritable turn to it owed its course: the shifting relation between reproductive social qualities and economic growth. Even in the immaterial labor theory that sought a middle ground between affect as pre-class and affect as class content – most obviously across the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – domestic labor is sublated into affective immaterial labor. What distinguishes affective labor from domestic labor in their account is “the extent to which this affective immaterial labor is now directly productive of capital and the extent to which it has become generalized through wide sectors of the economy” (Hardt 1999, 97). Thus the *immediacy* of affect to economics makes the political content of *mediated* structures of affect (here named domestic labor) passive in the production of the contemporary.

The position developed by immaterial labor theory trumped mediation, resulting in what Beverly Best critically calls the “post-interpretive approach” endemic to affect theory (2011, 61). When social mediation is flattened into a depthless model of synchronic production, class conflict is effectively rewritten as a soft voluntarism of the intellect. Mediation, on the other hand, narrates affect back into the dialectical non-identity between economic production and social reproduction. Work without a wage is still social work, even if it is unrepresentable on the side of commodity prices that depend on it. Though all commodities, including labor power, are first encountered as ready-mades on the market, it is only because the market requires the constant effacing of reproductive labor in order to make economic relations immediate ones. If every mother were paid for her child, there'd be nothing left for the child, just like wages for housework would bankrupt the economy. The social relations that give rise to the moment of market exchangeability, where definite quantities of labor in the abstract are rendered visible in alien objects (a fork and a smile), are where an account of affect *as mediation* repoliticizes its class character. Because what we've been suggesting up until this point is that the real plot from which affect emerged in 1990s criticism has to do with the gradual emergence of a new class dynamic in post-industrial societies: an intensification of class difference, not its disappearance.

- see CHAPTER 11 (DIASPORA AND MIGRATION); CHAPTER 22 (UNBOUND)

Notes

- 1 This version of Leys's argument comes from another critique of the affective turn from the preceding year: “How Did Fear Become a Scientific Object and What Kind of Object Is It?” (Leys 2010).

- 2 The list of thinkers interested in tracing affect's genealogy back to Spinoza is far too long and varied to index here. Currently the strongest account of this lineage is Jason Read's "The Order and Connection of Ideas: Theoretical Practice in Macherey's Turn to Spinoza" (2007).
- 3 Geographical division at this scale has been picked up more recently by human geographers through what Nigel Thrift has been calling the spatial politics of affect (see Thrift 2004).

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19

Indigenous Epistemes*Rauna Kuokkanen*

As an institution, the academy supports and reproduces certain systems of thought and knowledge, and certain structures and conventions that rarely reflect or represent indigenous worldviews. Research has demonstrated the marginalization, institutional racism, and indifference toward indigenous peoples and their epistemologies, histories, and concerns in the academy. It has also shown how in general, academic practices and discourses are hegemonic, racist, patriarchal, and (neo)colonial (e.g., Battiste and Henderson 2000; Mihesuah 1998; Mihesuah and Wilson 2004; Kuokkanen 2007; Smith 1999). Yet intellectual discrimination is rarely addressed as an indication of the academy having failed drastically at its main objective, i.e., the production of knowledge. What is behind this ignorance and arrogance, besides the apparent desire to uphold a status quo that serves the interests of those in power and of society at large? And how does this indifference affect the objectives of higher learning? Is it acceptable for “a site of learning” to be so ignorant?

Like the critiques of colonial education and residential schools, the general indigenous criticism of the academy analyzes, first and foremost, structural and institutional legacies of colonialism. In the university, the particular struggle is over the control of academic knowledge and the contents of the curriculum: what is being taught and expected? From which perspective? For what purposes? And in whose interests? Another crucial issue for indigenous scholarship is research ethics – conducting culturally appropriate research that follows indigenous protocols and guidelines. Indigenous scholars have also criticized the Eurocentric bias that results in questioning and undervaluing the validity of their research departments and colleagues. Research by indigenous scholars is deemed irrelevant or “revisionist” because, in many cases, it either falls outside mainstream research or draws on personal experiences as a member of a “minority group.” Work on an indigenous researcher’s own community and issues can also be criticized as biased, and consequently dismissed as unscientific, or self-serving. However, as the late Vine Deloria propitiously observed,

The identification of scholars working in the field of Indian–white relations has this strange quality to it: proponents of the Indian version of things become “revisionists,” while advocates of the traditional white interpretation of events retain a measure of prestige and reputation. (1987, 85)

Michael Dorris, in turn, contends that while Native American scholarship may be called “revisionist,” it does not imply invalidity: “Europeans and Euro-Americans have not felt shy in writing about their respective ancestors and are not automatically accused of aggrandizing them; why should native scholars be less capable of relatively impartial retrospection?” (1987, 104).

These concerns reflect the broader question of hierarchies of knowledge, such as the way in which indigenous epistemologies are often regarded as inferior when compared to western scientific knowledge, which is understood as being produced through objective, neutral, and rational inquiry. As first pointed out in the mid-twentieth century by Frantz Fanon (1961, 1967) and Albert Memmi (1965), colonialism signifies not only the occupation of territories but also a certain type of relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in which the latter is considered inherently inferior (“uncivilized,” “savage,” “primitive”).

This chapter attends to the fact that within the contemporary university, it is no longer non-western people but their systems of knowledge and perceptions of the world – what Michel Foucault termed epistemes – that are rendered inferior, and therefore dismissed. I argue that as long as the academy sanctions epistemic ignorance, it will be unable to profess its multiple truths (cf. Derrida 2001).

This chapter begins with a discussion of indigenous epistemes and a rationale for the concept of episteme. It then introduces the idea of epistemic ignorance and explains how it operates in contemporary academia. I suggest that to take epistemic ignorance seriously is a way to draw everyone in the academy into the process of creating new, less hegemonic forms of knowledge. This is distinguished from multicultural attempts of “knowing the other,” which is considered not only an inadequate response, but also an irresponsible one for it reflects a specific type of racism that enables the dominant to occupy the position of universality while consigning the other to a partial and particular one. Instead, I argue that academics are responsible for doing their homework, part of which is beginning to “learn from below.”

Indigenous Epistemes

By epistemes I refer, by and large, to the traditions of beliefs, assumptions, and ways of relating to the world that have been dominant in certain societies, and thus have influenced the construction of predominant discourses, not individual psyches and behavior. In a way, epistemes are the invisible principles according to which a society functions. They are assumed in the sense that they are constituted of (usually unstated) presuppositions, of which individuals are not necessarily aware unless they come into contact with other epistemes. Usually we are socialized into a certain episteme at an early age; this becomes our primary socialization and thus is foundational in terms of our values, perceptions of the world, and attitudes. Later, we may acquire other epistemes,

which form our secondary socialization. As an explanation of reality, giving meaning to the world and producing certain concepts (and not others), an episteme is implicit in language and reflected in the knowledges, discourses, disciplines, institutions, rules, and norms of a society that are consistent with those statements. The concepts of knowledge, discourse, and discipline are, in many ways, intertwined, and it is not always possible to speak of one in isolation from the others. Moreover, to speak of “knowledge” is to consider not only ways of knowing and things known, but also to consider what gets defined as knowledge, who does this defining, and who benefits from the act of definition. Similarly, it is necessary to pay attention to ways in which knowledge acquires authority and legitimacy in realms other than those from which it arises.

Yet, I would also suggest that the concept of episteme allows an analysis that extends beyond theories or systems of knowing. Episteme is often used to denote “of or pertaining to knowledge.” Michel Foucault, however, defines an episteme as “something like a world-view” and “the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems” (1972, 191). Foucault considers an episteme as a period of history organized around a certain deeply held assumption about the world, which determines what and how a society thinks, sees, and understands. The episteme is a lens through which we perceive the world, structuring the statements that count as knowledge in a particular period. In other words, it is a mode of social reality, the taken-for-granted ground whose unwritten rules are learned (and as Foucault would say, “written” in the social order) through the process of socialization into a particular culture.

Epistemes and the values they shape are dynamic and constantly evolving in time and space. Although separate and distinct in many ways, many indigenous peoples’ epistemes share certain fundamental perceptions of the order of things, particularly with respect to the human relationship to, and position in, the world. Discussing indigenous worldviews and philosophical traditions does not imply that they apply to every single indigenous individual in the world. To assert so would be as inappropriate as to propose that, say, Cartesian thinking applies to every individual in dominant society. It is obvious that the longstanding domination of various colonial practices has resulted in the erosion, alteration, and alienation of many indigenous epistemes. In other words, as I talk about epistemes, I am not proposing either that all indigenous people understand themselves and the world through the lens of an indigenous episteme, or that those who do self-consciously recognize and understand their particular indigenous episteme as such. Even if there are countless contemporary indigenous individuals who have been socialized into the epistemes of their people, there are also a vast number who have had either limited or no access to them at all (if such a thing is possible). Epistemes are not necessarily taught and identified as such but are rather a way of being in the world transmitted most often unconsciously by families and communities.

In keeping with this understanding of epistemes, some have argued that in indigenous thought, “the world is not an external domain of objects that I look at, or do things to, but is rather going on, or undergoing continuous generation, with me and around me” (Ingold 2000, 108). Such a way of being in, or relating to the world shifts assumptions that are fundamental to western thought and culture. Thus, for

example, engagement and participation are conditions not only of being but also of knowledge. Illustrating this difference, Tim Ingold offers a comparison of some aspects of mainstream western and Ojibwa (or Ojibway/Anishinaabe) ontological premises:

Mainstream Western philosophy starts from the premise that the mind is distinct from the world; it is a faculty that the person, presumed human, brings to the world in order to make sense of it. [...] For Ojibwa, on the other hand, the mind subsists in the very involvement of the person in the world. Rather than approaching the world from a position outside of it, the person in Ojibwa eyes can only exist as being in the world, caught up in an ongoing set of relationships with components of the lived-in environment. And the meanings that are found in the world, instead of being superimposed upon it by the mind, are drawn from the contexts of this personal involvement. (101)

Though Ingold is speaking about a specific North American indigenous episteme that cannot be generalized, on the level of ontological principles, the Ojibwa way of relating to the world corresponds to that of many other indigenous peoples. Ingold recommends considering different ontological premises in the light of genealogical and relational approaches or models. The genealogical model, based on linear and static assumptions of ancestry and cultural memory, is not only fundamentally colonial but also deeply implicated in the discourse of the state (151). It is the relational model, in Ingold's view, which better reflects the ways in which identities, knowledge, and relationships with the natural environments of indigenous peoples are constituted. Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, he compares the relational model to the image of the rhizome, which makes it possible to conceive the world and life in constant change. Representing the idea of multiplicity and resisting causality and hierarchy, rhizome is a mass of interrelated roots and nodes. One of the founding premises of the relational model of the world is that life is not an internal property but is instead immanent in the relations between persons and things (Ingold 2000).

Interestingly, the metaphor of rhizome resembles the notions of textuality in deconstructive practice. Emerging out of poststructuralist challenge to a set of false epistemological and hermeneutic certainties embedded in western philosophy, "textuality" is often misunderstood as implying that everything can be reduced to a text. Instead, the notion of "text" and "texture" implies that "we are effects within a much larger text/tissue/weave of which the ends are not accessible to us" (Spivak 1990, 25). Moreover, arguing for a new notion of the "text," Jacques Derrida proposes that it "is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces" (Derrida 1979, 84). In this view, "a text is never anything but a system of roots" that are endlessly interwoven (Derrida 1976, 101–102). It is possible to find similarities in the way both indigenous thought and deconstructive practice recognize the embeddedness of human existence within intricate webs that can never be fully grasped. Of course, this does not indicate that deconstructionists would unproblematically share or understand the basic premises

of indigenous epistemes. On the contrary, many theorists of deconstruction are deeply implicated in the ontological and philosophical traditions of the West.

Epistemic Ignorance

My concept of epistemic ignorance draws on Spivak's "sanctioned ignorance" but is also informed by epistemological marginalization. For Spivak, sanctioned ignorance refers to the ways in which "know-nothingism" is justified and even rewarded in the academy. It is "of heterogeneous provenance," and it manifests itself in various ways such as through academic practices that enable the continued foreclosure of "native informants" by not acknowledging their role in producing knowledge and theories. Borrowing from Lacanian psychoanalysis, Spivak uses the concept of foreclosure to talk about ways in which the native informant and her perspective are erased by the production of academic elite knowledge. She has defined this as "the interested denial of something" (Spivak 1990, 125).

What I call epistemic ignorance refers to the ways in which academic theories and practices marginalize, exclude, and discriminate against other than dominant western epistemic and intellectual traditions. In the process of producing, reproducing, and disseminating knowledge, these "other" epistemic and intellectual traditions are foreclosed to the point that generally there is very little recognition and understanding of them. In other words, epistemic ignorance as a concept is not limited to merely not-knowing or a lack of understanding. It also refers to practices and discourses that actively foreclose other than dominant epistemes and that refuse to seriously contemplate their existence. Epistemic ignorance is a form of subtle violence. When other than dominant epistemes and forms of knowing are not seen or recognized, they disappear.

Epistemic ignorance arises at both the institutional and individual levels and manifests itself by excluding and effacing indigenous issues and materials in curricula, by denying indigenous contributions and influences, and by showing a lack of interest and understanding of indigenous epistemes or issues. Students, faculty, and staff are all guilty of this. Yet epistemic ignorance is not a simple matter of communication, nor is it only a question of individuals acquiring a multicultural perspective or a cross-cultural understanding. It is not limited to changes in the curriculum. It is a question of epistemological racism (i.e., what is considered legitimate epistemology in the academy)¹ as well as of sheer indifference and ignorance of the sort that takes western epistemes for granted as the only valid point of departure. Manifestations of epistemic ignorance are not random offshoots or isolated incidents; they are rooted in academic structures that are complicit in colonialism and that reproduce the inferiority of non-western epistemes (in the same way that the inferiority of peoples was produced earlier) in order to protect the interests of those in power. It is a question of the legacy of colonial histories and power inequalities but also of understanding; as Spivak notes, "to ignore or invade the subaltern today is, willy-nilly, to continue the imperialist project; in the name of modernization, in the interest of globalization" (Spivak 1990, 290). Epistemic ignorance is excused and sanctioned in many ways. For example, it is veiled in sentiments of political correctness (e.g., mainstream faculty are not permitted to teach issues pertaining to the "other"), concerns about colonialism

(e.g., teaching about the “other” signifies colonization), and even “cannibalism” (e.g., the fear of “consuming” indigenous practices).

Knowing the Other

It has been long recognized that any attempt or claim to know (about) other peoples and cultures is loaded with problems and dangers (e.g., Asad 1973; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1973; Mohanty 1984; Said 1978; Spivak 1985). A well-meaning but patronizing liberal-humanist tradition upholds the belief that a mere cultivation of understanding or an increase of information will facilitate the encounter with the “other,” or even eradicate systemic social and power inequalities. At its extreme, this view asserts that liberal democracy is a “social strategy for enabling individuals to live the good life. It is unalterably opposed to ignorance. It trusts that knowledge and understanding have the power to set people free” (Rockefeller 1994, 91). Spivak takes the political philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre as an example of the simplistic supposition that sheer data facilitates understanding of the “other,” a view that she identifies with the “arrogance of the radical European humanist conscience” (1999, 171). In his *Existentialism and Humanism*, Sartre argues: “Every project, even that of a Chinese, an Indian or a Negro, can be understood by a European [...]. There is always some way of understanding an idiot, a child, a primitive man or a foreigner *if one has sufficient information*” (cited in Spivak 1999, 171). Assuming the universality of epistemologies and transparent access to any episteme or system of knowledge, this view adopts a Eurocentric superiority and colonial mentality according to which western or “modern” ways of knowing and intellectual traditions are more sophisticated than others (when the latter are even admitted to exist).

Eurocentric assumptions of knowing (inferior) others have been contested on various grounds and by different discourses over the past couple of decades. Postcolonial theories denounce attempts at knowing the other through a colonial, imperial bias, while feminist critiques remind us of the implications and legacies of the patriarchal gaze through analyses of the androcentric biases of supposedly gender-neutral knowledge. Anti-racist and critical race theorists consider the idea of learning about other peoples and cultures a liberal strategy aiming at improving the control of difference, while many anthropologists and ethnographers continue to struggle with the crisis of cultural representation. Poststructuralists, in turn, ask how one can imagine knowing other peoples and cultures when a person can never even fully know herself. In indigenous scholarship, it is often argued that other peoples cannot be known through cultural lenses that are based on entirely different assumptions and perceptions of the world.

The question of knowing other peoples and cultures is further complicated by the argument that appreciation of other cultures does not necessarily prevent violence. This is the case with Hernando Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who seized the kingdom of Montezuma in what is now Mexico. Conquistadors’ writings indicate that, at least on a certain level, the Aztecs inspired admiration in Europeans – but the marvel of the Spaniards was, by and large, limited to the objects produced by the Aztecs:

Like today’s tourist who admires the quality of Asian or African craftsmanship though he is untouched by the notion of sharing the life of the craftsmen who

produce such objects, Cortés goes into ecstasies about the Aztec productions but does not acknowledge their makers as human individualities to be set on the same level as himself. (Todorov 1987, 129)

“Understanding of other cultures” in terms of architecture, design, and material culture cannot be conflated with understanding of different worldviews or immaterial, intellectual culture. The separation of the products of a culture from the actual producers is a convenient way to avoid recognizing and addressing human beings on either an individual or a collective level. It also enables the simultaneous appreciation of the material culture (both in past and present) on the one hand, and a perception of indigenous people as the “social problem,” on the other. Such sophisticated appreciation of art and cultural property, which ignores the actual histories of the producers and peoples who give shape and meaning to this art and culture, continues today in contemporary museums and galleries. As Homi Bhabha argues,

In fact the sign of the “cultured” or the “civilized” attitude is the ability to appreciate cultures in a kind of *musée imaginaire*; as though one should be able to collect and appreciate them. Western connoisseurship is the capacity to understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent. (1990, 208)

Through this potent association of knowing with acquisition and inscription, to “know” becomes a mode of power and control. Postcolonial criticism has long argued that producing and having (or claiming to have) knowledge of other peoples reflects the desire of the knowing subject to tame and consume, if not to possess or devour, that “other.” Knowledge – both its production and imposition – has also been a means of controlling and gaining power over indigenous peoples.²

Rousseau was among the first to point out, in his *Discourse on Inequality*, that European voyages to, and colonial exploits of, other parts of the world have amounted to nothing more than “ridiculous prejudices” and further knowledge of the European self. He criticized the way European explorers and colonizers utilized their cultural relativism to maintain their own sense of superiority and normativity.³ Spivak (1985) calls the process of containing the other for colonial purposes “othering”; domesticating an incommensurable and discontinuous other in order to consolidate the imperialist self. In this way, the other is conventionalized in the dominant discourse, the epistemic discontinuity that might have existed is neutralized, and the “subaltern” – defined in this context as those barred from speech and (self-)representation – is constructed as monolithic. The violence of a specifically European mode of knowing and understanding cannot, however, be put to rest or made to disappear simply by declaring it suspect. Even if one might occasionally be tempted to adopt the more pessimistic view of the incommensurability of modern and indigenous epistemes, the only viable path forward appears to be in committing ourselves to building a responsible (response-able) academy. This can be done only by extending the dominant, western intellectual conventions beyond their normative limits.

Responsibility for Doing Homework

Look, you're an academic. Do your homework. If I weren't supposed to teach you something, why are you in class?

(Spivak 1990, 93)

For Heidegger, responsibility is “a response to which one commits oneself” (cited in Gasché 1995, 228). Spivak, whose notion of responsibility also reflects Mikhail Bakhtin’s articulation of “answerability,” elaborates this idea of responsiveness or responsiveness.⁴ Spivak posits that response “involves not only ‘respond to,’ as in ‘give an answer to,’ but the related situations of ‘answering to,’ as in being responsible for a name (this brings up the question of the relationship between being responsible for/to ourselves and for/to others); of being answerable” (Spivak 1994, 22). Responsibility signifies the act of response, which completes the transaction of speaker and listener, as well as the ethical stance of making discursive space for the “other” to exist. She maintains that “ethics are not just a problem of knowledge but a call to a relationship” (Spivak 1996, 5). If responsibility cannot be merely the mechanical expectation to answer, what does it mean, then, to call for a willingness to give a response and for the ability to respond? What is the response-ability of the academy?

Responsibility links consciousness with conscience. It is not enough to merely know one’s responsibilities; one must also be aware of the consequences of one’s actions. Without this awareness, there is a risk of the arrogance of a “clean conscience,” a stance of studied innocence by privileged, hegemonic academics who can afford to be indifferent and not-knowing. Spivak has argued that doing one’s homework implies unlearning one’s privilege and learning. This starts by addressing one’s privilege and the prevailing “ideology of know-nothingism” in a way that will make visible the various forms that elite racism takes. It requires the critical examination of one’s beliefs, biases, and assumptions as well as an understanding of how they have developed and become naturalized in the first place.

Derrida calls for “new ways of taking responsibility” in the academy – ways that critique while also moving beyond the professionalization of the university. These new ways would signify a rethinking of the university as well as an examination of its disciplinary structures (Derrida 1983). Importantly, for Derrida, these “new responsibilities cannot be purely academic. If they remain extremely difficult to assume, extremely precarious and threatened, it is because they must at once keep alive the memory of a tradition and make an opening beyond any program, that is, toward what is called the future” (1983, 16). New ways of taking responsibility in the academy are linked to the question of what constitutes a “good” university. If the new responsibilities cannot be purely academic, the answers will not always be found in the academy; thus we will have to make an opening beyond the academy.

We may approach the question by considering the Okanagan concept of *En’owkin*. This concept signifies a process of group commitment to find appropriate solutions through a respectful dialogue within a community. *En’owkin* is a collective process that seeks ways to include those voices that are in a minority; but this is not inclusion for the sake of inclusion. Rather, the concept of *En’owkin* recognizes that minority voices are necessary and that understanding them is vital to good governance and a healthy, viable community. As practiced in community and extended family circles, *En’owkin* is not

about making decisions but about hearing all voices. The premise of *En'owkin* is that no single individual can have all the answers and that if someone is arguing forcefully for his or her own point, there is no need to listen to that person. The point is not to stage an argument but to ensure that every perspective and view is heard. In other words, *En'owkin* implies that one is not participating in the process in order to debate or enforce one's own agenda but rather to understand the view that is most oppositional to one's own and to recognize its importance. In this way, difference becomes diversity, part of a multitude of perspectives that can be further debated. When these aspects of listening and dialoguing are not taken into account, there can be no rational outcomes and the following generations will suffer for it (Armstrong 2004).

Furthermore, doing homework must involve analyzing the typical “moves of innocence” – that is, those claims to the right to *not* know – as well as the simplistic breast-beating that allows business to go on as usual (Spivak 1990, 121). Instead of taking the position of the politically correct (yet dominant) academics who argue that they can no longer speak, one needs to examine the historical circumstances and articulate one's own participation in various forms and practices of silencing. As Spivak puts it, “rather than simply say, ‘O.K., sorry, we are just very good white people, therefore we do not speak for the [other],’” those who conduct hegemonic discourse need to dehegemonize their position by learning how to occupy the subject position of the “other” and how to behave as a subject of knowledge within the institution of neocolonial learning (Spivak 1990, 1992).

According to Spivak, doing homework is an ongoing practice that includes learning as much as possible about the areas where the hegemony of the dominant and privileged subject is being challenged (Spivak 1996). However, familiarizing oneself with areas one knows little about still amounts to hegemonic practice if we do not engage in the “home” part of the homework. Calls to scrutinize the historical circumstances and to articulate one's own participation in the structures that have fostered various forms of silencing (including self-censorship) represent a shift away from the idea of fieldwork toward the idea of homework. Whereas fieldwork is more often than not conducted elsewhere and “out there” – not least because for so many academics, it does not even cross their minds that universities and their campuses are in fact physical places, concretions of specific histories and labor – homework starts from where we are, from our homes. In the context of the academy's homework, home is a broader concept than just one's house or apartment (or office, or classroom, for that matter). The traditional Sami concept of home knows no walls; rather, it encompasses the surrounding environment with which they interact on a regular basis and without which they would not be fully human (Valkeapää 1994). Home, in this sense, and the act of sitting down to do homework thus compels us to examine this more complex reality. Who is at home here? Who was here before this became “my” home? Are there others who are at home here? What and where are our academic homes? What are their historical circumstances, and what is and has been the institution's role in participating in them? The responsibility of academics cannot be limited to neutral descriptions of who we are, as has become common practice within the more self-reflective, critical academic circles; it must also link itself to the concrete, physical locations of our enunciation.

Instead of assuming that it is possible to know the “other,” we need to recognize the fundamental openness of learning. Epistemological curiosity, which is at the heart of

the academy, demands fundamental openness to the world, toward the “other.” The will to know implies an enclosure, a hegemonic monologue, and the colonial logic of domination. Instead of thinking that “we must know” or that “we are entitled to know” – positions that, by retaining a sense of ownership as well as distance, allow very little room for hospitality, the gift, or reciprocity – we need to make a distinction, however provisional, between knowing and learning (Spivak 1995). This distinction marks a departure from the methodologies of disengagement and the politics of neutrality and impartiality, both of which are associated with the conventional practices of knowledge production, and both of which are characterized by the absence of responsibility and respect for what is studied and known. From this departure, we will arrive at an engagement with learning as participatory reciprocity, which acknowledges that “knowledge is a social activity, not the passive and ‘neutral’ reception of raw, ‘pure’ observational data by presocial individuals” (Plumwood 2002, 43).

“Learning from Below”

Since her earlier argument, Spivak has become somewhat cautious of the idea of “unlearning one’s privilege” because it can sound too pious and self-ennobling (Spivak and Sharpe 2002). Instead of unlearning one’s privilege, she argues, the privileged should *use* their privilege, make it downwardly mobile, and go where the subaltern feels normal (Spivak 2006). We also need to inquire, as Ahmed suggests, into what we are actually learning when we learn to see privilege. Does learning to see one’s privilege imply unlearning it? And does this learning, by definition, result in equality and justice? If learning takes place in contexts shaped by privilege such as the university, one’s learning about privilege may end up only increasing the cultural capital of the privileged (Ahmed 2004). Thus, Spivak (2000) has modified her earlier call for unlearning one’s privilege as “learning to learn from below.” She argues that “learning from below” occurs through teaching:

Learning from the subaltern is, paradoxically, through teaching. In practical terms, working across the class-culture difference (which tends to refract efforts), [...] the teacher learns to recognize, not just a benevolently coerced assent, but also an unexpected response. For such an education speed, quantity of information, and number of students reached are not exclusive virtues. (Spivak 2004, 537)

Discussing the relationship between learning and teaching, Paulo Freire similarly argues that teaching is “part of the very fabric of learning” (1998, 31). In his view, there is no teaching without learning, because “to learn” necessarily precedes “to teach.” Teaching was and is made possible through everyday processes and practices of learning. To “learn from below” also echoes the Okanagan principle of *En’owkin*: the goal is to learn and hear, not to process it into what one already knows or try to digest the material for academic production (cf. Spivak and Sharpe 2002).

Shifting from the arrogance of “knowing the other” to “learning to learn from below” requires a radical revision of previously held assumptions and conceptions of learning. As Freire (1998) contends, we are able to learn only when we recognize our “unfinishedness” – the fact

that we are always learning and never done with knowing. This understanding challenges the standard academic arrogance, will to know, and premise of knowing the other. Further, “learning from below” implies “trying to learn outside of the traditional instruments of learning” (Spivak 1993, 25). The academy, both at the institutional and individual levels, has to be willing to reconsider the existing, dominant modes of learning and ultimately to learn a new way of learning – learning to learn from below without hegemonic assumptions of salvage, progress, or containment. It requires willingness to stretch into different modes of perceiving the human relationship to the world and depends on recognition of the human responsibilities toward that interdependence. Ultimately, learning from below necessitates transforming the conventional modes of thinking and knowing embedded in modern, Eurocentric epistemes, often characterized by linearity and monocausality, to relational, participatory, and narrative modes of being and knowing the world. Spivak maintains that the process of learning to learn from indigenous philosophies amounts to a powerful mobilizing discourse from which the entire globe would benefit, not only the Fourth World. She argues that this deliberate and heedful process seeks mind-changing on both sides and is attainable only through ethical singularity: an intimate, individual engagement with the “other” that occurs in non-essential, non-totalizing, and non-crisis terms (Spivak 1999).

“Learning to learn” must take a specific form of “learning to receive,” which calls for explicit attention to the act of receiving rather than arrogant, colonial “taking for granted.” It necessitates active participation in the process, in the form of responding and reciprocating. What is more, an indispensable part of this learning to receive is the ability and willingness to perceive indigenous epistemes “not only as repositories of cultural nostalgia but also as part of the geopolitical present” (Spivak 1999, 102). Indigenous epistemes are not residual artifacts of archaic societies, but ways of being and modes of thought and action that continue to shape people’s behavior, practices, and thinking today – and, even more importantly, indigenous epistemes offer new ways of enhancing our critical understanding and broadening our intellectual inquiry.

- see CHAPTER 7 (DELHI/AHMEDNAGAR FORT – WASHINGTON, DC/ BIRMINGHAM JAIL – PRETORIA/ROBBEN ISLAND 1947–1994; OR, RACE, COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM); CHAPTER 28 (DECOLONIZATION)

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Notes

- 1 “Epistemological racism” is defined as racially biased ways of knowing in dominant epistemologies, which tend to distort the realities of people outside the mainstream or the dominant group. These epistemologies govern the current range of research paradigms

- and originate from a certain history and society (or a group), reflecting and reinforcing assumptions of that particular society or group and excluding epistemologies of other peoples and societies. Epistemological racism ensures that all epistemologies except normative ones remain inferior and subordinate. See Scheurich and Young (1997).
- 2 See Smith (1999), particularly ch. 3. See also Said (1978) and Spivak (1985) on “worlding,” the process by which imperial discourse is inscribed upon the colonized space by acts of mapping, naming, and colonial presence.
 - 3 See Bonnett (2000).
 - 4 See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), for his philosophy of answerability. Bakhtin’s concept is discussed, for instance, by Greg M. Nielsen, *The Norms of Answerability: Social Theory between Bakhtin and Habermas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 136–137. Central to this concept is the creative dimension of action and the question, “How should we act toward other cultures?” Nielsen notes that for Bakhtin, “action is more than an intelligent reasoned response to a problem or situation. The act or deed has the two-sided form of answerability.”

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20

The Everyday, Taste, Class*Ben Highmore*

What could critical and cultural theory want from everyday life? What could the everyday do for critical theory? In one sense to summon “the everyday” as a concern for theory is to simultaneously claim too much and say too little. What exactly is being invoked when we call on the everyday – a terrain of habit, survival, getting-by and getting-on, or going-under? Perhaps it presents a sphere of desire and feeling – hopes dreamt of and pursued, or dashed on the rocks of prosaic reality, or a world of pervasive and sporadic moods (e.g., anxiety, boredom, elation, barely concealed rage)? Or something more like a quantity than a set of qualities: this much sleep, that much food, this much work, that much money, these many days left...? In a recent deployment of the term, the architectural critic Georges Teyssot writes of “the tangled thicket of everyday life, with its burden of miseries, perpetual bad habits, repressed desires, ineffable longings, and untold melancholies – but a gloom relieved by the animated chatter of gossip, the cozy reassurance of mainstream opinions, and the uncanny comforts of familiarity” (2013, 1–2). It is a compelling and complex evocation of the daily, but even this inclusive definition would be hard to apply simultaneously to a worker in Shenzhen, a “displaced person” in a camp in Darfur, and a suburban IT manager in the United States. Or rather, the mobilizing of this “tangled thicket” reads differently in each instance: “the burden of miseries” or the “cozy reassurance” reverberates in each example with a world of difference.

A phrase like “everyday life” cannot hope to contain with any descriptive meaningfulness the endless sprawl of the actuality of people’s everyday lives. But instead of treating the phrase as if it could point to a referent that is knowable and stable, we might do better to treat everyday life as an invitation to consider how we might know the world. Just as the words “reality” and “experience” – when they are at their best – don’t point to something uncontested and solid but suggest instead a striving to know the world in a more fulsome manner, so everyday life can be set to work as a desire to attend to the world as a heterogeneous sensorial ensemble. This at least is the path taken by critical theorists who have treated the everyday not as an object of negative critical scrutiny (the everyday as relentlessly dull and inauthentic), but as a challenge to the very architecture of critical theory.

The two most often cited theorists who have focused on the everyday are Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) and Michel de Certeau (1925–1986). Both of these French

writers, for all their differences, found in everyday life a compelling response and challenge to the limits that became apparent to them in the critical theory of their time. For them the everyday is grasped as something that outstrips theory and undermines critical protocols that are in danger of stagnating into sclerotic conventions. The everyday, because it is always unmanageably excessive, puts theory on the back foot, making it recognize its limited purchase on concrete experience.

For Lefebvre, the everyday shone a torch on two important philosophical and political systems of the mid-century – phenomenology and official Marxism – and found both wanting. If the official Marxism of the Communist Party clung to a belief in the historical inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a teleological unfolding, then it was hard-pressed to account for the way that the working classes seemed to be buying into commodity culture in the postwar period rather than steeling themselves for the inevitable revolution. What was needed was an approach more attentive to what culture and society felt like from the inside, so to speak, at the level of experience. Phenomenology, which foregrounded a creaturely being experiencing the phenomenal world, seemed to offer a glimpse of what the world felt like, but here the problem was the difficulty it had in working past the single experiencing subject to account for life at the supra-individual level. And this is where everyday life was invaluable in its refusal to settle either at the level of individual experience (phenomenology) or at the level of abstraction (official Marxism). In the preface to the second edition of his first volume of *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1958), Lefebvre imagines a situation in which a woman is buying some sugar and argues that this event is connected to her desires, to her gender, to her memories, but also to world trade, to the history of slavery, and so on. It is both a contingent event and a socially and historically determined one, or as he puts it: “So now I can see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event – and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many ‘essences’ it contains within itself” (Lefebvre 1991, 57). For Lefebvre, then, everyday life is a heterogeneous interconnected web that forms an “infinitely complex” totality.

Such a position is usefully glossed by Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross in the introduction to their landmark special issue of *Yale French Studies* on “Everyday Life” from 1987. They see everyday life as “situated somewhere in the rift opened up between the subjective, phenomenological, sensory apparatus of the individual and reified institutions” (Kaplan and Ross 1987, 3). Kaplan and Ross provide a memorable and particularly Lefebvrian example when they answer the question, “what does it mean to approach cultural production from the vantage point of everyday life?”

It means attempting to grasp the everyday without relegating it either to institutional codes and systems or to the private perceptions of a monadic subject. Between, for example, the traffic court and the angry driver who has received a moving violation, we would need to evoke a complex realm of social practice and to map out not merely a network of streets, but a conjunction of habit, desire, and accident. (3)

It is a suggestive image, but it also demands a truly interdisciplinary engagement, as the singular event spirals out into the contingencies and determinations of history, the geographical and geological understanding of the environment, the psychosocial makeup of the subject, and the anthropology of conventions.

For Michel de Certeau, a generation after Lefebvre, the everyday offered a way of countering the seductive charms of the powerful and compelling explanations of social life offered by Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. While both Bourdieu and Foucault sought to explain how networks of power, discrimination, and differentiation are internalized and reproduced, de Certeau wondered why these networks never seemed to really accord with our actual experience of life, where we clearly aren't supplicants at the altar of commerce and power:

If it is true that the grid of “discipline” is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also “minuscule” and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what “ways of operating” form the counterpart, on the consumer’s (or “dominee’s”?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order. (de Certeau 1984, xiv)

It is an intriguing argument and it suggests that while we may live in disciplinary societies we don't live this subjection at the level of daily life, even if we don't counteract it or fully escape it either. In the end, de Certeau's project is the heuristic investigation of this state of affairs, which will require not simply different explanations of our social life but also different instruments for attending to a life that seems to be hidden in plain sight. As he claimed: “we know poorly the types of operations at stake in ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations, because our instruments of analysis, modeling and formalization were constructed for other objects and with other aims” (de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998, 256). De Certeau's books on everyday life were initial forays into designing new instruments and devices for registering the everyday. It was unfinished work: he died from cancer in 1986, at the age of sixty.

This strikes me as the nub of the matter for critical and cultural theory: does “everyday life” simply mean an extension of the field for the study of culture, an exploration of the crevices of the daily – something anthropologists and sociologists might have been doing for years? Is it just a reminder to take seriously the unglamorous world of routines and habits, the unspectacular world of the ordinary and take note of its materiality, its inescapable actuality? Or does it pose a more radical challenge? Should it be a challenge to invent new instruments, to eschew traditional explanations and understandings of social phenomena and approach them from a different direction? Perhaps the everyday suffers from the contempt that over-familiarity brings? Perhaps we will forever need to be devising new instruments and devices for registering everyday life. By looking at the way taste and class are conjugated in accounts of everyday life, the productivity of the means of registering the everyday can be seen more clearly.

Taste: Classifying the Classifiers

An age-old saying tells us that “there is no disputing taste,” which doesn't mean that there haven't been disputes about taste, just that there are no grounds for assessing such disputes. It can also mean that you can't dispute taste because taste is a

self-evident fact of experience: taste, in this sense, is not something to deliberate about. Whether we treat taste as something universally true or as something tied to our own interests it would seem that the existence of good taste isn't, for many critics, something that exists "out there" in the matter of things, but is primarily to do with our subjective experience. Thus the adage "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" can simply mean that the quality of beauty is an experience internal to the perceiver, whether we might collectively agree or not about the kinds of people and things that generate such an experience. In the mid-eighteenth century the philosopher David Hume could express such a view by claiming, "beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment" (Hume 1998, 141). But even bitter and sweet, he would also suggest, cannot be arbitrated on in an absolute manner, though it might not seem contentious to claim that sugar is sweet and lemons are bitter and sour.

The belief that "good" and "bad" are values that do not belong to objects and practices is needed to recognize the way that taste is connected to changes in fashion. It is also needed as a basic assumption for any sociology of taste that wants to show how taste is not a set of universal values but is used to gain status and to demonstrate class distinction. After all, if you want to show how manners change, or how a once elite practice becomes associated with "the people," then first of all you need to lose the idea that objects and practices have fixed and inherent social content. Instead you need to believe that such content is radically contextual and must be supplied by social practice. But the idea that taste resides in the experiencing subject rather than in the object world doesn't necessarily lead to a sociological understanding of taste. Indeed it can, as I have already hinted at, be the belief of people who also believe in a transcendent set of universal values about beauty.

Roger Fry, for instance, an English aesthete who often complained about the lack of taste of the vast majority of people, wrote in 1912 about the waiting rooms at doctors' surgeries and at railway stations. These, according to Fry, were places where the furnishings and decorations have been taken from a range of different traditions and times and have been jumbled together and where objects like vases and pots depress the spirit because "every beautiful quality in the material and making of pots has been carefully obliterated" (1981, 48). For Fry, people refuse to experience and recognize beauty and good design because they have been alienated from their own aesthetic sensibilities and distracted by fussy ersatz designs with which they fill these rooms and which "are there because their absence would be resented by the average man who regards a large amount of futile display as in some way inseparable from the conditions of that well-to-do life to which he belongs or aspires to belong" (48). For Fry, "nearly all our 'art' [and Fry is including decorative arts and furnishing in this] is made, bought, and sold merely for its value as an indication of social status" (48).

Fry's firm belief in the universality of aesthetic values might strike us today as overly dictatorial and difficult to defend, and yet in his belief that taste is used to express aspirations and to confer social status he might just be echoing the basic catechism of sociologies of taste. For instance Pierre Bourdieu, who today is the one unavoidable reference for the sociology of taste, in his magnum opus *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* writes that "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classification, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which

their position in the objective classifications is exposed or betrayed” (1986, 6). Bourdieu might find in Fry’s position evidence of a specific class position (the judgment of taste shared by a class faction who have invested in their own sensitivity as their distinguishing feature), yet both Fry and Bourdieu have a sense that people are embroiled in a world of things and occupations that they are using primarily to show their standing in the world.

Unlike Fry, Bourdieu doesn’t believe in a disinterested realm of taste that could transcend class and other forms of status competition and identity making. This allows Bourdieu to critically explore how taste and class operate in everyday life, and to show some important aspects of how a world of taste is experienced. He writes forcefully about how taste is a way of connecting and disconnecting with others, a way of belonging or feeling alienated. “Like every sort of taste,” writes Bourdieu describing the taste beliefs of people such as Fry,

it unites and separates. Being the product of the conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others. And it distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and is classified by others. (1986, 56)

Taste provides the feeling of togetherness by uniting you with those who share your preferences and values, but perhaps more importantly it also inculcates the feeling many people get when they are moving from one social class to another that they will never quite be part of the club, they will never quite fit.

Bourdieu, unlike Fry, is particularly concerned with the passional injuries of taste – of taste as a cultural ground that betrays as often as it brings comfort. Because for Bourdieu taste is part of the very fabric of what it means to be a social being, it cannot always, or even very often, be worn lightly (or rather: wearing taste lightly is itself an affordance of a specific class faction). The weight of taste is probably felt most severely by those who are trying to leave one class and join another. The imperial world-system that came into being in the early nineteenth century (see Darwin 2009) has meant that the growth of the proletariat has been distributed internationally and especially in the global South, while a good deal of the global North has increased the kinds of jobs that manage to offer the cultural veneer of “white-collar” labor, without the security and ownership that was traditionally associated with the bourgeoisie. The class or class faction known variously as “the lower middle class,” or “the petit-bourgeoisie,” or the “upper working class,” or perhaps most descriptively “the salaried masses” (Kracauer 1998) is a class seen as aspiring to bourgeois taste cultures, but without the cultural confidence and resources to fully inhabit such taste. Here is a class whose tastes are routinely ridiculed by comedy dramas and by aesthetes such as Fry, and whose taste-awkwardness is a perpetual theme for sociologists:

the petit-bourgeois experience of the world starts out from timidity, the embarrassment of someone who is uneasy in his body and his language and who, instead of being ‘as one body with them,’ observes them from outside, through other people’s eyes, watching, checking, correcting himself, and who, by his desperate

attempts to reappropriate an alienated being-for-others, exposes himself to appropriation, giving himself away as much by hypercorrection as by clumsiness. (Bourdieu 1986, 207)

Taste, here, is a deep structure that is as likely to show you up as show you off: it is no longer a feeling of belonging, a comfort of tradition, an ease of established values; it is now – when you practice what used to be called, by the more confident members of the middle classes, “social climbing” – a treacherous realm where you constantly double-check that your taste isn’t going to be the one thing that lets you down. In a more multicultural age – Bourdieu was primarily concerned with the class cultures of 1960s France – this might well describe many migrants’ experience of trying to fit in to the proprieties of a new host culture.

But is this an adequate description of taste as it performs in everyday life? In the schemas of taste and class that are followed by Bourdieu and his disciples, life is a constant jockeying and jostling for position, a constant deployment of objects and practices that exist in a dynamic cosmology of value and class association. Men who are solidly middle class or who aspire to be might play golf not because they love the feeling of metal clubs and their ability to use them to whack the ball towards the horizon, but so as to mingle at the golf club with those who might help them pursue or consolidate their status. A university lecturer, for instance, might go mountaineering or hill walking (and Bourdieu tells us that such hobbies are particularly “common among secondary or university teachers”) not to commune with nature in a particularly corporeal way, but to enjoy “the symbolic gratifications associated with practicing a highly distinctive activity” and to experience “the free and exclusive appropriation of scenery inaccessible to the vulgar” (1991, 372).

How does all this feel from the perspective of the everyday? It might or might not fit with how you see the world. But what does it look like when you grasp the conjugation of class and taste and apply it to yourself? You or I might feel fine about Bourdieu (or Roger Fry, for that matter) revealing to us how our tastes are determined by our class and by our educational background, but will this give us any access to the mystery of what is happening when we cook a meal for our friends, or listen to *our* music on headphones while in bed at night, and how listening to this particular piece of music brings the world into focus for me or you in a peculiar way? Does it get at what having a taste for something feels like? How taste constitutes a central aspect of the everyday, not so much as symbolic content, but as daily practice? And if the overly symbolic role given to taste is problematic in registering the everyday as a sensorial orchestration, perhaps there is also more that needs to be said about the way class is lived within the everyday.

Attachment, Deliberation, and Dreams

If everyday life has something to offer cultural theory, perhaps, as Michel de Certeau suggests, it will be at the level of supplying new instruments for registering the subtle tonalities of the everyday as well as its more stubborn habits and routines. Such instruments and devices wouldn’t have to be physical instruments; they could be techniques of attunement, sensitizing devices designed to alert the user to a particular phenomenon. In the spirit of the everyday they might also be rather ordinary. What would

happen, for instance, if those interested in taste, class, and everyday life held back from assuming that people primarily used their cultural preferences to declare – intentionally or unintentionally, happily or miserably – their social status? What would happen if cartographers of social taste hesitated before jumping to those conclusions; what if they took people at their word when they said they really liked the over-stuffed railway waiting room, with its lace curtains, its decorative vases? What would happen if they saw taste first and foremost as an activity, a constant way of making contact with the world, of adjusting ourselves in relation to the world and to others in the world? Taste, in this way, might well be seen primarily as the practice of giving our attention to something – the changing ways of listening, tasting, feeling, enjoying – but first and foremost a primary act of turning towards.

The first instrument I have in mind is simply a turn of mind that refuses to race ahead to the pay-off of social theory (a critical account of social structures) and spends time lingering in the foothills of the daily. Taste in everyday life registers twice; first – literally – in relation to eating and drinking and the substances we consume, and second – more metaphorically – as a set of preferences and values that constitute forms of discernment. The sociology of taste has usually followed the path of discernment, but what would happen if it followed and extended the path concerned with taste as a sensorial form of perception – a way of feeling our way in the world via olfactory and gustatory senses, and extending this to include the haptic, the visual, the emotional, and so on? This understanding of taste can be seen in the work of a sociologist like Antoine Hennion, whose research and writing is a consistent reimagining of a sociology of taste that is also a critical response to Bourdieu. For Hennion,

taste is not an attribute, it is not a property (of a thing or of a person), it is an activity. You have to do something in order to listen to music, drink wine, appreciate an object. Tastes are not given or determined, and their objects are not either; one has to make them appear together, through repeated experiments, progressively adjusted. (2007, 101)

Hennion has spent the last couple of decades studying the world of the amateur – where taste might be thought of as a reflexive form of learning and labor – and it is this emphasis on taste as something being learnt, improvised, improved, and practiced that offers a very different perspective than is usually accorded to taste within social and cultural theory. In this, I think it is more suited to the register of everyday life where life could be said to be practiced constantly and recursively without always being classifiable in terms of large-scale cosmologies of social symbols and meaning, and where reflection is not always carried out according to a logic or even to the world of ideas (the organism has a myriad of conflicting tastes, interests, tendencies).

Hennion's attention to the world of wine tasting, mountaineering, and music appreciation doesn't start out with the assumption that, for instance, wine is a bourgeois drink in comparison to beer (he is writing about France, after all), or that mountaineering is pursued because it offers landscape views unavailable to "the vulgar." For Hennion, what is crucial about taste is that it names our sensual and sensorial contact with the world: it is, in other words, "another declension of the word 'attachment'" (2007, 111). Taste, in this account, names our communion with the world, when it is being felt and considered: "to taste is to *make feel*, and to *make oneself feel*, and also, by the sensations

of the body, exactly like the climber, *to feel oneself doing*" (101, italics in the original). The climber (the one who isn't a social climber so much as a rock climber) attunes herself to rope and cleats, to footholds and safety procedures. We might say that social climbers would make poor rock climbers as they might be too concerned with how distinctive their activity is to take care of themselves. Or more importantly; no rock climber can be a social climber during the *everyday* activity of rock climbing, even if a meaningful aspect of taking it up has to do with social standing. And the same holds for the moment someone pauses to taste the flavors of a particular wine; when they reflect on this they are involved in a sensorial attachment to the world.

For Hennion, this is what makes taste a reflexive activity even if it isn't always reflexive in ideational terms:

the way we characterized it, the reflexive character of taste is almost a definition, its foundational act; an attention to, a suspension of, a stopping at what is happening – and symmetrically, a stronger presence of the object being tasted. The object also advances, takes its time, unfurls and exhibits itself. (108)

So, while we may not consider our tastes from an intellectual point of view, taste by its very nature is a form of consideration: a turning towards the world, hesitating, picking up and picking out. It is this unfurling of our attachment to the world that social and cultural theory has so far shown little interest in but which might provide an indispensable device for understanding how taste and class work at the level of everyday life.

My second instrument is an example of what Michel de Certeau called "the science of singularity" (1984, xi). This science of the singular is a heuristic tool that doesn't assume that the world has already distributed what is significant and what is insignificant. It starts with the singular – the event, the life, the moment – and works outwards from that to find sociality, culture, and collective life buried in the specificity of the case (rather than reading an assumed social content back into any and every case). It starts with the microscopic event of daily life (in a somewhat similar fashion to Lefebvre's example of a woman buying sugar) and tries to find the unfurling of history and desire there. In the example I want to show you, it doesn't start with hard material reality, but with a dream.

The historian Carolyn Steedman has spent her long academic career exploring the world of class and gender as it descends on subjugated subjects, often in the form of a continuing emergency, or set of emergencies (1982, 4). In her 1986 book, *Landscape for a Good Woman: The Story of Two Lives*, she embarks on a historically grounded familial ethnography to try to understand her mother's attachment to the world and to the world of things. And it is by remaining dutifully close to the historical specificity of her story that she manages to account for taste as a form of political desire.

The dream that Steedman has, which inaugurates her historical investigation, is a recurring one from childhood and features her mother:

She wore the New Look, a coat of beige gabardine which fell in two swaying, graceful pleats from her waist at the back (the swaying must have come from very high heels, but I didn't notice her shoes), a hat tipped forward from hair swept up at the back. She hurried, something jerky about her movements, a nervous,

agitated walk, glancing round at me as she moved across the foreground. Several times she turned and came some way back towards me, admonishing, shaking her finger. (1986, 28)

Steedman's mother, it turns out, doesn't wear the New Look – that 1950s style of clothing, fashioned by Christian Dior and championed by people like Princess Margaret, which used excessive amounts of fabric to make long skirts balloon out in a distinctive manner. Steedman's mother didn't have this Look but had a taste for it. She didn't have the Look but she should have had it. And the reason that she didn't have it was that she had to support children and had moved down to London, and the reason that she should have had it was that she had always been "a good girl," a clever weaver, a reliable worker. The world had let her down.

Steedman's micro-history of how one woman moved from the mill towns of Lancashire to enter the more precarious world of south London lodging houses is a history that is inevitably one that articulates the forces of class and gender, but never leaves her mother marooned as just another example reducible to the forces of "Capitalism" and "Patriarchy." It is also a story of how one woman's taste and desire can be structured around what she does not have, and how such taste does not end up supporting a politics of equality but fuels, instead, a vigorous envy that finds its most adequate expression in the politics of the Conservative Party.

The dream is, of course, unreliable testimony. But it is a form of testimony that leads us directly into a world of memory and desire, and insists that we offer an explanation for a world of longing and bitter regret. The micro-history that Steedman offers astutely reveals taste and class in the everyday as a world of emotional and political desire rather than a set of class-based preferences:

From a Lancashire mill town and a working-class twenties childhood she came away wanting: fine clothes, glamour, money; to be what she wasn't. However that longing was produced in her distant childhood, what she actually wanted were real things, real entities, things she materially lacked, things that a culture and a social system withheld from her. The story she told was about this wanting, and it remained a resolutely social story. When the world didn't deliver the goods, she held the world to blame. In this way, the story she told was a form of political analysis, that allows a political interpretation to be made of her life. (Steedman 1986, 6)

These two instruments – the attunement to attachment and the micro-history of desire – need each other. They work historically and sensually: they tell stories of lives that are splintered and contradictory but nonetheless are what Raymond Williams (1987) insisted on calling "a whole way of life"; they are attuned to the sensual, affective, and perceptual realm without which materialism is a hollow ascription of meaning. Together these devices should allow us to fill out the long singular stories that make up cultural and social memory while engaging with the sensual and sensorial world that turns desire into action and activity. With such devices, I think we can return to a sociology of taste equipped to tell more profound stories of the ways class impacts on our everyday lives.

Coda

“Everyday life” is not itself a contribution to critical and cultural theory. It should rather be thought of as a theoretical precaution for those undertaking the study of culture. In the late 1960s, Paul Rabinow started conducting fieldwork in rural Morocco. As an anthropologist trained in the complex interpretation of rituals he found no difficulty in comparing ecstatic religious ceremonies with the nights of jazz improvisation he enjoyed in New York. What he found most difficult to understand were the day-to-day interactions, and the significance of what for many are the insignificant, taken-for-granted actions of the daily. For him rituals are easier because they were a culture telling each other – and anyone else who cared to listen – what was significant. Ritual culture was made for interpretation, whereas

it is in the less explicitly shaped and less overtly significant areas of day-to-day activity and common-sense reasoning that most cultural differences are embedded. Thematic observation is disturbingly difficult, for these phenomena are everywhere, thereby proving the most opaque to the methodologies we have developed. (Rabinow 1977, 58)

He “got” the rituals because they were there to be “got.”

In our contemporary consumer culture there is a mass of material that plays the part of ritual, telling us what is significant. It is a world of taste and class there to be “got.” Magazines, advertising, reality TV are all constantly telling us how to conjugate class and taste: it is how commodities are sold and it is how promotional culture works. Pick up any commercial magazine that relies on advertising for its revenue and you will be invited into a world incessantly classed through taste, endlessly calibrating the subtleties of how cultural preferences figure on a complex landscape of hierarchies. And because we have been well tutored by this promotional culture in the business of how to interpret the nuances of class and taste (often a tautological equation), we are all experts in spotting the class associations that are being articulated through taste: we know the clientele that is being hailed by this particular chain of restaurants or clothing outlets; we know the conflicts that will arise when reality TV monstrously pits the “posh” against the “pleb.”

But what do we want from our critical theory? Do we want more opportunities for seeing how this ritual culture is rolled out across daily life? Do we just want to fine-tune our abilities at classifying classifiers – a skill that is probably being done with more aplomb in the editorial offices of lifestyle magazines and program makers? Or do we, like Michel de Certeau, or Carolyn Steedman, or Antoine Hennion, or Paul Rabinow, or perhaps like the rock climbers and wine drinkers, want to explore the more opaque regions of the everyday and find new declensions and conjugations of taste and class there? In other words, do we want critical theory to leave the world as it is while offering us a more elaborate (and classy) language with which to complain about it, or do we want theory to goad us into finding the world anew and to making it more than it is today?

- see CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES); CHAPTER 27 (CULTURAL PRODUCTION)

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21

Disability Studies*Anna Mollow*

For this chapter, the editors of the present volume invited me to analyze “intersections of problems of disability with other, perhaps more familiar, vectors of social and cultural critique.” I take up their suggestion throughout this chapter; by foregrounding disability scholars’ theorizations of disability in conjunction with race, gender, sexuality, class, and neoliberalism, I underscore the relevance of disability studies to a range of contemporary cultural conversations. Before proceeding, however, I wish to linger on one phrase in the editors’ request: “other, *perhaps more familiar*, vectors.” I do not disagree with their formulation: undoubtedly, disability studies does have the status of a “less familiar” endeavor in relation to many other socially resistant scholarly disciplines. Indeed, although disability studies has been an active presence in academia for the past few decades, and although disability scholars have articulated analyses of ableism in ways that further connections with more established fields, the concepts of “disability” and “disability oppression” continue to seem unfamiliar to many people.

This is true both inside and outside the academy. For example, most colleges and universities do not offer a disability studies major, or even a minor – perhaps because of a lingering suspicion that disability studies lacks “intellectual rigor”? And outside of academia, few are aware that disability studies exists. This problem can be illustrated with an anecdote: as I was completing my dissertation a couple of years ago, I was frequently asked by acquaintances what my project was about; since the phrase “disability studies” tended to elicit blank looks, I began saying, “It’s kind of like women’s studies, ethnic studies, or queer theory, except that the focus is on disabled people.” I find it troubling that the most efficient way of making legible the central stakes of my discipline has entailed relegating disability studies to a “me too” category in relation to other, “more familiar” forms of cultural critique.

But don’t get me wrong: if disability studies remains less familiar than other forms of critical scholarship, this disparity should not be construed as evidence that disabled people are “more oppressed” than members of other socially minoritized groups. I call attention to the trope of the unfamiliar in relation to disability not in order to rank oppressions, but instead to highlight specificities in the ways that ableism functions in the present historical moment. Whereas one hegemonic reaction to feminist,

anti-racist, and queer social critique is to implicitly (or explicitly) ask, “Aren’t we over that already?” – as in the notion that we currently inhabit a “post-feminist,” “post-race,” or “post-gay” era – a more common contemporary reaction to disability-centered critique wonders, “What is *that*?” Rather than characterizing either of these dismissive queries as “better” than the other, I point to their differences to suggest that, in challenging multiple forms of oppression, a diversity of strategic approaches will be needed.

With such dynamics in mind, one of my aims in this chapter is to promote what I will call “disability familiarity.” Since “Gee, I don’t really know what that is” remains a common response to disability scholarship and activism, I contend that intellectuals who engage in left social critique while ignoring disability studies are in effect contributing to the entrenchment of ableism. This chapter therefore provides an introduction to the field for readers who may wish to begin incorporating analyses of disability into their work. Yet a couple of caveats are necessary. First, I cannot pretend to offer an exhaustive account of disability studies; it would be impossible to take full measure of this broad-ranging, heterogeneous interdisciplinary field in one short essay. Reflecting my own background, this chapter’s focus leans heavily toward work done in the humanities in the United States. Second, the task of promoting familiarity with disability studies will be complicated by my concurrent efforts to do something rather different: in addition to reviewing the history of disability studies and outlining some of the field’s tenets, I will also explicate a set of ongoing debates within the field that has had the effect of *defamiliarizing* disability – that is, of raising difficult questions about exactly what “counts” as disability and how it should be theorized and understood.

In keeping with this dual enterprise, the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I elucidate disability studies’ founding paradigm, “the social model of disability,” and detail some of the political and theoretical transformations that this framework has facilitated. The second section engages with what could be described as challenges to the social model; some scholars have advocated revising, or departing from, the social model to facilitate analyses of disability’s intersections and connections with race, sexuality, class, nation, gender, chronic illness, and mental disability. I suggest, however, that these complications of the social model can be understood as very much in keeping with this framework’s central project: an expansion and multiplication of the ways in which disability studies’ key value of “access” can mean.

Getting Familiar with Disability Studies: Introducing the Social Model

In an oft-quoted essay, the historian Douglas Baynton observes that “disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write” (2001, 52). Baynton’s remark aptly evokes not only disability’s status in history but also its positioning in the present day: although disability is ubiquitous, the social realities of disabled people’s lives are continually coded as marginal concerns. There is no empirical reason that disability should seem unfamiliar to most people; far from an unusual occurrence, it touches the lives of almost everyone. In disability studies, it is a truism that “We’ll all be disabled if we live long

enough.” Even those who belong to the group that disability activists once commonly referred to as TABs (“temporarily able-bodied”) usually have friends, colleagues, or family members who are disabled. According to U.S. Census data (2010), 19 percent of the population reports having a disability, with half of that number describing their condition as “severe.” In a global context, the World Health Organization (2014) estimates that 15 percent of the world population, or one billion people, are disabled. Nor does “disability” comprise a small subset of bodily and mental experiences. On the contrary, a broad range of conditions – blindness, deafness, paralysis and other mobility impairments, brain injury, mental illness, cognitive or intellectual disabilities, chronic physical illnesses, and chronic pain – can produce disability.

It’s not just disability that is everywhere: ableism, the social system that authorizes and enforces the oppression of disabled people, is also omnipresent. In every arena of the social order, disabled people are subordinated. We face discrimination in employment, education, housing, and transportation; as a result, we experience high levels of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. We also encounter pervasive cultural prejudice and stigma. Visibly disabled people are stared at, are condescendingly told that they are “inspiring,” and are subjected to intrusive questions like “Have you ever thought of killing yourself?” (Hockenberry 1995, 97). People with non-visible disabilities are called “hysterical,” are told to “get over” our symptoms, and are denied disability benefits and access accommodations because our impairments are assumed not to be “real” (Mollow 2014). In addition, violence and harassment are disproportionately visited upon disabled people (Davis 2002, 147). Individuals with disabilities are at higher risk of being subjected to coerced sterilization and other unwanted medical procedures and of having their children taken away (Desjardins 2012). In addition, many disabled people are institutionalized in nursing homes, often for reasons that have more to do with corporate profits than with medical need (Russell 1998, 96–108).

The segregation of disabled people in nursing homes, “special” schools, and exploitative “sheltered workshops” is one reason that disability seems unfamiliar to denizens of the dominant culture: many of us have literally been hidden from view. The disability rights movement strenuously resists this segregation. Insisting on our equal right to take up space in the world, disability activists place ourselves within the sight lines of those who might prefer not to see us. As Simi Linton writes in her 1998 manifesto *Claiming Disability*:

We have come out not with brown woolen lap robes over our withered legs or dark glasses over our pale eyes but in shorts and sandals, in overalls and business suits, dressed for play and work – straightforward, unmasked, and unapologetic....And we are not only the high-toned wheelchair athletes seen in recent television ads but the gangly, pudgy, lumpy, and bumpy of us, declaring that shame will no longer structure our wardrobe or our discourse. We are everywhere these days, wheeling and loping down the street, tapping our canes, sucking on our breathing tubes, following our guide dogs, puffing and sipping on the mouth sticks that propel our motorized chairs. We may drool, hear voices, speak in staccato syllables, wear catheters to collect our urine, or live with a compromised immune system. (3–4)

Linton's invocation of coming-out discourse ("We have come out," "We are everywhere") and her celebration of disabled people's unapologetic self-display resonates with the "out, loud, and proud" assertions of queerness voiced by the LGBT movement. Often employing similar strategies, disabled and queer social movements have historically overlapped and intersected. Corbett O'Toole has remarked that "the lesbian community has been a longtime pioneer in providing access for women with disabilities to community events" (2000, 212). Yet O'Toole and numerous other queer disability activists have also pointed out that ableism remains a significant problem in LGBTQ communities (O'Toole 2000, 211–212). In a speech delivered to the National Lesbian and Gay Pride March on Washington in 1987, Connie Panzarino pressed her audience to commit themselves to disability access. "It's 'nice' that they built a ramp so I could get up here to speak to you, but why are the steps in the front and the ramp in the back?" (1994, 259). In fact, as Panzarino notes in her memoir, the ramp was not only in the back of the stage but also poorly designed, "so steep that it took four people to help [her] up" (1994, 259).

The AIDS crisis catalyzed additional connections between queer and disability activists. In 1983, the People with AIDS Advisory Committee framed what would come to be known as the Denver Principles. By stating, "We condemn attempts to label us as 'victims,' a term which implies defeat, and we are only occasionally 'patients,'" they attempted, as Robert McRuer has observed, "to make the lives of people living with AIDS and HIV readable within discourses of civil rights and social justice as opposed to discourses of pathology" (2003, 145). Indeed, contesting pathologization has been a key strategy of both disability and LGBTQ movements. Much as lesbian and gay activists pressured the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders, and as much as trans activists have protested psychiatry's labeling of trans people as "disordered" (Serano 2013), disability activists have fought deeply entrenched social and cultural practices that define our bodies and minds in exclusively medical terms.

Beginning in the 1970s, disability activists and scholars elaborated a thoroughgoing "critique of the medical model." The dominant framework for understanding disability in modern western industrial societies, the medical model defines disability as a deficiency afflicting an unfortunate individual. When cures or effective remedies cannot be found, the medical model authorizes social reactions of pity, fear, avoidance, and moral judgment. To counter the hegemony of the medical model, disability activists postulated "the social model of disability" as an alternative framework. In contrast to the medical model's definition of disability as individual biological defect, the social model's account of disability focuses on architectural, attitudinal, political, and economic structures that enforce the marginalization of disabled people. The social model rejects the widespread assumption that most disabled people spend their lives longing for a cure. In fact, many disabled people have no wish to change their bodies. For example, in her memoir about growing up with polio, Anne Finger recalls, "My disability was like my femaleness, part of who I was" (2006, 122). Of course, many disabled people do seek cures and medical interventions; AIDS activism is an example of a disability movement that has fought for medical research and treatments. As I will discuss later, one of the limitations of the social model is its elision of the experiences of disabled people who describe themselves as ill. Yet disability activists' resistance to the medical model as the single, defining framework through which our lives are understood has value to people with a range of different disabilities, including illnesses. Most importantly, the social

model directs attention to the *political* structures that limit our lives. The People with AIDS Advisory Committee was arguably doing social model theorizing when it implored allies to “support us in our struggle against those who would fire us from our jobs, evict us from our homes, refuse to touch us or separate us from our loved ones, our community or our peers” (1983). This advocacy is consonant with the social model because it directs attention not to the virus that causes AIDS but rather to societal mistreatment of people with HIV or AIDS.

The following set of contrasts can illustrate the wide-ranging implications of the social model: whereas the medical model conceptualizes mobility impairment by asking how many steps a person can take, the social model asks about ramps, elevators, and wheelchair-accessible transportation. In contrast to the medical model, which attributes the unemployment and poverty that many disabled people face to our allegedly insufficient skills and abilities, the social model focuses on inaccessible work environments and prejudice on the part of employers. And while the medical model regards the incarceration of millions of disabled people in institutions as a necessary, if unfortunate, consequence of medical need, the social model spotlights the power of the nursing home lobby, emphasizing that attendant care programs (which allow disabled people to receive necessary services in their homes) cost less than warehousing people in institutions (Russell 1998, 96–102).

The social model’s shift in focus from the medical to the political was facilitated by its creators’ construction of a heuristic distinction between two key terms: “impairment” and “disability.” While “impairment” refers to a bodily condition, “disability” signifies social barriers. The paradigmatic illustration of the social model’s division between impairment and disability is a wheelchair user facing a building with stairs: the impairment is the condition (such as amputation or a spinal cord injury) that makes climbing stairs impossible; the disability is the absence of ramps and elevators. In its separation of bodily givens from social structures, the social model’s differentiation between impairment and disability resembles the sex–gender distinction in feminist theory. Much as “sex” in early feminist theory signified a biological condition of femaleness (a construction that, of course, would eventually be contested), “impairment” in foundational disability studies texts referred to a bodily condition (this construction would also be complicated later, in part by efforts to theorize mental disabilities as forms of impairment). And similarly to the ways in which the term “gender” has been invoked by feminists to identify political and cultural practices that oppress women, the word “disability” has been employed by disability scholars to signify social structures that oppress disabled people. As the creators of the social model put it, “In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (UPIAS 1976, 3).

The social model ignited major political transformations. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, the disability rights movement emerged as a force demanding political equality. Insisting that disabled people themselves, not medical professionals or other “experts,” were the best authorities on our lives, disability activists created independent living centers, which linked disabled people with accessible transportation, attendants, housing, and employment, thus enabling them to live with self-determination (Shapiro 1993, 49–55). Disability activists also fought for attendant care programs; their victories facilitated the release of many disabled people from nursing homes. In 1977, the famous

504 sit-in – in which a coalition of disability activists took over the San Francisco offices of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for twenty-six days – led to the signing of regulations prohibiting discrimination against disabled people in any institution receiving federal funding (Shapiro 1993, 64–70; O’Toole 2015, 54–74). And the successful 1988 Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University was followed two years later by the Americans with Disabilities Act (Shapiro 1993, 74–75). Based on the grounding concepts of the social model, the ADA does not attempt to rehabilitate or otherwise “improve” disabled people; instead, this legislation removes social barriers to our full participation in the world. It would be difficult to overstate the profound importance of social model-inspired legislation like the ADA. Speaking personally, I can say that without such laws, it would have been impossible for me to access the disability accommodations that I needed in order to earn my Ph.D.

These legal changes have been accompanied by cultural projects reimagining the ways in which “disability” can signify. Disrupting dominant cultural constructions of disabled people as unattractive and undesirable, disabled artists, poets, and performers have celebrated disabled bodies as sites of beauty and sexuality. In a poem originally published in 1987, Cheryl Marie Wade announced, “I am not one of the physically challenged/I’m a sock in the eye with a gnarled fist/I’m a French kiss with a cleft tongue” (2013, 526). A performance piece by Mary Duffy showed the artist presenting her nude armless body in the pose of the Venus de Milo (Mitchell and Snyder 1996). More recently, the Krip Hop artist Leroy Moore’s “Droolilicious” speaks back to stigmatizing cultural reactions to drooling: “Cerebral Palsy, was schooled to catch my drool/Now I’m a man changing the rules/Found someone who thinks it’s sexy/Now I’m naming it” (2014, 27).

The claiming of disability as a positive identity was taken up by disability scholars in the humanities in the 1990s. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s foundational book *Extraordinary Bodies* subverts dominant cultural constructions of visible disability as freakishness and bodily inferiority, asserting that “the meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies reside not in inherent physical flaws, but in social relationships” (1997, 7). Contesting stereotypes of disabled people as weak and passive, Paul Longmore uncovered a history of disability activism in the United States dating back to the 1930s (2003, 53–101). He and other disability scholars also criticized the culture’s circulation of images of pitiable and infantilized disabled people, such as Charles Dickens’s character of Tiny Tim and the “poster children” of telethons (Longmore 1997 and 2016). Although telethons are supposed to “help,” they do damage to disabled people by reinforcing the deeply rooted cultural assumption that pity and charity, rather than social and economic equality, are the appropriate responses to disability. Moreover, when the telethon performer Jerry Lewis claimed that a life with a disability is only “half a life,” he buttressed the pernicious belief that disabled people’s lives have less value than those of nondisabled people (H. Johnson 2005, 73).

The idea that disabled lives are “not worth living” is deeply imbricated with historical discourses about eugenics (Davis 1995, 35–37; Longmore 2003, 37–46; Garland-Thomson 1997, 34–35). Eugenic ideology is not a relic of the past: from the respected Princeton bioethicist Peter Singer’s assertion that it should be legal for parents to kill their “severely disabled” children at birth (1993, 131) to the “death with dignity” movement and public policies that promote selective abortion, the idea that it is better to be dead than disabled continues to exert influence. Intervening in conversations about

these political issues, disability scholars emphasize that disabled people's perspectives need to be included in any discussion about whether our lives are worth living (Hubbard 2013; Saxton 2013; H. Johnson 2005, 201–228).

Disability scholars also critique “overcoming narratives,” stories that express amazement at disabled people doing ordinary things such as grocery shopping or going to school – or, alternatively, that celebrate the dramatic feats of “supercrips” who scale formidable mountains or compete in the Olympics. Rather than lauding the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps achievements of a few “plucky” and “inspiring” individuals, disability scholars focus on eliminating social barriers, which are the true obstacles to our flourishing.

Alongside stereotypes of the pitiable child and the inspiring overcomer, cliché representations of disabled people as bitter, vengeful, and evil also contribute to our oppression. Analyzing literary representations of a trope that they call the “disabled avenger,” David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder argue that disabled characters such as Shakespeare's Richard III and Herman Melville's Captain Ahab perform the function of a “narrative prosthesis”; that is, their disabilities seemingly provide an “explanation” for otherwise inexplicably villainous behavior (2000, 119–139). Taken together, these texts make possible a redefinition of disability in keeping with the social model; that is, they invite a reenvisioning of disability, not as an individual defect but instead as a concept deeply enmeshed with disciplinary discourses about “the normal” (Davis 1995).

Contesting the notion of the normal and claiming stigmatized identities as sources of pride are strategies that have been employed not only by disability activists but also by members of myriad other social movements. And as with anti-racist, feminist, and LGBTQ movements, in which early unitary models of oppression met with challenges by subsequent theorists and activists, a second wave of disability scholarship has complicated some of the field's founding doctrines. This body of work asks whether the social model can do justice to the lived realities of disabled people of color; sexual minorities with disabilities; disabled people who are poor and/or homeless; people who become disabled through war or violence; and people disabled by chronic illness, chronic pain, and mental or psychiatric impairments. These questions will be the focus of the following section.

Defamiliarizing Disability: Complicating the Social Model

The first chapter of *No Pity*, the journalist Joseph Shapiro's history of the disability rights movement, presents a classic social model account of disability. To reinforce his point that “people with disabilities are demanding rights, not medical cures,” Shapiro quotes the disability activist Cyndi Jones; when asked if she would “swallow a magic pill” that would cure her of paralysis caused by childhood polio, Jones answers in the negative: “It's the same thing as asking a black person would he [*sic*] change the color of his skin” (1993, 14). Analogies between disability and race or ethnicity appear throughout *No Pity*; such comparisons have also been a staple of much early work in disability studies. For instance, Lennard Davis likens disability to “the body marked as differently pigmented” (1995, 80), and Garland-Thomson advocates redefining disability as “a form of ethnicity” (1997, 6). These comparisons have historical antecedents; the disability rights movement deliberately adopted strategies from the black civil rights movement, and anti-racist and disability justice

movements sometimes worked in coalition. For example, the Black Panthers played a critical role in facilitating the success of the 504 sit-in by bringing hot meals to the protesters, who otherwise would have been starved out of the building that they were occupying (Schweik 2011; O'Toole 2015, 58–60). In its coverage of the sit-in, the *Black Panther* newspaper quoted the Black Panther Party leader Ericka Huggins, who explicitly compared the social oppression of black people to that of disabled people (Schweik 2011).

Yet when “like race” comparisons are made outside of the context of such coalitional work, and without the participation or consent of people of color, they present manifold problems. Analogies are typically employed to explain the unfamiliar by means of the familiar: to claim that being disabled is “the same” as being black, then, is to risk implying that racism is a problem that is already adequately understood, and that this understanding can now be used for a new purpose – to shed light on the less familiar, and therefore perhaps more pressing, problem of disability. This dynamic plays out when Davis complains that students supposedly “pour [*sic*] over the subject of race in their textbooks” while “utterly ignor[ing]” the history of disability (2002, 147–148). What’s more, likening disability to race obscures distinctions between these two axes of experience: is being disabled really, as Jones suggests, “the same thing” as being a person of color? Facile comparisons between disability and race also block possibilities for thinking about intersections of racism and ableism in the lives of disabled people of color: if disability is “like race,” then what is it “like” to experience racist and ableist oppression at once?

In an essay titled “Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal,” Chris Bell highlights “the failure of Disability Studies to engage issues of race and ethnicity in a substantive capacity” (2006, 275). Provocatively, Bell argues that disability studies’ governing investments have been so predominantly white that it would be best to “acknowledge Disability Studies for what it is, White Disability Studies” (275). Citing Ann duCille’s remark that “one of the dangers of standing at an intersection... is the likelihood of being run over,” Bell writes:

When you come across a non-white disabled person, focus on the disability, eliding the race and ethnicity, letting them be run over, forgotten. Do not consider how the intersection in which this subject lives influences her actions and the way she is seen. Choose not to see that intersection and quickly move on down the road of disability, away from the “perpendicular” roads of race and ethnicity. The fact that the intersection exists is not your fault. It is a prime example of poor engineering. (2006, 279)

Bell’s comments resonate with arguments that had been forwarded one year earlier by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson in their introduction to *Black Queer Studies*. Critiquing queer theory for a tendency toward “totalization and homogenization,” Johnson and Henderson observe that the field’s “‘unmarking’ of difference (e.g., gender, race, class, region, able-bodiedness, etc.)” has “serious implications for those for whom these other differences ‘matter’” (2005, 5).

In the years since Bell published his potent critique, several books and articles have addressed intersections between disability and race. A special issue of *MELUS*, titled “Race, Ethnicity, Disability, and Literature” and edited by Jennifer James and Cynthia

Wu, was published shortly after Bell's piece; and Bell's own edited volume, *Blackness and Disability*, appeared in 2011. In these and numerous other venues, scholars have examined topics such as disability's role in fugitive slave narratives (Samuels 2006), Audre Lorde's writing about cancer (Bolaki 2011; Pickens 2011), anti-rehabilitative impulses in Gary Fisher's writings about BDSM (McRuer 2006), the story of Junius Wilson (a deaf African American man who was involuntarily institutionalized for most of his life) (Burch and Joyner 2007), Gwendolyn Brooks's representations of black men disabled by war injuries (James 2011), cultural portrayals of Chang and Eng Bunker (the "Original Siamese Twins") (Wu 2012), historical linkages between the lynching of African American men and the sterilization of cognitively disabled white men (Jarman 2012), and the ways that hierarchies of "animacy" shape cultural understandings of race, animality, queerness, trans, and disability (Chen 2012). A forthcoming special issue of *African American Review* will further expand these conversations (Pickens 2017).

In broadening the scope of disability studies to enable a more in-depth consideration of race, these writings might be said to produce a defamiliarization of disability; that is, they call into question assumptions about the proper foci of disability studies. In an article originally published in 2006, I contend that disability studies should take seriously Meri Nana-Ama Danquah's *Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression*, even though, by describing the author's suffering and recounting her use of prescription drugs to recover from her condition, Danquah's memoir engages in thematic and rhetorical strategies that disability studies scholars have critiqued (Mollow 2013a). As Danquah points out, African American women with depression tend to be underdiagnosed and undertreated, in part because the stereotype of the "strong black woman" makes depression among black women seem unthinkable (1998, 19). Thus, for many (though not all) African American women with depression, access to medical care, rather than involuntary administration of it, is the more salient social justice issue (Mollow 2013a). Because disability studies' grounding claims make it easy to overlook the importance of Danquah's memoir, I argue, these claims need to be reevaluated (Mollow 2013a). Similarly, McRuer notes that "in some ways, Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* is not 'disability studies,' but in other ways, once you really take race seriously in the field, you need to redefine constantly what is 'disability studies'" (personal communication, 2015).

Rethinking what disability studies "is" has also been a central activity of scholarship that theorizes conjunctions between disability and sexuality. In our introduction to *Sex and Disability*, McRuer and I express the hope that the chapters in that anthology "might transform and confuse disability, as it is understood in the dominant culture, in disability studies, and in the disability rights movement" (2012, 32). One such transformation is initiated by Russell Shuttleworth's discussion in that volume of his notion of "sexual access" (55). While access is typically conceptualized as pertaining to the public sphere (as in access to a bank, library, or park), Shuttleworth employs it to theorize "the effect that sociopolitical processes and structures and symbolic meanings have on disabled people's sense of desirability, sexual expression and wellbeing, sexual experiences, and embodied sexual feelings, as well as the resistance they often deploy against sexual restrictions" (2012, 55). Narrow conceptions of disability access are also exceeded in Don Kulick and Jens Rydström's *Loneliness and Its Opposite*. Focusing on disabled people who require physical assistance in order to have sex, Kulick and Rydström contrast the treatment of this issue in Sweden and Denmark. Sweden (like most countries,

including the United States) adopts practices of disengagement; if a person needs help in order to masturbate, or if two individuals need aid in positioning themselves to have sex, they are out of luck. In Denmark, by contrast, a set of practices has been developed that enable caregivers to assist disabled people in having sex (2015, 28). Kulick and Rydström compellingly argue that this willingness to “engage” is a defining feature of a just society.

Much theorization of sex and disability has occurred at the nexus of disability studies and queer theory, and some scholars have proposed giving a new name, “crip theory,” to this hybrid enterprise. That suggestion was put forth in 2003 by Carrie Sandahl, whose influential essay “Queering the Crip or Crippling the Queer?” figures *queer* and *crip* as twin terms. Sandahl suggests that “both queering and crippling expose the arbitrary delineation between normal and defective” and “disarm what is painful with wicked humor, including camp” (2003, 37). Sandahl’s proposal was further elaborated in McRuer’s book *Crip Theory* (2006). Like Sandahl, McRuer employs *crip* as a signifier for provocative interventions involving a “simultaneous articulation and disarticulation” of identities; crip theory, in other words, both does and undoes disability identity politics (2006, 41). In formulating these capacious understandings of *crip*, Sandahl and McRuer each express openness to the possibility that some non-disabled people might claim to be crip (Sandahl 2003, 27; McRuer 2006, 37).

The status of *crip* in the field has changed since Sandahl’s essay was published in 2003. In a footnote to that article, Sandahl wrote, “If I had my druthers, I would replace the term *disability studies* with *crip theory* or *crip studies* to represent its radical edge” (53 n.1). Today, such replacements are common; many recent important works feature the word *crip* in their titles. For example, Alison Kafer’s *Feminist, Queer, Crip* aims to practice crip theory as Sandahl and McRuer have defined it, that is, as “more contestatory,” and more critical of identity politics, than disability studies (2013, 15). However, some disability scholars have questioned the assertion that *crip theory* names a more contestatory, or less identitarian, project than *disability studies*. For instance, Mark Sherry calls *crip* “the new fashionable term among disability studies academics” and claims that “very few” “disabled people in the community [who are] affected by blindness, deafness, learning disabilities, intellectual impairments, neurodiversity, brain injuries, and psychiatric symptoms” embrace the word *crip* (2013). This assertion overlooks important scholarly and activist contributions by people who have precisely the conditions that Sherry lists and who do invoke the term *crip* (M. Johnson 2013; Richter 2014; Price 2015). In addition, Sherry’s construction of a Manichean *crip/disability* binary – in which *disability* signifies “people in the community” and *crip* performs only in “the safety of academia” – fails to acknowledge the generative engagements with disability activism undertaken by many theorists (and activists) who use the term *crip*. However, Sherry’s arguments do invite consideration of important questions. Does the centralization of *crip* (which derives from *cripple*) risk marginalizing people with chronic illnesses, mental disabilities, and other conditions that do not necessarily involve mobility impairment? And does the use of the word *crip* in academic contexts constitute an appropriation of the term from the early disability rights activist contexts in which it was first deployed – contexts in which *crip* often referenced people who worked in identity politics movements and claimed disabled identities? Or, on the other hand, can *crip* productively function as an extension of that early activist work?

These questions have not yet been decided, and Sandahl, McRuer, and Kafer have each written thoughtfully about the risks presented by the identity fluidity that they associate with *crip*. For example, McRuer acknowledges that “nondisabled claims to be crip could quite easily function as appropriation” (2006, 37). And Sandahl has recently expressed a “worry” that disability studies/crip theory is “moving too quickly away from disability identity” (in McRuer and Johnson 2014, 157). Kafer also uses the word “worry” in her discussion of *crip*: “I worry about the possibility of ‘crip theory’ being positioned as a successor narrative to disability studies, as if all the problems of the field could be solved with this one shift in approach”; to mitigate this danger, she alternates between the phrases “feminist and queer disability studies” and “crip theory” (2013, 183 n.53, 16). This worrying is perhaps in keeping with the work that “crip” is meant to do; McRuer suggests that *crip* is a term that “in various times and places must be displaced by other terms” (2006, 41).

Such a displacement might be effected, in some moments and locations, by the word “ugly.” Susan Schweik’s *The Ugly Laws* documents the history of local ordinances in several U.S. cities, enacted between 1867 and 1920, that prohibited people who were described as “diseased,” “maimed,” or “deformed” (the exact language varied, depending on the city) from appearing in public (2009). Disability activists in the late twentieth century referred to these statutes as “the ugly laws” and cited them as evidence of an overarching oppression of disabled people. But the ordinances were actually anti-vagrancy laws, designed to make it easier for police to arrest disabled beggars: “Ugly law was begging law, although contemporary American disability activism did not know this. Unsightliness was a status offense, illegal only for people without means” (2009, 16).

Schweik’s argument has important implications for disability scholarship and activism today; since “ugly laws” were primarily directed at poor and/or homeless disabled people, then recent local ordinances aimed at getting homeless people out of the public view must be understood as disability issues. Schweik’s analysis could be said to complicate the social model, as it exceeds the limits of a single-vector account of disability oppression. Importantly, though, Schweik does not *reduce* questions about disability to economic ones. Rather than using class analysis to trump what she calls “appearance politics,” Schweik underscores the persistence of “legalized discrimination against capable people with facial anomalies”; for example, in 2003 Samantha Robichaud, who was born with a birthmark that covered her face, was denied promotion at the McDonald’s restaurant where she worked because it was thought that she “would either make the babies cry or scare the customers off” (qtd in Schweik 2009, 284).

Analyzing disability in conjunction with class in present-day contexts necessitates discussion of neoliberal political economies. Jasbir Puar argues that neoliberalism demands able bodies (i.e., capable workers) while at the same time profiting from disability; “personal debt incurred through medical expenses is the number one reason for filing bankruptcy,” she notes (2013, 178). Distinguishing between “disability *rights* activists” and “disability *justice* activists,” Puar characterizes the latter group as committed to rethinking disability “in terms of precarious populations” (181; emphasis added). Challenging the disability studies doctrine that disability is a category culturally constructed as outside the normal, Puar points out that in “working-poor and working-class communities of color, disabilities and debilities are actually ‘the norm’” (180).

Clare Barker and Stuart Murrery make a similar observation about global regions in which violence and food scarcity are prevalent (2013, 68–69). The difficulty of applying foundational disability studies principles to transnational analyses is further illuminated by Nirmala Erevelles, who asks: “How can acquiring a disability be celebrated as ‘the most universal of human conditions’ if it is acquired under the oppressive conditions of poverty, economic exploitation, police brutality, neocolonial violence, and lack of access to adequate health care and education?” (2011, 119–120).

Transnational analyses of disability in contexts of war, disaster, and hunger make evident the need for attention to the close connection that sometimes exists between disability and suffering. Focusing on suffering runs directly counter to the social model, which casts suffering (or “impairment”) outside the domain of legitimate political analysis. As Mike Oliver, one of the founders of the social model puts it, “the social model is not about the personal experience of impairment but the collective experience of disablement” (2004, 22). However, the social model’s downplaying of suffering has met with critique from some feminist disability scholars. A proscription against describing disability as suffering, these critics contend, valorizes a masculinist stoicism and augments the oppression of disabled people whose impairments do cause distress. For example, Liz Crow has argued that the social model obscures that “pain, fatigue, depression and chronic illness are constant facts of life” for many people with disabilities (1996, 209). Although this critique has not permeated the subfield of feminist disability studies (much important work by feminist disability scholars, such as Garland-Thomson [2011] and Kim Q. Hall [2011], utilize a social model approach), Crow is one of numerous feminist critics who have pushed the field to attend to suffering as a facet of many disabled people’s lived experiences.

Writing in 2001, Susan Wendell expanded on Crow’s argument by advocating that chronic illness be recognized as a form of disability. To someone unfamiliar with disability studies and the disability rights movement, the subtitle of Wendell’s article, “Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities,” might seem a commonsense proposition: why *wouldn’t* chronic illnesses be understood as disabilities? But the social model of disability and the related “critique of the medical model” have tended to define disability in ways that risk marginalizing impairments, such as chronic illnesses, that centrally involve suffering. As we have seen, social model theorists insist that the proper focus of anti-ableist attention is “disability” – that is, political oppression “imposed on top of our impairments” – rather than any distress that impairments themselves may occasion. Yet including chronic illness under the rubric of disability is a matter of feminist concern, Wendell emphasizes, because “pain and/or suffering are major sources of impairment in many chronic illnesses that are more common in women than in men, including rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, lupus, ME/CFIDS, migraine headache, MS, and depression” (24).

Wendell’s arguments have been extended by theorists who initiated a discourse that Merri Lisa Johnson has named “feminist psychiatric disability studies” (2013). For example, Andrea Nicki argues that “social structures based on *able-mindedness*, which marginalize people with mental illnesses...are also disabling” (2001, 81; emphasis added). Moreover, Elizabeth Donaldson notes, the social model cannot capture the complexities of *able-mindedness*: “using a wheelchair does not disrupt the notion” of a stable self “quite so much as being delusional does” (2011, 105). Margaret Price, whose path-breaking 2010 book *Mad at School* constituted an important moment in what has

been called a “mad turn” in disability studies, argues in a later article that reckoning with mental disability will mean “confront[ing] the point that impairment *is* sometimes bad, especially impairment that involves pain” (2015, 274).

The framing of mental illness in terms of suffering diverges from arguments forwarded by the psychiatric survivor movement, many of whose members reject the concept of mental illness. These critics highlight abuses that have been perpetrated by the psychiatric profession: involuntary hospitalization, forced drugging, seclusion rooms, and restraints (Grobe 1995; Lewis 2013, 116). Yet the differences in perspectives between people who have been denied adequate medical or psychiatric care and those who have had harmful procedures forced upon them need not signify an insurmountable incompatibility. As Bradley Lewis notes in his discussion of the Mad Pride movement, some psychiatric survivors find biopsychiatry useful (2013, 121, 123). And feminist psychiatric disability studies, as described by Merri Lisa Johnson, provides a “validating scholarly frame” for people who claim psychiatric disabilities as well as for those who refuse such labels (2013).

Johnson’s remarks appear in her introduction to *DSM-CRIP*, a special issue of *Social Text Online* that she and I co-edited. In the conclusion to this issue, I posit “mad feminism” as a framework that can complement feminist psychiatric disability studies (Mollow 2013b). Mad feminism is oriented toward the subject positions of “people who might not bear any psychiatric diagnosis label but are nonetheless regarded by the dominant culture as ‘crazy’: people of color seen as emotionally erratic, fat people thought to be irrational overeaters, or folks with chronic illness suspected of hypochondria and malingering.” This outward-leaning orientation characterizes a wide variety of work that has been produced in conversation with disability studies. For example, trans identities can perhaps usefully be understood as disabilities according to the social model, since trans people are subjected to medicalized stigma (Wilkerson 2012). Fatness is another stigmatized bodily difference currently being theorized in conjunction with disability. The structures of ableism and fatphobia are deeply inter-related; people who are fat, disabled, or both face discrimination, staring, pity, economic oppression, and desexualization (Mollow 2015). Ageism, too, is inseparable from disability oppression; in each case “the object of hatred is the body that shatters the youthful, strong, and independent ideal” (Cohen-Rottenberg 2014, 213). Some asexuals (individuals who do not experience sexual attraction) are also finding commonality with disabled people, since both (overlapping) groups are routinely subjected to unwanted pathologization (Kim 2010). Analyses of asexuality emphasize that celebrations of disabled people’s sexuality should be supplemented with arguments that value asexual people’s lives.

Some of the authors whose works I have discussed in this section explicitly frame their analyses as critiques of the social model; others might not define their interventions in these terms. In either instance, it is important to emphasize that even the most strenuous critiques of the social model can be understood not as wholesale repudiations of that founding paradigm but rather as generative extensions of it. Indeed, I would suggest that the brilliance of the social model animates each of the critiques that we have just examined. The core principle remains the same: the ways in which disabled people (however broadly that category is construed) are mistreated, marginalized, subordinated, and rendered invisible arise not from any innate bodily or mental insufficiency on our part but rather from social processes that *can change*.

Are We Familiar Yet?

I began this chapter by responding to the terms of the project set for me in the context of the present volume – to give an account of disability studies at its intersections with “perhaps more familiar” theoretical writing. In concluding, I am left wondering whether disability itself will seem more or less “familiar” to my readers. My hope is that the answer to this question will be yes *and* no. Yes in the sense that the overview I have provided may offer entry points into a discipline that once seemed unfamiliar. But no in the sense that disability can never be wholly familiar: as the texts I have discussed make clear, our conceptions of what disability means, and of the myriad ways in which it touches us all, must continually be expanding.¹

- see CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 10 (SUBJECTIVITY); CHAPTER 14 (GENDER AND QUEER THEORY); CHAPTER 29 (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

Note

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22

Unsound

Veit Erlmann

**“A True Sound Which Is Not in Reality,”
or Duverney’s Dilemma**

In 1683, a young French anatomist named Joseph-Guichard Duverney published a short treatise on the ear entitled *Traité de l’organe de l’ouïe, contenant la structure, les usages et les maladies de toutes les parties de l’oreille* (Treatise on the organ of hearing, containing the structure, function, and diseases of all parts of the ear) (Duverney 1973). With its detailed illustrations and innovative theory of hearing based on the resonant structure of the basilar membrane, the work is considered to be the first comprehensive discussion of the human ear and a milestone in the emergence of modern otology. But the modernity of Duverney’s treatise is not as clear-cut as it may seem. In a passage on *tintement* or tinnitus, the otologist muses on the strange phenomenon of a “perception of a Sound which is not in reality, or of an internal Sound” (137). The cause of this sensation, he argues, does not reside, as the ancients had believed, in the mystical *air implantatus* (“the air inside the ear”), in divine inspiration or in some form of mental defect, but in the nature of the auditory nerve.

As it is thought that we can never hear without the Ear being struck upon, we attribute all Noises to this Organ; nevertheless it is indifferent whether the Fibres of the Nerves be shaken next the Ear, or next the Brain, there will still arise the same Sensation from it. (143)

The *tintements*, in short, are “true Noises” that are “perceiv’d such as they are, yet the ear is unable to relate them to an exterior object” (141).

The passage, apart from it being the first in a series of ongoing attempts to explain tinnitus, is noteworthy for two reasons. As a staunch Cartesian, Duverney does not call into doubt the existence of a reality that is inextricably linked to the object world. Yet, in contrast to Descartes, he denies that this exterior world is radically cut off from what the first “modern” philosopher called *res cogitans* and as such it is an untrustworthy source of certainty. Hence, the assertion that a sound can be at the same time “true”

and an illusion for Duverney is not so much a logical dilemma born from Cartesian rationalist doctrine as a question of medicine, physiology or even psychology. Positive knowledge about the world “out there,” Duverney seems to suggest, is not the only aspect of sound worth considering. Nor is such knowledge the exclusive preserve of that most peculiar of modern inventions, the Cartesian “thinking thing.” Duverney’s adumbration of tinnitus, one might thus argue, is in fact much less owed to the “progress” of “modern” science than to a conundrum at the very heart of that science. The sound that he describes clearly belongs to different domains: the domain of nature, objects and “reality” (which, of course, includes the auditory nerve) on the one hand, and a supposedly more diffuse, “internal” domain on the other. Yet what the pioneer otologist lacks is a term that enables him to fold these disparate domains into a coherent theory of knowledge. Unlike Descartes, who could only invoke a benevolent God safeguarding the equivalence between the realm of sensation and the realm of thought, Duverney’s theory of hearing settles on a seemingly more mundane connector: “sound.” The term becomes a convenient shorthand for something that is too unstable and uncertain to be grasped by a mere logic of cause and effect. “Sound” thus serves to stabilize domains which, in the modern view, are irreducibly distinct rather than “sound” itself being stabilized by what are patently non-sonic entities such as “true” objects and the “inside.”

Duverney’s predicament haunts the study of sound to this day. The emergence of Sound Studies, for instance, was due in large part to a growing feeling of unease over postmodernism’s and poststructuralism’s privileging of the visual as the preeminent site of critical engagement with the modern. Tracing sound’s complex and contradictory implication in constructions of modernity, early sound scholars argued, is just as crucial in debunking modernity’s most deep-rooted mythologies of subjectivity, reason, and power as is cultural studies’ fixation on texts, images, and discourse. To name some representative examples, scholars explored the genealogy of attention in eighteenth-century musical listening (Johnson 1996; Riley 2004) and its discursive linkages with core modern “epistemic virtues” (Daston and Galison 2007) such as objectivity. Others focused on the parallels between new fields of scientific inquiry such as otology or auditory physiology and philosophical constructions of rationality (Erlmann 2010). Yet others explored the causal links between “culture” and the emergence of modern audio-technologies (Sterne 2003) or, conversely, the impact of technology on the “aural dimension of modernity” (Thompson 2002, 11).

But although the demythologization of modernity liberated the ear from its subordinate position as the “second sense” and, by the same token, from its association with the “pre-modern,” the broader epistemological framework that enables dichotomies such as modern/pre-modern or Duverney’s inside/exterior and the various natural, social, cultural or discursive causalities investing them with explanatory force, remained largely intact. Furthermore, the cause–effect logic borrowed from modern supreme disciplines such as physics effectively marginalized other methods of conceptualizing the multiplicity of ways in which sound is caught up with a vast array of domains, modern and non-modern, scientific and artistic, natural and social. For all of Sound Studies’ efforts to establish sound as a legitimate object of inquiry and a viable alternative to cultural studies’ fetishizing of the visual, there appears to be little ground on which the idea of sound as a distinct category of knowledge can be maintained. The field appears to be at a crossroads. We seem to have reached a point where some of our most

taken-for-granted historical, aesthetic, and above all epistemological assumptions regarding the givenness of a particular domain such as “sound” or “hearing” have become debatable (Sterne and Akiyama 2012, 556).

The “modern” in sound, in particular, is fraught with ambiguity. Is sound “thinglike” and “a means in itself,” because modernity “brought about developments in science, technology, and medicine,” as the *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* claims (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012, 4)? If this assertion is correct, what was sound before “new ways of producing, storing, and reproducing” made it “thinglike”? Or has sound always been “just sound,” that is to say unmarked, pure nature (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012, 4)? And if neither the modern nor the natural offer stable reference points for securing sound’s epistemological status, what is the “reality” of sound? Is sound’s status as an object the result of it having been “socially” constructed as such, or because it objectively exists “out there,” as nature, subject to inexorable, immutable laws independent of human intentions? And what about Duverney’s “inside,” the world of culture, emotions, and, most crucially, the unconscious, a domain as unassailable in its impact on us as nature is said to be impervious to human desire? Or is sound something else altogether, a hybrid with a little bit of thingness and naturalness residing in the social construction of sound and an element of the social being inherent in sound’s “materiality”?

The controversy over “nature” and the “social construction” of knowledge is not new, of course. It has shaped the emergence of Science and Technology Studies (STS) in the 1970s, continues to ripple off in the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) of the 1990s, and remains at the center of ANT-offshoots such as the various ontological, ecological, and post-human theories currently in circulation. Yet echoes of these debates ring only faintly in Sound Studies.¹ Hence, this chapter is an attempt to carry forward the discussion initiated by Sound Studies, STS, and ANT scholars about sound’s complex entanglement with modernity by querying what one might call the modern “will-to-sound.” This endeavor departs from a somewhat counterintuitive hypothesis and an even stranger term. Rather than assuming it as a given of inquiry, I argue, the sonic first needs to be reassembled. Sound does not exist a priori, but is the result of myriad actors, objects, and interests entering into associations with each other. Reassembling is a core concept of Bruno Latour’s “sociology of associations,” and can be fruitfully applied to the acoustic domain. Rather than “framing” sound in a broader “context” or cultural “form”; instead of neutralizing its various manifestations such as music in the role of a medium for the “construction” of knowledge, mood, or emotion (DeNora 2011, 57–58); or in lieu of attributing rather magic powers to science and technology to turn something into an entity called “sound” that can be studied, measured, stored, and reproduced in supposedly more rational, objective, efficient, and profitable ways than ever before (Thompson 2002), reassembling starts from a more modest premise. To reassemble sound it is necessary to look for interstices, displacements, and transformations, for the not-yet-heard, the not-to-be-heard, the pre-heard, or the not-heard-before-we-remember-it. In analogy to Latour’s sociology of associations, one might say, for the Sound Studies scholar the sonic manifests itself only in the traces the sonic leaves when a new association is being produced between elements which themselves are in no way “sonic” (Latour 2008, 8).

To undo the modernist out-there-nature-science/in-here-mind-psychology divide underpinning our concept of “sound” I propose a term introduced by sound scholar Steve Goodman: the “unsound.” While in Goodman’s reading “unsound” denotes the

physiology of vibrations on the edge of audibility and their mobilization for what he calls the “ecology of fear” (Goodman 2012; see also Friedner and Helmreich 2012), the concept is reworked here to encompass a broader range of phenomena that are not necessarily limited to questions of audibility and to the idea of emplaced, sensed sound as the normative space of Sound Studies. More importantly, it is to resist positivist views of objects as existing in themselves and, hence, to question the notion inherited from nineteenth-century science that all that is required for an objective account of things is to recognize the *state* they are in. Instead of this “state function” of knowledge, as Isabelle Stengers (2010) calls it, the concept of “unsound” shifts the focus to how the production of a fact occurs together with and through numerous “functions.” In short, “unsound” is more than the Other of sound; more than some “unreal,” virtual or ineffable sound; and more than a third space between sound and non-sound. Rather, as the term’s more commonly recognized adjectival form suggests, the “unsound” is unfixed sound. Instead of securing sound in a metaphysics of self-sameness (“sound in itself”), a fuzzy materialism (the “materiality” of sound), or in some presumed historical origin, physical foundation or psychological source, to talk about “unsound” is to emphasize the fluctuating relationship between the material, historical, and psychological. Much like ANT might be regarded as a negative theory that refuses to reduce statements about things to descriptions of what constitutes them as “real” (a cable network is X, sound is Y), a theory of unsound is about the movements the sonic performs as it constantly thwarts the possibility of becoming subject to the fixity of a knowledge grounded in a given “state,” or “state function.” In this perspective, then, the status of sound might ideally be considered as that of a “quasi-object” (Latour 1993, 51). It is “real” in the sense of it being the product of objective physical processes (Duverney’s “such as it is”), but it is also “social,” “cultural” or “inside.”

One might imagine a whole panoply of such quasi-objects. Among the most fascinating (and possibly most extensively studied) are those that involve various technologies of inscription, storage, “reading,” and, more generally perhaps, acoustic transduction. Key examples are found across the modern/non-modern divide such as in the pre-Columbian song glyphs of indigenous Mexicans that draw song and speech into what Gary Tomlinson describes as loops of contiguous substances of carved stone, wood, and paint (Tomlinson 2009). Similar loops also pull together more modern sound media such as soot, Chladni’s glass plates, sand and iron filings, as well as nineteenth-century tin foils, paper rolls, needles (Gitelman 2003), the x-ray film used for “Samizdat” recordings (Daughtry 2009), and the laser beams of our era. Another fertile area for the study of sound as a quasi-object straddling the out-there/in-here divide is the medical field, broadly speaking; that is, the spaces, technologies, and practices through which human bodies and selves are being sonically assembled, from monitor sounds and the ultrasound of the maternity ward, to the sonification of movement patterns (Schoon and Volmar 2012), to the test protocols of mp3 research labs (Sterne 2013), and the sounds of the hospital (Rice 2013).

In all of these examples, the epistemological status of sound is up for grabs. Who is to say whether Ernst Florens Chladni’s discovery of longitudinal waves resulted from a set of shared moral and aesthetic values invented by the members of a class of nineteenth-century *Bildungsbürger* that was already firmly in place (Jackson 2006)? Or was it, rather, the highly fluctuating association of persons, things, and domains that “constructed” Chladni’s social world? In what follows, I take a slightly different route to

illustrate the persistence of Duverney's "dilemma" in modernist understandings of sound. Rather than dwell on "thinglike" sound "out there" or on its presumable origin in society, science or technology (a nexus that by now has been covered so well that it is hardly necessary to summarize it here), I focus on what Latour calls "in there psychology," that is, the realm of an isolated, immaterial subjectivity distinct from the world "out there" and yet somehow being determined by its inexorable, lawlike thingness (1999, 22).

But how does one register "the links between unstable and shifting frames of reference" such as "nature" and the "inside" (Latour 1993, 24)? What "actants," to use Latour's phrase, are at play? To initiate this inquiry I propose to revisit the work of Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan, two theorists who, oddly enough, do not appear to have shared a sustained concern with "sound" as an object "out there." Nor were they, for that matter, particularly invested in "the inside," especially as it has been figured in Freudian psychoanalysis. Yet both the Frankfurt School theorist and the founder of the Toronto School of Communication were persistent in querying modernity's self-aggrandizing claims and in so doing provided the foundations of the kind of theory of the "unsound" that I am developing here.

"Sounds That We Have Never Heard Before We Remember Them," or Benjamin's *Déjà Entendu*

Between 1931 and 1938 Walter Benjamin worked on three texts that are centrally concerned with the emergence of modern mass media and most notably the deep cultural and psychological impact of photography and film. Yet these texts – the essay "Little History of Photography," the childhood memoir "A Berlin Chronicle," and, most famously, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" – also contain, if only *in nuce*, a theory of the sonic that crucially hinges on sound's negativity. "For it is another nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye," Benjamin writes in the photography essay for instance. This nature is 'other' above all "in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious. Whereas it is commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms), we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person actually takes a step. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis" (Benjamin 1999a, 510–512).

A year later, in "A Berlin Chronicle," Benjamin (1999b) would add an important proviso. He wonders whether the "space informed by the unconscious" is in fact an optical one and whether the term *déjà vu* is "well chosen" to describe that space. Would it not be better to use a metaphor taken from the realm of acoustics to denote the strange phenomenon of recognizing the class divisions of his native city by recalling the sounds of the barrel organs and the Christmas carols of his childhood days?

By 1938, finally, after extensive conversations with Theodor Adorno, the "realm of acoustics" resurfaces, if only as an afterthought, in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." Here the "space informed by the unconscious" is no longer revealed by photography alone. Nor is Benjamin satisfied with arguing that the

“swooping and rising, disrupting and isolating, stretching or compressing” of the much more nimble movie camera brings about a “deepening of apperception throughout the entire spectrum of optical impressions” (Benjamin 2003a, 265). Much like Sigmund Freud’s *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* had made us aware of our everyday slips, Benjamin adds in a largely unnoticed parenthesis of just five words, it is “now also the auditory” [*und nun auch der akustischen*] impressions that would enable this deepening (Benjamin 2003a, 265).

Scant as his comments on sound may seem, Walter Benjamin’s work is the *locus classicus* of the unsound. As such it not only prompts a rethinking of our presentist privileging of (heard) sound, it also raises questions about how to expand his highly suggestive leads into a more coherent theory of what one might call the *déjà entendu* or the acoustic unconscious as key modernist categories. As readers may recall, Benjamin’s media theory and anthropology of the senses was central to his philosophy of history and the privileged position within it of categories such as attention, distraction, memory, and, most crucially, awakening. As the passages quoted above illustrate, this philosophy owes much to the psychophysiology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to the fascination in particular with the “augmenting” capability of such devices as Étienne-Jules Marey’s wheel-camera. Yet, for Benjamin, the unknown known resulting from our nervous system’s inability to cope with the ever-rising flood of stimuli brought about by mass media was more than a simple effect of what Freud famously called *Reizschutz* or stimulus shield. Rather, Benjamin’s embryonic theory of the *déjà entendu* registers the subtle ways in which new audio-media upset conventional wisdom about our relationship to the popular, familiar, and the everyday more broadly.

This effort to rethink what he called our “commonplace milieu” (Benjamin 2003a, 265) involved two mutually exclusive moves. Benjamin’s theory of cultural memory undermines the notion prominent in present-day critiques of media as sites of loss and amnesia. A critical media theory, he argued accordingly, cannot be based on a blanket denunciation of forgetting and, by implication, on moral appeals for attention and remembrance as key prerequisites of culture. It must entail what Peter Krapp calls an “ethics of forgetting” (2004, xi), encompassing a much wider range, beyond the simple dichotomy between amnesia and anamnesia, of “ordinary,” “background,” or “taboo” forms of listening, such as listening to music for sleeping (Kassabian 2013), love making (Fabbri 2013), mood control (Bull 2000), or driving (Bijsterveld 2010).

The second move at rethinking forgetting reveals a more modernist streak. Having rejected the idea of a forgetting without forgetting as a mere pathological exception, Benjamin invests the hidden yet constantly active knowledge without a knowing agency with tremendous magical and aesthetic potency. Pursuing his musings about the applicability of *déjà vu* quoted earlier, he writes:

One ought to speak of events that reach us like an echo awakened by a call, a sound that seems to have been heard somewhere in the darkness of a past life. Accordingly, if we are not mistaken, the shock with which moments enter consciousness as if already lived usually strikes us in the form of a sound. It is a word, a tapping, or a rustling that is endowed with the magic power to transport us into the cool tomb of long ago, from the vault of which the present seems to return only as an echo. (Benjamin 1999b, 634)

It is clearly a different kind of relationship between the unconscious and consciousness than the one current in standard psychological theories of *déjà vu* that Benjamin is gesturing toward here. At the same time, the messianic, utopian potential of the acoustic unconscious to blast open the “prison world” of the “commonplace milieu” is being channeled into the more predictable realm of aesthetics. Although becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory-trace are incompatible processes within one and the same system, Benjamin quotes Freud’s famous dictum: consciousness can also have another function other than the neurological function of protecting against “shock.” It is a function that is more ambiguously positioned at a point where consciousness emerges from a memory-trace and where the blatant divisibility of the auditory present into “moments” made possible by audio-technology is being transformed back into undivided continuity, into the perceptual and ultimately also cognitive unity of the person in front of the loudspeaker.

The experience corresponding to this function is a “poetic experience,” Benjamin declares. If the shock is parried by consciousness, he writes in his famous Baudelaire article, the incident that causes it would be considered as an isolated experience (*Erlebnis*), but if it were incorporated into consciousness, the shock would be sterilized. Baudelaire’s poetry is indeed the result of a carefully calculated “plan” that turns the exposure to “shock” into an aesthetic norm (Benjamin 2003b, 318).

There is, then, a certain sense of order and logos to all this, as if a hidden principle organizes the Benjaminian two-way street between consciousness and the unconscious. The contents of the sonic crypt return as if in their original, consciously present state. One sound, one word follows another going in one direction before returning in the same order from the opposite direction. Accordingly, the space of his “now in the auditory” is not simply that of “sound,” but that of sound as language, syntax and meaning. Or, more precisely, Benjamin’s “realm of acoustics” does not consist of audible sounds *per se* as it encompasses successive stages of “unsoundness” and “soundness,” of the sonic being undone and assembling. From an initial state of being a “word,” a “tapping” or a “rustling,” the audible negates itself, entering a silent, other-sensory (“cool”) space before it resurfaces in somewhat truncated form, sound morsel after sound morsel. However, the linear sequence of “events” remains intact throughout, much like an echo retains if not the totality, then the temporal structure of the original sound that it emanates from. Thus, just as Proust’s *mémoire involontaire* makes available “images that we have never seen *before we remember them*” (Benjamin 1977, 1064; my emphasis), the acoustic unconscious for Benjamin shelters a secret code whose key has been lost and whose meaning must be retrieved through a form of redoubling, through painstaking deciphering, decoding, and “reading.”

“No-Point-of-Audition,” or McLuhan’s Acoustic Space

If Walter Benjamin’s nascent theory of *déjà entendu*, then, is modernist to the core, so is the work of Marshall McLuhan. Although the Canadian media theorist is remembered for phrases such as “the medium is the message” and for having prognosticated a “global village” and the second coming of “orality” as a panacea for all the ills from the printing press to traffic jams to the grid of American cities that modernity begot, McLuhan is far from being a “postmodern” thinker. At the heart of his theory of unsound

or, as he called it, “acoustic space” is a profoundly and paradoxically modernist, anti-modern nostalgia. As such, it is cobbled together from an eclectic mix of media theory, bits of psychoacoustics, homespun anti-Freudian psychology, and, most notoriously, a string of dualisms gleaned from art history and early ecological theory such as perspective/mosaic, ground/figure, low definition/high definition, and environment/anti-environment.

The source of the first two pairs, ironically, is the work of the pioneer of twentieth-century psychoacoustics, Georg von Békésy. An avid art collector, Békésy distinguished two kinds of approaches to the challenges posed by the “revolutionary development of techniques in acoustics” during the early decades of the twentieth century (Békésy 1960, 4). There is, first, a “‘theoretical approach’ according to which a problem is formulated in relation to what is already known, [in order] to make predictions or extensions on the basis of accepted principles” (4). But there is also a “mosaic” approach. Here each problem is taken for itself “with little reference to the field in which it lies and that seeks to discover relations and principles that hold within the circumscribed area” (4). Békésy provided two examples of the difference between these approaches: the depiction in Persian miniature painting of individual objects as if “spread out on a carpet,” on the one hand, and the attempts from the Renaissance onwards to give unity and perspective and to represent the atmosphere of the scene depicted, on the other hand (4).

But McLuhan also invoked some of Békésy’s work on spatial acoustics more directly, arguing that directional hearing is subject to a great deal of variation in the sensation of stimuli. Thus, while the perception of the distance of a sound is simply determined by its loudness, for instance, in front–back location (that is, by listening to a sound *behind* the head) the perception of distance was indeterminate, even though it is possible for a subject to voluntarily shift the sound image from front to back and vice versa (Békésy 1960, 280–281). This, in McLuhan’s view, not only resembles the perception of reversible perspective figures such as in Edgar Rubin’s famous faces–vase diagram, it eminently suited his project of articulating auditory space and the mosaic in what one might call, following McLuhan’s theory of “no-point-of-view,” a theory of no-point-of-audition.

The matter of the environment/anti-environment dyad was more complex, highlighting McLuhan’s limited exposure to and ambiguity toward Freud’s work. The difficulty with psychoanalysis, he held, was its inability to grasp the ever-present now of the unconscious in terms that transcend those of geometric space or the figure. Perhaps he had in mind Freud’s analogy between the unconscious and the Piazza of the Pantheon in Rome (where buildings from different eras are juxtaposed) when he reproaches psychoanalysis for failing to pay attention to “the *ground* of psychic conditioning” (McLuhan 1987, 458). Faced with the impossibility of picturing the simultaneous and unable to resolve the paradox of having to represent the discontinuous work of the unconscious in a theory of continuous temporality, McLuhan argued, psychoanalysis could but fixate on the figure and geometric three-dimensionality. As a result, psychoanalysis does not tolerate a “withholding the syntactical connection,” instead favoring introspection and a “single image of great intensity” over two-dimensional or “mosaic” participatory simultaneity instead (McLuhan 1951, 80).

Another instance of Freud’s fixation on visual space, according to McLuhan, is his interpretations of the Oedipus and Narcissus myths. Oedipus’ blindness, McLuhan claimed for instance, is not the punishment for having acted out his repressed sexual desire by killing his father and marrying his mother. It is rather, as the ancient

dramatists knew well, the price he had to pay for the hubris of having solved the riddle of the Sphinx. Oedipus' penalty for having caused a break in the system by artfully crossing "break boundaries" over into another system was a sealing-off of an "awareness to the total field" (McLuhan 1994, 39).

The myth of Narcissus, for its part, is not about what Freud called "ego ideal" (and would later rename "super-ego"). More than anything, it is a tale of self-amputation. By mistaking his own reflection in the pool of water for another person, by falling in love with an image of himself as an Other, Narcissus cut himself off from himself. The extension of himself through the medium of the mirror, as his name implies, is thus tantamount to narcosis, numbing Narcissus to Echo's attempts to seduce him with fragments of his own speech. "He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system" (McLuhan 1994, 41). Self-extension leads to self-amputation, which in turn prevents self-recognition: a "massive psychic chiasmus" (McLuhan 1962, 277).

For McLuhan, then, Oedipus and Narcissus do not belong to the same order of the unconscious. Psychoanalysis's unconscious and acoustic space are not coterminous. McLuhan's unconscious is not a site of interiority and of the repression of unwanted outside intrusion as it is with Freud's Oedipus complex, but the product of extrusion. The "outring" of the self through media is what creates the unconscious and prevents Narcissus from escaping visual space and from immersing himself in the totality and simultaneity of acoustic space. Similarly, Oedipus might be said to have tried an acoustic approach, but was doomed to remain trapped in the sensory deprivation of visual space symbolized by blindness. Of course, there are parallels between McLuhan's self-extension/self-amputation and Freud's discontent with "civilization's" prosthetic organs and their narcissist implications (Freud 1961, 37). But the problem with the interpretation of the Oedipus myth as a master trope for psychoanalysis's unconscious lies deeper. If the unconscious is consciousness that is "outered" by media rather than being the internal residue of the sensory excess of media input that has been repressed, how can one write about it? How might the unconscious, so construed, become available to thought when it resists the geometric logic of the point-of-view in the first place? And how can we grasp through the closed system of language a space that is inherently unstable and vulnerable to disruption without losing its essential incomprehensibility? In short, if the medium is the message, and language is a medium, what can be said about the unconscious beyond the apparent oxymoron of it being formless form?

Figure and ground, visual and acoustic space, consciousness and the unconscious are not quite as diametrically opposed to each other, however, as McLuhan often made them appear. Because language itself is a medium, it cannot confine within itself the meaning of the media-unconscious, he might have said. For McLuhan media are not a priori means to blast open and make available for conscious inspection what Benjamin had called the "prison-world" of our "commonplace milieu" (2003a, 265). Media *are* the unconscious. Consciousness, consequently, is not the Other of this media-unconscious; it is merely a new environment of the media-unconscious. The nature of media, then, is not a question of their content but an ecological question. Says McLuhan,

An environment is naturally of low intensity or low definition, which is why it escapes observation. Anything that raises the environment to high intensity, whether it be a storm in nature or a violent change resulting from a new

technology, turns the environment into an object of attention. When an environment becomes an object of attention it assumes the character of an anti-environment or an art object. (McLuhan 1967, 44)

It is this moment of “total awareness” or “consciousness of the unconscious” (McLuhan 1994, 47) that constitutes McLuhan’s ultimate master-narrative through which the modernist myth of cognitive authority survives. Yet it survives in a far more paradoxical form than McLuhan might ever have imagined. Following Rosalind Krauss and substituting the auditory for the visual, we might say that modernism imagined the figure to be of two orders. The first is the order of empirical hearing and of the sound as “heard,” and this is the order that both the nineteenth-century theorists of “absolute music” and Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno disdained. The second order is that of “pure” hearing itself, the level that modernism simultaneously fears and seeks to master as a principle of coordination, unity, and structure: audible but unheard (Krauss 1993, 217). Yet there is also a third, impossible order of the figure, one which Jean-François Lyotard calls the “figural” and that works entirely outside the realm of either sound or non-sound (Lyotard 2011, 3). The figural refuses to confine art in perspectival, representational space for sure and, hence, thwarts any attempt to gloss the aesthetic experience as a form of “understanding.” But in turn it also resists as gratuitous the temptation to reduce the aesthetic experience to a mere mechanical reflex to or record of unconscious repression *tout court*.

An art of the “acoustic space,” one might conclude, is thus not one of the order of the unconscious as an object of repression. Nor can it simply take the side of anti-environmental, total consciousness. To paraphrase Lyotard, the art of “acoustic space” is an art of the figural. While remaining well within the sensory realm, it reminds us that there is an interworld that is less a store of readily available “sounds” than a repository of past hearings. In experiencing such art, “every form of discourse exhausts itself before exhausting it” (Lyotard 2011, 7).

Conclusion

Although my endeavor in this chapter to think beyond Duverney’s dilemma and the dichotomies ensuing from it is primarily situated at the level of discourse, it should not be seen as another attempt at consolidating language’s role as an intermediary between inside and outside, society and nature, subject and object. Rather the point of these reflections has been to open up Sound Studies to the profound technological and aesthetic shifts in the history of sound over the course of the twentieth century and to interrogate modernist constructions of sound as a given thing or object “out there.” Revisiting Benjamin’s and McLuhan’s thinking about the acoustic unconscious and acoustic space respectively, despite its impressionism, social determinism, and technoutopianism, may provide the basis of a theory in which “sound” is less the self-evident starting point for inquiries into technologies, cultural forms, sensory practices, and social contexts in and through which the sonic circulates than the endpoint of investigations in which sound appears as a fragile assemblage of sonic and non-sonic elements.

- see CHAPTER 18 (AFFECT); CHAPTER 25 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY)

Note

- 1 See, however, Hennion (2007) for an ANT-inflected discussion of taste, Bates (2012) on Turkish musical instruments, Born (2011) on mediation, Piekut (2014) on the potential of ANT for music history, and Cardoso (2013) on funk parties, noise, and sound politics in São Paulo, Brazil.

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23

Screen Life

Toby Miller

Most popular and significant screen texts (i.e., retail websites, Hollywood films, television programs, press releases redisposed as churnalism, dating sites, and corporate electronic games – not queer collective documentaries, environmental agitprop, Occupy manifestos, alternative news, my Vimeo recordings, or vanguardist *cortometrajes*) are commodities. Their appeal lies in the meanings they incarnate and generate. Perhaps because of this, the majority of cultural writing and speech about screen texts across the *anglo-parlante* world today isn't really about screen texts at all: it's to do with consciousness, specifically the consciousness of audiences. I mean by this that the screen and its texts are subordinated to an implicit and explicit excitation about spectatorship.

This tendency is evident regardless of whether the screens are mobile or static, large or small, networked or not, and across genres – games, sports, drama, news, documentary, and variety. Analysts prone to this discourse include regulators, journalists, pediatricians, police, advertisers, professors, politicians, parents, psychologists, bureaucrats, and anarchists. They veer hysterically between dystopic and utopic polarities, depending on their view of how new technologies either direct or unleash popular energies.

The binaristic cultural assumptions underpinning the discourse of audience consciousness generated by this diverse group include the following seeming antonyms that are logocentrically interdependent:

- large media conglomerates exercise total control over viewers, listeners, and readers, who absorb corporate messages like blank slates waiting to be covered with meaning/ because of new screen technologies and practices of consumption, concentration of media ownership and control no longer matters – information is finally free, thanks to multi-point distribution and destabilized hierarchies
- audiences are passive and align with their social identities as targeted by the media/ consumers are sovereign and can transcend class and other categories
- children are vulnerable to technologies and their messages/young people are liberated from media control
- news and current affairs set the agenda of politics and economics for ordinary people/ journalism is dying, as everyone and their app become sources of both news and reporting, simultaneously subjects and writers

- a political-economic oligarchy runs the social order and minimizes newness in order to diminish risk/the creative destruction of economic innovation ushers out the old and burnishes the new
- corporate and state power classify and manage the tastes and beliefs of audiences/ Marxist political economy and ideology critique deny the power of consumers and users and the irrelevance of boundaries
- former colonial powers and the United States dominate other cultures through the export of their media texts and the force of their companies/cultural-imperialism critique misses the creativity and resilience of national and subnational forms of life against industrial products; and
- violence and educational failure correlate with heavy use of the screen/media effects are inconsequential/audiences outwit corporate plans and psy-function norms

What is left out of these pessimistic and optimistic, popular and powerful perspectives? What else should we think about when we confront screen texts as screen life – in other words, as moments of production, meaning, consumption, and refuse? Is there anything beyond these stubborn binary oppositions, which seem to be as ineradicable as they are incommensurate?

A counter-list might include:

- citizenship rights and responsibilities in the context of concentrated ownership, weak regulation, and technological reach and convergence
- the ecological impact of the media
- the media beyond the confines of the global North, in places where, for example, newspapers continue to expand
- life outside consumption, untouched by multinational markets – without an electricity grid or potable water
- the continued resonance of cultural-imperialism critique for populations and activists; and
- the fantasies that media organizations have spread for a century – casting themselves as vulnerable to the young, susceptible to consumer rebellion, and hapless in the face of new technology laying waste to established power

This counter-discourse is largely absent from contemporary screen studies, whose best friends today are likely to be narratologists, aesthetes, *littérateurs*, academic fans, and creative-industries ideologues rather than political economists, ratings mavens, social-movement advocates, or environmentalists. More and more textual, generic, and fan-based analysis and less and less materialist work on the screen are being done. How might materialist approaches reassert themselves in a way that acknowledges the importance of meaning, but goes beyond the weightless idealism I have identified?

To respond to this question, we need to view the screen, whether it is a stupid phone or a smart film, through twin theoretical prisms. On the one hand, the screen is a component of sovereignty that relates to territory, language, history, and schooling. On the other, it is a cluster of culture industries. In each case, it is subject to the rent-seeking practices, exclusionary representational protocols, and environmental destructiveness that generally characterize liaisons between state and capital at the same time as it is animated by people at particular sites. To comprehend screen life, we therefore need to examine it at a structural and experiential level.

What to Do

Some useful precedents are available from a wee review of the literature of cultural materialism. Endless moral panics about the screen, to do with learning, lust, and lawlessness, have meant that technologies, audiences, and regulations have long been necessary components of cultural analysis. While those anxious origins may be rather dubious, their unintended consequences have left us ready to deal with media-effects medics, state censors, and propaganda people, because political economists and media historians, unlike others, have tended to look at the screen institutionally as well as textually and psychologically.

A materialist theory of the screen offers a place beyond the frontiers of dominant discourse by circumventing the theoretical traps that characterize cultural theory's current morass. The historian Roger Chartier is a helpful guide. Chartier seeks to establish and comprehend the contingent meanings of texts in three ways:

- a) reconstructing "the diversity of older readings from their sparse and multiple traces"
- b) focusing on "the text itself, the object that conveys it, and the act that grasps it"; and
- c) identifying "the strategies by which authors and publishers tried to impose an orthodoxy or a prescribed reading on the text" (Chartier 1989, 157, 161–163, 166).

This grid turns away from reflectionism, which argues that a text's key meaning lies in its overt or covert capacity to capture the *Zeitgeist*; it rejects formalism's claim that a close reading of sound and image cues can secure a definitive meaning; and it eschews the use of amateur-hour humanities psychoanalysis or rat-catching sadism (aka psychology) to unlock what is inside people's heads. Instead, Chartier looks at the passage of texts through space and time, noting how they accrete and attenuate meanings on their travels as they rub up against, trope, and are themselves troped by other fictional and social texts. Chartier's method traces screen life as a set of meanings moving through time and space.

Néstor García Canclini's notions of hybrid identity and interculturalism (1989, 2004; García Canclini and Miller 2014) and Bruno Latour's (1993, 2004) reconceptualization of hybridity locate screen life in broader contexts, while remaining tightly tied to materialist methods. Canclini notes three paradoxes in his account of contemporary culture. First, globalization also deglobalizes, because its dynamic and impact are not only about transport and exchange, but about disconnectedness and exclusion. Second, minority communities emerge at transnational levels, due to massive migration by people who share languages, through which they continue to communicate, work, and consume, albeit often via innovative code-switching or kitchen *argot* blended with the languages they master as migrants. Third, distinct demographic groups within sovereign-states may not form new and local cultural identities if they prefer textual imports from their places of origin dispatched through the culture industries. Amongst anthropologists we can also learn from Laura Nader's renowned call for a critical ethnography of the powerful as well as the oppressed (1972) and George Marcus's multi-sited account of where and how commodity signs begin, live, and expire (1995).

For his part, Latour allocates equal and overlapping significance to natural phenomena, social forces, and textual production. Just as objects of knowledge come to us in hybrid forms that are coevally affected by society and culture, so the latter two domains

are themselves affected by the natural world. He notes that “every type of politics has been defined by its relation to nature, whose every feature, property, and function depends on the polemical will to limit, reform, establish, short-circuit, or enlighten public life” (Latour 2004, 1). From plutocracy to patriarchy, appeals to channel, govern, or protect nature are crucial to political hegemony (33). The screen is no exception, as we shall see.

The screen is not just a series of texts to be read, coefficients of political and economic power to be exposed, or industrial objects to be analyzed. Rather, it is all these things: a hybrid monster, coevally subject to rhetoric, status, and technology – to meaning, power, and science (Latour 1993) – operating under the sign of intercultural globalization. Understanding the screen therefore requires studying it up, down, and sideways. That means researching production and distribution, cross-subsidy and monopoly profit, national and international public policy, press coverage, and environmental impact, *inter alia*, in ways that are largely unknown to disciplinary hegemons.

Futurity

For decades, developments in screen technologies have been compared to a new Industrial Revolution or the Civil and Cold Wars touted as a route to economic development as well as cultural and political expression. In the 1950s and 1960s, Fritz Machlup, a neoclassical prophet of the knowledge society, famously announced that the current and future success of the U.S. economy relied on high levels of education, research, and development. The nation needed a workforce that renewed itself by learning in harmony with advances in technology (1962).

In the context of Machlup’s findings, a group of highly placed futurists identified “knowledge workers” as vital to an emergent cluster of information-based industries, which would generate productivity gains and competitive markets and draw the middle class into their web (Bar with Simard 2006). Cold Warriors like former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (1969), cultural conservative Daniel Bell (1977), professional anti-Marxist Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983), and lapsed-leftist Reaganite Alvin Toffler (1980, 1983) promulgated a new international division of labor in which agriculture and manufacturing would shift to the global South and the North would embark on structural adjustment, retraining blue-collar workers away from assembly and towards services. The latter’s middle class would continue its merry investment in human capital through higher education. There would be four, largely painless, changes in the global North’s economy from production to services: the preeminence of professionalism and technique, the importance of theory to innovate and generate public policies, the formation of a discourse of the future, and new screen technologies (Mattelart 2003, 77–78).

My fellow white men of 1970s futurism saw a focus on screen technologies displacing grubby manufacturing from the global North to the global South and ramifying U.S. textual and technical power, provided that the blandishments of socialism, and negativity toward global business, did not create class struggle. They promised a world of modernity, of rationality – of the ability to apply reason to problems and seek salvation in the secular via technology. That wish has suited reactionary policy makers and think

tanks ever since, for ideological as well as efficiency reasons. The discourse has been hegemonic for nigh on fifty years, and most amusingly (for something so invested in prediction yet invested in repetition) it is constantly reinvented by amnesiac cybertarians, from *Wired* magazine in the 1990s to *Technology Review* today (Streeter 2005; Barbrook and Cameron 1996).

Consider Ronald Reagan's speech that launched his successful 1966 campaign for the governorship of California, notable for these words: "I propose... 'A Creative Society'... to discover, enlist and mobilize the incredibly rich human resources of California [through] innumerable people of creative talent." Reagan's eager rhetoric publicly birthed today's idea of technology unlocking the creativity that is allegedly lurking, unbidden, in individuals, thereby permitting them to become happy, productive – and without full-time employment. Its prescience derived from the futurists, but could have been uttered by any cybertarian today.

The speech was specifically opposed to the "Great Society," a term that had been coined by the Edwardian Fabian Graham Wallas (1967). Wallas's acolyte Walter Lippmann spoke of "a deep and intricate interdependence" that came with "living in a Great Society." This tendency worked against the militarism and other dehumanizing tendencies of "the incessant and indecisive struggle for domination and survival" (Lippmann 1943, 61, 376). Lippmann influenced Lyndon Johnson's invocation of the "Great Society" and provided a foundational argument for competent, comprehensive social justice through welfarism and other forms of state intervention. That "Great Society" vision was fatally undermined by decades of neoliberalism, under the sign of futurism, Reaganism, and the screen.

In keeping with the futurists' decades-old fantasies and the chorines of neoclassical economics, the International Telecommunication Union gleefully predicts that screens will have connected the Earth's 6.5 billion residents by 2016, enabling everyone to "access information, create information, use information and share information." This development can even "take the world out of financial crisis," thanks to its dynamizing effect on developing markets (Hibberd 2009). For instance, today's *bourgeois* economists argue against state participation in development, maintaining that cell phones have streamlined markets in the global South, enriching individuals in zones where banking and economic information are scarce, thanks to the provision of market data connecting buyers and sellers on mobile screens in ways that facilitate perfect competition. Their claims include "the complete elimination of waste" and massive reductions of poverty and corruption (Jensen 2007).

In similar vein, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says these technologies can play a pivotal role in developing service-based, low-polluting economies in the global South through energy efficiency, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of diminished biodiversity, and diminished pollution (Houghton 2009). In short, the screen is said to obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy in an alchemy of truth and beauty. Corporate and governmental hegemons are supposedly undermined by innovative creation and distribution, while the economy glides gently into an ever greener post-industrialism. This utopianism has dovetailed with a comprehensive turn in research away from unequal infrastructural and cultural exchange and towards an extended dalliance with screen technology's supposedly innate and inexorable capacity to endow users with transcendence (Ogan et al. 2009).

Prosumer and Cognitarian

In terms of labor, the comparatively cheap and easy access to making and circulating meaning afforded by new screens is thought to have eroded a one-way hold on culture that saw a small segment of the world as producers and the larger segment as consumers, even as it makes for a cleaner economy. The latest screen technologies have supposedly allowed us all to become simultaneously cultural consumers and producers (“prosumers”) – no more factory conditions, no more factory emissions, and no more intermediaries deciding what pops up on our screens (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010).

Toffler coined the term “prosumer” three decades ago. It was conceived as a return to subsistence, to the period prior to the Industrial Revolution’s division of labor – a time when we ate what we grew, built our own shelter, and gave birth without medicine. The specialization of agriculture and manufacturing and the rise of cities put paid to that, as the emergence of capitalism distinguished production from consumption via markets. Toffler identified a blend of the two eras in the 1970s, when the French invented and marketed home-pregnancy tests. These kits relied on the formal knowledge, manufacture, and distribution that typified modern life, but permitted customers to make their own diagnoses, cutting out the role of doctors as gatekeepers between applied science and the self (Toffler 1980, 266). Toffler called this “production for self-use.” He discerned an identical tendency in the vast array of civil-society organizations that emerged at the time in the name of “self-help”; the popularity of self-serve gas stations when franchises struggled to survive after the 1973–1974 oil crisis; and the emergence of automatic teller machines, which proliferated as banks sought to reduce their labor force (269–270).

Both instances involved getting customers to do unpaid work in addition to paying for goods and services. In this sense, Toffler acknowledged the crucial role of corporations in constructing presumption – they were there from the first, cutting costs and relying on (unpaid) labor undertaken by customers to externalize costs through what he termed “willing seduction.” This was coeval with, and just as important as, the devolution of authority that emerged from the new freedoms of identity and mobility (275).

Today’s technological era is marked by the interoperable capacity of screens to create and transmit meaning. Suddenly readers become writers, listeners transform into speakers, viewers emerge as stars, fans are academics, and vice versa. Zine writers are screenwriters. Bloggers are copywriters. Children are columnists. Bus riders are journalists. And think of the job prospects that follow! Urban performance poets rhyme about Nissan cars for cash, simultaneously hawking, entertaining, and researching. Coca-Cola hires African Americans to drive through the inner city selling soda and playing hip-hop. Subway’s sandwich commercials are marketed as made by teenagers. AT&T pays San Francisco buskers to mention the company in their songs. As for universities, why, screen-studies majors become designers and graduate students in New York and Los Angeles film schools read scripts for producers and pronounce on whether they tap into the *Zeitgeist* (Maxwell and Miller 2012; Miller 2007).

But there’s another side. Opportunities to vote on the outcome of the Eurovision Song Contest or reality programs disclose the profiles and practices of viewers, who can be monitored and wooed more efficiently in the future. End-user licensing agreements ensure that players of corporate games online sign over their cultural moves and perspectives to the very companies they are patronizing in order to participate. YouTube streaming allows gullible cybertarians’ ages, races, genders, expenditures, and preferences to be sold by

corporations as market intelligence. And roommates spy on each other's extra-legal streaming in return for payment by copyright claimants (Maxwell and Miller 2012; Miller 2007).

Target was exposed in 2012 for analyzing women's purchasing patterns to determine whether they were pregnant, then proceeded to advertise related products through direct mailing to their homes. That risked disclosing their potential, past, or present pregnancies to people from whom they might wish to keep such matters private, be they parents, grandparents, children, lovers, or lodgers (Duhigg 2012). Toffler's wonderful French testing kits had best be bought with cash rather than cards and taking steps to avoid leaving traces of deoxyribonucleic acid (<http://www.wikihow.com/Avoid-Leaving-DNA-at-a-Scene>). Despite such outrages, U.S. citizens are largely ignorant of the extent and impact of corporate surveillance (Madden et al. 2013).

The revolutionary screen-based society has not only empowered corporate spying on consumers and citizens. It has also disempowered the very people around whom it was built: the educated middle class. From jazz musicians to street artists, cultural workers have long labored without regular compensation and security. The history of live performance in this informal cultural sector, as opposed to grand theatrical or dance companies, showed that all workers could move from security to insecurity, certainty to uncertainty, salary to wage, firm to project, and profession to precarity – with smiles on their faces (Ross 2009). Screen society distributes that systematic insecurity across industries. Contemporary business wants flexibility in the people it employs, the technologies they use, the places they occupy, and the amounts they are paid – and *inflexibility* of ownership and control (Mosco 2014, 155–174).

The philosopher Antonio Negri (2007) has redeployed the concept of the *cognitariat*, another of Toffler's (1983) inventions, to account for this phenomenon. The term refers to people with heady educational backgrounds undertaking casualized cultural work at the uncertain interstices of capital, education, and government in a post-Fordist era of mass unemployment, limited-term work, and occupational insecurity. Members of the *cognitariat* are sometimes complicit with these circumstances, because their identities are shrouded in autotelic modes of being: work is pleasure and vice versa, so labor becomes its own reward (Gorz 2004).

The situation of these workers is amplified by the harsh realities of work today. Despite the technocentric projections of both Cold War futurists and contemporary web dreamers, the wider culture industries remain largely controlled by media and communications conglomerates, which frequently seek to impose artist-like conditions on their workforces (the cable versus broadcast TV labor process in the United States is a notorious instance). They gobble up smaller companies that invent products and services, “recycling audio-visual cultural material created by the grassroots genius, exploiting their intellectual property and generating a standardized business sector that excludes, and even distorts, its very source of business,” to quote *The Hindu* (Ramanathan 2006). In other words, the *cognitariat* – interns, volunteers, contestants, and so on – creates “cool stuff” whose primary beneficiaries are corporations (Ross 2009).

Consider the advertising agency Poptent, which undercuts big competitors in sales to major clients by exploiting prosumer artists' labor in the name of “empowerment.” That empowerment takes the following form: Poptent pays the creators of homemade commercials US\$7,500; it receives a management fee of US\$40,000; and the buyer saves about US\$300,000 on the usual price (Chmielewski 2012). Enter the discourse of the creative industries.

Creative Industries

As per Reagan's doctrine, many U.S. municipal, regional, state, and national funding agencies have dropped venerable administrative categories like arts and crafts, replacing them with the discourse of the creative industries and the power of the screen. Barack Obama's presidential Committee on Arts and the Humanities welcomed the "Creative Economy," focusing

on the power of the arts and humanities as an economic driver, sustaining critical cultural resources and fostering civic investment in cultural assets and infrastructure. These efforts help speed innovation and expand markets and consumers, directly benefiting local economies. (President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities n.d.)

This discourse of culture as a resource has proliferated globally (Yúdice 2002). In Britain and Australia, it became a central plank of governmental industry policy from the mid-1990s. Rwanda convened a global conference on the "Creative Economy" in 2006 that was designed to draw upon the social healing allegedly engendered by culture and commodify/govern it. Brazil houses the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Program's International Forum for Creative Industries, which decrees that "[c]reativity, more than labor and capital, or even traditional technologies, is deeply embedded in every country's cultural context" (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2004, 3). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity (2002) heralds the creative industries as a portmanteau term that covers the cultural sector and goes further, beyond output and into the favored neoliberal canard of process.

India's venerable last sensible gasp/grasp of Nehruvianism, its Planning Commission, convened a committee for creative industries (Ramanathan 2006) and China has shifted "from an older, state-dominated focus on cultural industries ... towards a more market-oriented pattern of creative industries" (Keane 2006). Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea follow similar strategies (Peichi 2008; Cunningham 2009b) and the British Council has exported its bizarrely credulous policies on the topic to bizarrely credulous Chilean and Colombian culturecrats (personal communication).

The high priest of creative industries, the much-heralded, much-maligned economic geographer-cum-business professor Richard Florida (2002), speaks of a "creative class" that is revitalizing post-industrial towns in the global North that were devastated by the relocation of manufacturing to places with cheaper labor pools. He argues that the revival of such cities is driven by a magic elixir of tolerance, technology, and talent, as measured by same-sex households, broadband connections, and higher degrees respectively. Florida has even trademarked the concept: his claim to own the "creative class" is asserted with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office via registration number 3298801 (<http://tess2.uspto.gov>).

New screen technologies bind this discourse together. True believers claim an efflorescence of creativity, cultural difference, import substitution, and national and regional pride and influence, thanks to screen technologies and firms (Cunningham 2009a). In the words of the former Marxist cultural theorist and inaugural president of the

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Jacques Attali, a new “mercantile order forms wherever a creative class masters a key innovation from navigation to accounting or, in our own time, where services are most efficiently mass produced, thus generating enormous wealth” (Attali 2008, 31). For the house intellectuals of coin-operated think tanks,¹ this gives rise to an “aristocracy of talent” (Kotkin 2001, 22): mercu-rial meritocrats luxuriate in court society thanks to their ever-changing techniques, technologies, and networks. Labor is acknowledged by its intermediaries in this brave newness, provided that it is abstracted from physical, dirty work (Mattelart 2002). This is in accord with Toffler, Bell, de Sola Pool, and Brzezinski’s prescriptions all those years ago for the magic sold on-screen today by Facebook, which promises peace on earth and a “world of friends” (<https://www.facebook.com/peace/>) and Twitter, which hubristically describes itself as a “triumph of humanity” (“A Cyber-House” 2010).

Urbanists, geographers, economists, planners, public intellectuals, think-tank inmates, and policy wonks articulate academic grants, the arts, public policy, and everyday life to capital. Many have shifted their discourse to focus on comparative advantage and competition rather than heritage and aesthetics (screens versus paintings). Neoliberal emphases on unlocking creativity succeed old-school protections of cultural patrimony. The purported capacity of the market to govern everything opens up new lifeworlds. Pragmatic leftists no longer even speak of mixing socialist ideals with reformism. These newly powerful intellectuals, who were once free-floating but socially ineffectual humanities critics, are in thrall to the idea that culture is an endlessly growing resource capable of dynamizing society through the ubiquity of the screen.

Peak bodies parrot their prayers. The Australian Academy for the Humanities calls for “research in the humanities and creative arts” to be tax-exempt based on its contribution to research and development, and subject to the same surveys of “employer demand” as the professions and sciences (2010; also see Cunningham 2007). The Australian Research Council’s former Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation solemnly announced during its late pomp an “industryfacing [*sic.*] spin-off from the centre’s mapping work, Creative Business Benchmark” (Cunningham 2011b; also see 2011a).

The British Academy seeks to understand and further the “creative and cultural industries” (2004, viii). In partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the UK’s National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts says, “[t]he arts and humanities have a particularly strong affiliation with the creative industries and provide research that ‘helps to fuel’” them, in turn boosting innovation more broadly (Bakhshi, Schneider, and Walker 2008, 1). In Canada, the presidents of the Universities of Toronto and British Columbia advise that:

[I]ndependent-minded university and college graduates from diverse backgrounds are critical to building creative societies with innovative foundations.

[A] culture of innovation and entrepreneurship should be promoted in all sectors of the economy, not least social agencies, non-profit enterprises, public administration, and postsecondary and health-care institutions. (Naylor and Toope 2010)

Prone to cybertarianism (Miller 2015), these dutiful chorines of digital capitalism and the technological sublime pile out of business class and onto the jet way in three major

groups. Richard Floridians hop a limousine from the airport then ride around town on bicycles to spy on ballet-loving, gay-friendly, multicultural computer geeks who have relocated to deindustrialized, freezing rustbelts. True-believer Australian creationists criticize cultural studies as residually socialistic and textual. And Brussels bureaucrats offer blueprints to cities eager for affluence and ready for reinvention via culture and tolerance. The promise on offer is a makeover “from the rusty coinage of ‘cultural industries’ to newly minted ‘creative industries’” (Ross 2006–2007, 1). For a date with Florida, visit creativeclass.com, which features a coquettish glance from William Jefferson Clinton, a jaundice-spectacled Bono, and the promise of “next-generation researchers” (presumably people who have recently shown up on home-pregnancy test kits) on its home page. If you’d prefer Attali, who also knows how to make use of public money, his Marxism is carefully airbrushed from history in best Politburo fashion at this online profile, which stresses his support for deregulation of industries.² Power-point intellection from these towering cybertarians could come to a town near you. On screen, all the time.

A key working assumption of such intellectuals is that the culture industries’ control over the intersection of art and the public has been overrun by individual creativity. In this Marxist/Godardian fantasy, the screen can obliterate geography, sovereignty, ownership, and hierarchy, alchemizing truth and beauty. People fish, film, fornicate, and finance from morning to midnight, frolicking in a deregulated, individuated world that makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures, and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. Consumption is privileged, production is discounted, and labor redefined (Dahlström and Hermelin 2007). It becomes both a pleasure and a responsibility to invest in human capital. Signs of a robust civil society and private self are both generated and indexed by latest mobile screens, from the cheapest tablet to the gaudiest watch. Quite apart from the impact on workers I have already described, something is left over – and out – by this heavenly vision.

Waste

Consider the ubiquitous metaphor that explains/mystifies where our screens obtain and store information: “the cloud.” It signifies a place where all good software goes for rest and recuperation, emerging on demand, refreshed and ready to spring into action. Seemingly ephemeral and natural – clouds are benign necessities of life that rain on fields then go away – nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to the power-famished, coal-fired server farms and data centers rendered innocent by this perverse figure of speech (Innovation Hub 2015; Mosco 2014).

No-one would wish to piss on this parade, but let’s think about the fact that the U.S. National Mining Association and the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity gleefully avow that the “Cloud Begins with Coal,” even boasting that the world’s screen technologies use 1,500 terawatt hours each year. That’s equivalent to Japan and Germany’s overall energy use combined, and 50 percent more than the aviation industry. It amounts to 10 percent of global electricity (Mills 2013).

The Association and the Coalition even quote that slightly dotty old multinational grandparent of dress-up, Greenpeace (2012), on the environmental implications of data

centers, as evidence of “healthy” growth for extractive industries. Big mining and big coal just can’t help themselves, so excited are they by the centrality of their polluting products for the present and future of the cloud. No wonder Google disclosed a carbon footprint in 2011 almost equal to that of Laos, largely due to running the search engines whose results we gaze at endlessly thanks to the cloud (Clark 2011).

And what about when obsolete screen technologies are junked? They become electronic waste (e-waste), the fastest-growing component of municipal cleanups around the global North. E-waste poses serious threats to worker health and safety wherever plastics and wires are burned, monitors smashed and dismantled, and circuit boards grilled or leached with acid, while the toxic chemicals and heavy metals that flow from such practices have perilous implications for local and downstream residents. This accumulation of electronic hardware causes grave environmental and health harm as noxious chemicals, gases, and metals from wealthy nations seep into landfills and water sources across Malaysia, Brazil, South Korea, China, Mexico, Viet Nam, Nigeria, and India, *inter alia*. E-waste ends up there after export and import by “recyclers” who eschew landfills and labor in the global North in order to avoid the higher costs and regulatory oversight in countries that prohibit such risks to the environment and workers. Businesses that forbid dumping e-waste in local landfills as corporate policy readily mail it elsewhere (Maxwell and Miller 2012).

In that “elsewhere,” pre-teen girls pick away without protection at used televisions, telephones, and tablets, recycling and cleaning screen detritus. The appalling morbidity rates of these ragpickers have stimulated a stream of studies that directly associate work in the informal e-waste economy with occupational health and safety risks. It’s significant that much of this research comes from the global South, with distinguished contributions from African, Asian, and Latin American scholars and activists (Nnorom and Osibanjo 2009; Devi, Swamy, and Krishna 2014; de Oliveira, Bernardes, and Gerbase 2012).

Back in the “rich” world, U.S. prisoners work compulsorily for less than anybody else would, doing everything from assembling to recycling screens. The Constitution helpfully guarantees corporations this right as part of the *quid pro quo* for the abandonment of slavery via the 13th Amendment. Imprisoned indentured labor is an attractive option for U.S. firms, because it avoids the transportation costs associated with offshore enterprises and satisfies the longstanding policy of displacing the African American and Latino male working class from education into incarceration, as per structural racism. Screen companies that exploit these opportunities include AT&T, IBM, Intel, Lucent Technologies, Texas Instruments, Dell, and Compaq (LeBaron 2008; Conrad 2011).

That screen we love so much is looking opaque rather than transparent – in fact very murky indeed.

Conclusion

Screen life must be engaged from a multiplicity of perspectives, embodied in the theoretical and methodological work of Chartier, Latour, Canclini, Nader, and Marcus and the specialist research of Ross, Nnorom, Devi, and de Oliveira. Doing less would be gratifyingly neat and tidy – keeping our bottoms as well wiped as screen-studies graduate school, tenure, grants, or discipleship demand. But that would run the risk of

missing the meanings that accrue to screen texts as they move through time and space. After all, at the end of the day, we are surely trying to comprehend the web, film, television, magazines, newspapers, and games – how and why they are made and received and the impact they have. We aren't just obediently trotting out orthodoxies practiced by the self-anointed of visual culture, film theory, art history, literary criticism, communications, and other pleasurable *cordons sanitaires*. Are we?

- see CHAPTER 24 (DIGITAL AND NEW MEDIA): CHAPTER 27 (CULTURAL PRODUCTION)

Notes

- 1 Who doubtless believe what they write and say, given their ideological proclivities.
- 2 See, for example, <https://www.jla.co.uk/conference-speakers/jacques-attali#VfOcEhOqqkp>

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24

Digital and New Media*Wendy Hui Kyong Chun*

The term new media came into prominence in the mid-1990s to describe media previously called electronic, digital, and/or multimedia. New media, an oddly plural yet singular term, aggressively broke with and aged earlier forms of media; it also asserted a categorical similarity between disparate forms of media, from computer games to web pages, which were reclassified as “new.” Its odd singular/plural status also stems from its negative definition: it is not mass media. Indeed, it was to be a mass medium to end mass media by dissolving the mass – the amorphous we – into individuated, empowered users – you(s) – initially by allegedly emancipating users from their physical limitations. Paradoxically, information and control technologies, developed by the military, were to enable these freedoms.

Although theoretical investigations and definitions of new media vary widely, almost all, especially the early ones, begin by explaining what is new (or not) about new media. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin’s *Remediation* (2000) and Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree’s *New Media, 1740–1915* (2003) placed new media within a larger history, arguing that there have been many “new” media. In contrast, Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* (2002) defined new media as different and distinct. According to Manovich (2002), new media – the result of the convergence of computing and media technologies, of Charles Babbage’s difference engine and the Lumière Brothers’ cinematic projections – is comprised of two layers: a visible content layer, which is similar to and often indistinguishable from older media, and an invisible data layer, which makes new media singular. In response, those in the emerging field of software studies emphasize the invisible workings of software platforms and programs, which shape users’ interactions and store data traces. What matters, they argue, is not simply what appears on the screen, but also the myriad invisible interactions between user input, algorithmic execution, and data storage and transmission (Fuller 2003, 2008; Mackenzie 2006); platform studies also begins by critiquing “screen essentialism” (Montfort 2004). German media archaeologists, inspired by the work of Friedrich Kittler, similarly seek a technical explanation for the difference computationally based media make. They contend that computational logic is radically different from human-based narrative and

archives (Ernst 2012). Many in game studies, particularly those dubbed “ludologists,” argue that gameplay is fundamentally different from spectatorship (Aarseth 2001; Bogost 2007).

Other influential definitions of new media have explored the topic of convergence, but have focused more closely on user actions and interfaces.¹ Rather than viewing convergence as the coming together of culture and technology, Henry Jenkins (2006) has argued that both media technologies and cultures are themselves undergoing convergence: once distinct media are becoming compatible (e.g., TV over the Internet) and once distinct powers (e.g., that of the consumer and producer) are merging in unpredictable ways through phenomena such as fan culture. Jenkins emphasizes the participatory and interactive nature of new media, something also emphasized by early promoters of the Internet, who represented it as inherently democratic because it enabled everyone publicly to voice their opinions. Al Gore famously described the global network as the Athenian Agora come true (1994). Others argued that it was democratic because the Internet was uncensorable: its routing protocols treated censorship as an outage and automatically routed around it (Elmer-Dewitt 1993), an assertion that assumed that routing and addressing protocols were fixed. Similarly, portraying technology as solving political problems, news organizations in the second decade of this century dubbed various political uprisings around the world as “Twitter revolutions,” a name that erases location and politics in favor of a technical platform (Stone and Cohen 2009). More recently “gamification” has been trumpeted as a way to foster greater user participation in government and education (Kapp 2012).

The obverse of this celebration of new media, and in particular the Internet, as inherently empowering and democratic is its condemnation as a den for spammers, pornographers, child molesters, and terrorists, and more generally as a medium that uncontrollably disseminates offensive or banal materials (Elmer-Dewitt 1995; Levy 2001). According to this narrative, the freedoms enabled by the Internet are too dangerous, and thus governments need to regulate content in order to ensure that this democratic medium – this digital culture – does not destroy democratic society.² More scholarly reactions to this celebration have focused on the ways in which the Internet and information is always embodied and how the technological does not dissolve political problems. N. Katherine Hayles (1999) has examined the processes by which “information lost its body,” while Anna Munster’s (2006) early work examined various modes of virtual embodiment. Lisa Nakamura (2006) has shown how race has not disappeared online, but has been “remastered” as identity tourism, among other practices (given this, it is intriguing to consider the prominence of people of color in “viral videos,” from *Chocolate Rain* to *Gangman Style*).

Simultaneous with this celebration/condemnation of new media as inherently (too) empowering has been an interrogation of new media as fostering state and commercial control and surveillance. The field of surveillance studies, as evidenced by the journal *Surveillance Studies*, investigates the ties between new media and the proliferation and growing acceptance of surveillance technologies and data tracking. In his early book, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (2006), Alexander Galloway has argued that control exists in the era of distributed networks via the Internet and other technical protocols – that is, new media are central to what Gilles Deleuze (1992) called “control society.”³ Tiziana Terranova (2004), whose work focuses on both the affective and technical within network culture, has insightfully argued that networks operate via

a logic of soft control. Rather than celebrating participation as inherently empowering, Terranova has shown that capital sets the conditions for and exhausts “free labor.” In the same vein, Trebor Scholz (2012) has examined the emergence and politics of “playbor.” Evgeny Morozov more recently has popularized these critiques in *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (2011), which reveals how the assumption that the Internet is inherently democratic blinds us to how governments regularly and expertly use social media to monitor protests and protesters. Recent reporting on “Big Data” – on how corporations and governments both store and mine all our digital traces – has further revealed the extent of control on the Internet, as have leaks by Edward Snowden about the National Security Agency’s practice of regularly storing all the Internet data it technically can (Duhigg 2012).

Digital Culture: From Cyberspace to Social Media

Intriguingly, although the promise/threat of “new media” has remained basically the same (freedom/control), the practices and meanings associated with this promise/threat have varied greatly, revealing the complex relationship between culture and technology, which Janet Murray has described as a “double helix” (2003). The Internet in particular changed radically from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. This change rivaled in extremity its earlier transformation from a non-commercial, military, academic, and governmental “public good” to a mass medium, when its backbone was sold to private corporations in the early to mid-1990s.

During the mid-1990s and despite serious differences between Internet protocol (TCP/IP) and the science fiction idea of cyberspace, the Internet, which had existed as TCP/IP since 1974, became a new medium when it became a fictional one: cyberspace. Writing on a typewriter and inspired by the 1980s videogame scene, William Gibson conceived of “cyberspace” in a short story, “Burning Chrome,” in 1982. In his most popular novel, *Neuromancer*, which fleshed out a dystopian post-World War III future in which the United States had disappeared and the world was dominated by Japanese *zait-batus*, Gibson described cyberspace as “a consensual hallucination,” “a graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system” (1984, 52). In this space, elite marauding console cowboys disdainfully referred to their bodies as meat (1984, 6). The “digital culture” of the 1990s was heavily influenced by cyberpunk (in particular *Neuromancer* and Neal Stephenson’s 1992 *Snow Crash*) and portrayed new media as virtual: as allowing for greater control by freeing one’s self from one’s bodily limitations. During this time period in which the Internet was privatized – and despite the fact that the Internet was built by the U.S. military – rhetoric about the virtual independence of cyberspace abounded: from John Perry Barlow’s infamous 1996 “Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” – which began with “governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone.... You have no sovereignty where we gather” – to television commercials by companies such as MCI declaring that “there is no race” on the Internet (MCI 1997).

Freedom allegedly stemmed from anonymity, from no-one knowing who you were. As the famous *New Yorker* cartoon, which pictured two dogs using a computer, joked, “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog” (Steiner 1993). In this space, the

authentic self could finally be revealed and an authentic public sphere could emerge because discrimination could be eliminated. The promise of the Internet as a bodiless public was made most clear in rhetoric surrounding the Internet as a race-less space. It seemed impossible to advertise the Internet in the mid- to late 1990s without featuring happy people of color singing the praises of the Internet. These advertisements, which assumed these raced bodies (rather than racist bodies and actions) caused racism, did not reflect then current Internet demographics: the same corporations that touted the Internet as the great equalizer also sponsored round tables on the digital divide. However contradictory this may seem, it was not because both positions assumed that cyberspace offered technological solutions to political problems: in both cases, access to cyberspace was to (dis)solve racial disparities. These dreams were strongest and this imagining most compelling at a time when few people were on the Internet. Most importantly, through its transformation into an actually existing technology, cyberspace moved from signaling a dark to a happy future and the liberal position on technology moved from one of protest (for example, the 1980s anti-nuclear movement that informed Gibson's cyberpunk vision) to one of enthusiastic embrace (Chun 2006).

Again, at the same time the Internet was celebrated as the great equalizer, it was also condemned as a purveyor of pornography and obscenity. (Importantly, the Internet could have been equally portrayed as the great solution to child pornography, since it now made these materials more easily trackable.) Tellingly, the Telecommunications Act of 1995, which deregulated the industry and laid the groundwork for the commercial Internet, also sought to regulate the content of the Internet for the first time. Although the Communications Decency Act was eventually overturned – in part due to arguments about the inherent democratic nature and extra-state status of the Internet – it greatly affected the dissemination of Internet pornography. Since it listed credit card verification as a valid means of determining age (even though one does not need to be eighteen within the United States to acquire a credit card), it helped make pornography, which had been freely available for many years, the first profitable online industry. The success of the pornography industry allegedly convinced other businesses that the Internet could be a viable commercial marketplace. It also helped popularize the notion that identity verification was necessary for the Internet to thrive as a safe public sphere (Chun 2006).

In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, terrorism replaced pornography as the chief threat of the Internet and, in the era of Web 2.0 and social media, freedom was portrayed as stemming from authentic and authenticated identities, rather than anonymity. Freedom, that is, stemmed from knowing who was a dog and who was not. Profound changes to how data is stored and tracked, to how IP addresses are assigned, to routing protocols and to user norms revealed the lie of early alleged technical/political truths about the inherently ungovernable Internet, truths that themselves relied on a very odd understanding of how TCP/IP operates. With the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet has been reconceived as a semi-private/public space of “true names” and “true images,” that is, as a series of poorly gated communities.⁴ In this semi-private or semi-public space, freedom stems from safety in the form of controlling one's surroundings.

This new version of the Internet sought to move the default user from the lurker to the friend and envisioned social interactions as based on transparency. This move

towards transparency was a response to the failures of the initial Internet to live up to its hype. By the early 2000s, the early promises of the web were exposed for what they were: unfulfilled and perhaps unfulfillable imaginings of ideal public/democratic spheres. Like the newsgroups that preceded them, chat rooms were often nasty spaces subject to “Godwin’s Law”⁵ and open listservs were dying, killed by spam and by trolls, whose presence was amplified by those who naïvely “fed” them and others who admonished them for doing so (Lovink 2003). Further, the Internet was filled with phishing scams, and allegedly private email accounts were flooded with spam messages advertising pornography, body modification tools, and dodgy pharmaceutical companies. Many, although not all, viewed anonymity, which once grounded the dreams of the Internet as a utopian space of the mind, as actually destroying the possibility of a civilized public sphere. Corporations such as Google.com and Facebook.com, which also needed reliable, authenticated information for their data mining operations, supported this tactic of tethering the on- and offline as the best and easiest way to foster responsibility and combat online aggression (Bosker 2011; Bynum 1997).

Importantly, this was not the only solution offered to foster critical public dialogue: competing against this simple tying of transparency with trust were “reputation systems,” such as the one developed by Slashdot.org, which were based on pseudonymic usage. These systems evolved through long-term use and communal evaluation – features essential to any functioning online community. Scholar Helen Nissenbaum, writing in 2001, noted that, although security is central to activities such as e-commerce and banking, it “no more achieves trust and trustworthiness online – in their full-blown senses – than prison bars, surveillance cameras, airport X-ray conveyor belts, body frisks, and padlocks, could achieve offline. This is so because the very ends envisioned by the proponents of security and e-commerce are contrary to core meanings and mechanisms of trust” (2001, 121). Trust, she insisted, and still insists, is a far richer concept that entails a willingness to be vulnerable. As Nissenbaum also points out, the reduction of trust to security assumes that danger stems from outsiders, rather than “sanctioned, established, powerful individuals and organizations” (2001, 121). The intensification of cyberbullying, sexting, and the emergence of intimate dangers more serious than “stranger danger” has validated Nissenbaum’s critique, as has the growing profitability of “Big Data.” Real names have been central to data verification and to the tracking and building of user profiles.

With the emergence of “Big Data” – massive databases often based on “data trash” or on seemingly ephemeral traces of our online actions – new media have become more accurately predictive (also framed as more “user friendly”). By finding and creating correlations, corporations are able to predict and shape better consumer activities. Famous episodes that allegedly reveal the power of Big Data include: Target’s successful prediction of a teen pregnancy in the mid-west United States; Amazon’s recommendation system; and Netflix’s decision to produce a new version of *House of Cards*, starring Kevin Spacey (Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier 2013). According to some, the emergence of Big Data has annulled the need for theory: because we now have an abundance of empirical data, we no longer need theories about the world.⁶ This assumes that data is raw and can speak for itself; however, as Lisa Gitelman (Gitelman and Jackson 2013) has shown, “raw data is an oxymoron.” Despite this, Big Data is challenging our common perceptions of causality because clearly non-causal

relations seem to be better predictors of future behavior. Most forcefully, scholar Victor Mayer-Schönberger and journalist Kenneth Cukier have argued, “society will need to shed some of its obsession for causality in exchange for simple conditions: not knowing why but only what” (2013, 7). Indeed, they claim that not only do we need to give up on causality because knowing what is happening is more important than why, but we also need to give up on causality because “it’s little more than a cognitive shortcut that gives the illusion of insight but in reality leaves us in the dark about the world around us” (2013, 64).⁷ They also argue that we need to let go of our penchant for accuracy. In terms of Big Data, accuracy is not needed: it is better to have a lot of noisy data than a smaller set of accurate data.

Effects on Knowledge and Theory

Big Data’s challenge to theory is not singular: it is one of many challenges posed by new media. Early on, new media’s challenge was mainly discussed in terms of speed. Theorists McKenzie Wark (2005) and Geert Lovink (2000, 2003) have argued that the sheer speed of telecommunications undermines the time needed for scholarly contemplation. Scholarship, Wark argues, “assumes a certain kind of time within which the scholarly enterprise can unfold,” a time denied by global media events that happen and disappear at the speed of light (2005, 265). Theory’s temporality is traditionally belated. Theory stems from the Greek *theoria*, a group of officials whose formal witnessing of an event ensured its official recognition (Godzich 1986). To follow Wark’s and Lovink’s logic, theory is impossible because we have no time to register events, and we lack a credible authority to legitimate the past as past. In response, Lovink has argued for a “running theory” and Wark has argued that theory itself must travel along the same vectors as the media event. Increasingly, new media theorists are using the tools of new media in their critiques: from Big Data visualizations to multi-modal publishing platforms, such as Scalar (<http://scalar.usc.edu/>).

Although these critiques and new tools are important, it is also crucial to understand how New Media itself – as the New – thrives on crises and the ways in which the role of theory – as verification – has been transformed in the era of social media (Chun 2011a, b). Now, it seems an event has not happened until it has been documented, uploaded, and liked on Facebook.com, rather than witnessed by a *theoria*. To be is arguably to be updated: both subject of, and subject to ceaseless updates, which feed new media systems. Automatically recognized changes of status have moved from surveillance to evidence of one’s ongoing existence. Social media, that is, have taken the place of *theoria*. Further, the Internet enables endless and at times seemingly pointless decisions and actions, proliferating what Lauren Berlant (2011) has called “crisis ordinary.” Users are arguably worn down by an affectively intense yet unchanging present, in which, as Terranova (2004) argues, free labor is both fostered and exhausted. A profound compromising of boundaries once considered central, such as the difference between public and private, also proliferates crises and perhaps ironically reveals the possibilities of new media. These leakages, which make new media “wonderfully creepy,” have both undermined theories of new media as the end of theory – the ideal public sphere etc. – and revealed profound paradoxes in traditional understandings of publicity, privacy, etc.

New Media as Leak

Heralded as revolutionary from its “fiction-come-true” emergence, new media has been important not because it has actually brought about the future prophesized by cyber-punk fiction or because it is an ideal bourgeois public sphere, but rather because it has eroded the distinction between the revolutionary and conventional, public and private, work and leisure, fascinating and boring, hype and reality, amateur and professional, democracy and trolling. The same medium used to organize political protests disseminates countless images of cute cats: tellingly, twitter was initially a derogatory term used to describe the endless chattering of young girls and birds. This combination of gossip with politics is not an unfortunate aspect of new media and digital culture, but rather what makes the new media and digital culture so compelling. As Ethan Zuckerman (2008) has argued, this combination makes social media platforms more resilient: because so many people are invested in their pictures of cute cats, states find it difficult to censor and take down these sites.

Likewise, new media undermine the separation between publicity and privacy at various levels: from its technical protocols to its emergence as a privately owned public medium, from its privatization of surveillance to its redefinition of “friends.” Importantly, the Internet calls into question the distinction between the personal and the public in its very functioning. Every network card downloads/reads in all packets and then erases those not directly addressed to it, if it is not running in “promiscuous” mode (in which case it stores all these packets). This means that every user has probably downloaded all sorts of illegal materials. This also means that a networked personal computer is an oxymoron, produced by a massive advertising campaign. TCP/IP, however, does not automatically equal a massive surveillance machine, for TCP/IP regulates real-time transmission, not the storage of these transmissions. The decision by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) to install sniffers on backbone routers and to store all packet traffic it possibly can is a political one – one that needs to be countered by a politics of deletion. The subsumption of the eroding boundary between public and private by a politics of storage/deletion is also central to growing privatization/commercialization of surveillance: popular search engines, such as Google.com, store all search information and link them to IP addresses; they also share this information with states when required.

Social media is also driven by a profound confusion of the private and public. The very notion of a “friend,” initially viewed as a way to restrict communications in social media sites such as Friendster.com, has led to various “facebook disasters,” in which the boundaries between private and public, friend/boss/mother have been breached. This breaching, however, is not accidental, but essential. As danah boyd notes, Friendster.com profoundly and deliberately confused the boundaries between public and private by depending on the “public exhibition of private relationships in order to allow for new private interactions” (2004, 4). Friendster.com was initially conceived as a dating site, albeit one with an expanded user base: rather than rely on algorithms and forms, it crowdsourced match-making by allowing people automatically to see “friends” within four degrees of separation. Tellingly, insisting on “proper” friendships – a strict separation of private from public – led to Friendster.com’s demise as a social networking site in the United States. Traffic to Friendster.com decreased dramatically after the “fakester genocide,” during which, in order to protect what it thought was the essence of Friendster.com, it deleted the

accounts of “fakesters,” fake accounts of celebrities or things (such as Burning Man) (boyd 2004, 4). The fake accounts threatened to cripple the server, since it enabled wide and promiscuous networks.

The crises provoked by social media sites also reveal the increasing porousness between work and leisure: on these sites, your mother and boss could access easily the same information. Further muddying the boundary between play and labor is the fact that work devices, such as laptops and mobile phones, are also play devices: the same devices used at work are often used for personal functions. This has led to greater employee surveillance, since employers are able to easily track their employees’ keystrokes and surfing habits. It has also led to a blurring of work versus leisure time: with the ability to work from home, the workday has expanded, even to the point of intruding on vacation time. However, it is not simply that work has bled into leisure time, but also that work is increasingly viewed as a form of leisure or play (Scholz 2012; Berardi 2009). Websites not only encourage us to provide content for free, they also reuse and analyze our traces in order to understand existing correlations between user actions and to create new ones. This free sharing of information – including our location and present actions – also reveals the extent to which the boundary between surveillance and publicity has been increasingly compromised.

The erosion between work and play is especially clear in terms of the transformation of the military–industrial complex into the military–industrial–entertainment complex. The same devices and applications used for military purposes are used for entertainment, and it is popularly thought that entertainment emerges from the detritus of military equipment. The case of *Doom*, however, also reveals the two-way nature of this exchange (Riddell 1997). *Doom*, a popular multi-player first-person shooter, was used by the military in the late 1990s ostensibly to train soldiers, in part because it was open source and thus could be easily revised; since then, the U.S. military has started to regularly employ video games, such as *America’s Army*, for recruitment; it also uses virtual reality simulations to train soldiers.⁸ Although the convergence of military and entertainment software is often condemned as the “gamification” and thus the trivialization of warfare, the use of drones by the U.S. military calls this narrative into question. Instances of post-traumatic stress disorder are actually higher among drone pilots, in part because drones are also used for surveillance: often a drone pilot will follow her victims for days before killing them; she will also see the effects of her strike in more graphic detail than other pilots (Gregory 2011).

New media also continually compromises the distinction between hype and reality. Not only did the Internet become a mass medium by becoming “cyberspace,” new media in general thrive on promise rather than product. At least since Douglas Engelbart’s famous demonstration of the mouse – simply called “the demo” or “the mother of all demos” by those in Silicon Valley – new media has been driven by demonstrations of often fictional or barely realized technologies and art projects. Hype has become so central to consumption that actually acquiring the devices many months after the initial demonstration often feels disappointing. This inevitable disappointment or boredom is embedded in the very name new media: to call something new is to guarantee that it will one day be old. New media seem to thrive on or survive at the bleeding edge of obsolescence. Countless methods have thus been used to generate hype: from guerilla advertising schemes that deliberately try to appear amateur and thus “authentic,” to the hiring of users to aggregate at certain *Second Life* sites in order to generate interest.

New media's blurring of the distinctions between the revolutionary and conventional, public and private, work and leisure, fascinating and boring, hype and reality, and amateur and professional, reveals the extent to which it is part of the post-industrial/neoliberal economy. Similarly compromised spaces include shopping malls, which are open yet privately owned spaces. Indeed, the public/private binary seems to have become transformed into one of open versus closed; open source software operates by spreading licensing everywhere, contributing to the demise of the public domain (Chun 2006). Corporations, which are treated as individuals in the United States, increasingly use strategies of "soft control," which encourage workers to view work as integral to their life and identity (Berardi 2009). Hype is central to the functioning of the global marketplace, in particular the stock market, in which the relationship between the price of stocks and corporate earnings is often tenuous, such as during the dot.com craze of the late 1990s. The importance of derivatives to the stock market further reveals the extent to which the possibility of change matters more than actual value. In a neoliberal economy, individualism is encouraged and allegedly valued: rather than being paid according to a scale, one is compensated according to one's contributions and skills. The transformation of mass media into new media thus fits perfectly with this individualizing process.

Importantly, not only is new media affected by larger neoliberal forces, the effects of new media also expand beyond the online world. New media increasingly "augments" reality by mapping a virtual layer on top of, and in dialogue with physical space. More generally, massive computation and what Phil Agre (1994) has called "capture systems" – systems that capture physical actions in order to track and optimize various processes, such as delivering packages – have created what Nigel Thrift (2008) has termed an era of "qualculation." Because of new software and new forms of address, continuous calculation occurs at every point along every line of movement, thus making time-space more relative and fluid, and expanding the human sense of touch. Similarly, the desire for "connection" and mappability produced by social media and search engines has fueled new types of physical interactions. A fascinating corollary to Friendster.com was the emergence of flash mobs, which began in 2003 in New York City (the first flash mob converged on the rug department of a Macy's department store). As mass acts of benign communal action, flash mobs were one's friends lists come to life: ephemeral interventions into quasi-public, or at the very least open spaces, enacted by familiar strangers.⁹ Intriguingly, although these mobs were deliberately constructed to be as banal as possible (they focused around actions such as shopping for shoes) and although they were placed in the "safest" of public spaces – that is, public spaces that are not technically public but rather open (the third New York flash mob moved from Grand Central Station to the lobby of the Hyatt Hotel because of the presence of "National Guardsmen with machine guns") – they were treated with great suspicion. As the then anonymous New York organizer "Bill" noted, "there seems to be something inherently political about an inexplicable mob" (Kahney 2003). Indeed, the gathering of a mob, speaking in a language not entirely understandable in the words and gestures of official politics, recalls the traditional "noisy" claiming of rights that grounds democracy (Rancière 2010). The fact that these flash mobs were deliberately non-political and couched in terms of play and yet so disruptive, coupled with the fact that they would later mutate into both highly orchestrated commercial public relations events and criminal swarms, also exemplifies the dangers of occupying and opening

this liquid space between public and private, dangers and possibilities also exemplified by the opening of the “friend.”

Regardless, the example of flash mobs and the productive possibilities of “friend” reveal that the democratic possibilities for the Internet lie less in the creation of an ideal public sphere in which everyone is empowered and secure, but rather in its possibilities for messy and leaky engagements with others. To return to the example of TCP/IP, the fact that everyone has access to each other’s data – the fact that our computers need to be vulnerable in order to communicate – belies the notion of a personal computer, but also makes possible a more rigorous understanding of our machines as open and engaged. Combined with a more robust understanding of trust and citizenship as based on risk rather than overwhelming protection, new media’s “wonderful creepiness” can offer a way to engage freedoms that cannot be reduced to control: to freedom as what makes control possible, necessary, and never enough (Chun 2006). Furthermore, realizing that our machines are so open – that what is most remarkable and disturbing is not necessarily the fact that the NSA can download all traffic (especially given that the fact that the NSA was downloading router traffic on AT&T networks was known since 2006), but rather the fact that most did not realize that it was happening because of the overwhelming rhetoric of new media as empowering and personal – makes possible different practices and habits of new media (Chun 2006).

Coda: Habitual New Media

Given the emergence of Big Data and New Media as Leak, the best way to theorize and understand new media is arguably through the habits new media generate. The obsession with the new – the call to predict the future and focus on the new big thing – ignores what is arguably most intriguing about new media: how it lingers. Whether or not gazing at our smartphone still thrills us, smartphones increasingly structure our day and train our digits; whether or not we are still amazed by the World Wide Web, it has profoundly shaped our relationship to knowledge, habituating us to the search. New media matter most when they seem not to matter at all, when they have moved from the voluntary to the involuntary, the noteworthy to the invisible.

Habits are themselves leaky: they muddy the boundary between nature and culture, individuals and society. Most simply, habits are humanly made nature: they are things, acquired through time, that are then forgotten as they move from the voluntary to the involuntary, the outer to the inner. As they do so, they come to define the person: a habit was traditionally an outer garment, such as a nun’s habit. Habits, as Catherine Malabou (2008) has outlined in her introduction to Félix Ravaisson’s *Of Habit*, are usually understood in two ways: first, as mechanical repetition that erodes what is distinctively human; second, as fundamental to life, to how we persist. Ravaisson subscribes decisively to the second understanding. For Ravaisson, habit is not instinct; it is not a natural, automatic response. Habit, rather, implies an interval and frames change as persistence. It signals a change in disposition – a disposition towards change – in a being which itself does not change, even as it does. (My cells clearly change on a regular basis, but I am somehow still me.) Habit habituates: it is a reaction to a change – to an outside sensation or action – that remains beyond that change within the organism: it is unity of diversity. Through habit, we transform a change provoked by outside conditions

into a change generated from the inside, so that receptivity of being is transformed into an unreflective spontaneity, beneath personality and consciousness. Habit therefore makes subject and object, act and goal coincide, for habit occurs when an action is so free that it anticipates and escapes the will or consciousness (repetition breeds skill), or when a being's repeated actions reduce the difference between the state of the sensed object and sense itself (repetition dulls us to sensation). The example he offers of the moral person encapsulates this nicely. At first, becoming a moral person requires effort because there is a difference between our state and the state of morality. Gradually, with effort, morality becomes effortless and certain actions become pleasurable in and of themselves. And so, Ravaillon argues, we move from pity to charity. Through habit, we become independent of both cue and reward, spontaneously producing actions and sensations that satiate and satisfy.

With new media, the acquisition and change of habit has accelerated. We are now arguably habituated to change itself – to the anticipation and embrace of the new, where the new is not a radical change, but rather the *update*: the endless versions and revisions that dominate the logic and consumption of computer technology. As the debacle around Windows 8 makes clear, the kind of change expected and embraced by users is not radical change. Windows 8 launched in 2012 amid much fanfare: it was to revive Microsoft's fortunes by helping it adapt to a changing field of personal devices, in particular, the tablet. By focusing on touch-centric actions and by extensively changing its operating system (it even lost the start menu), it led to great and general confusion, and Microsoft had to relaunch a “newer-older” version of Windows 8 one year later. This example makes clear the paradoxes of new media: Microsoft is allegedly losing market share because it is viewed as old and conservative. However, by doing something radically new, it does even worse.

This example reveals that if new media are new, they are new in the more obscure concept of new as refreshing, rather than the wondrous. New not only means something that is radically different and emerging for the first time, it also means again: “coming as a resumption or repetition of some previous act or thing; starting afresh, resurgent”; “something restored after demolition, decay, disappearance” (OED). As the modernist adage “make it new” makes clear, new means taking what already exists and making it (slightly) different. In this sense, new media habituates us to the acquisition of “new” habits by habituating us to the update (Chun 2016). It habituates us to the update as a method of coping, of trying to catch up. Through new media, that is, we become habituated not only to the update, but also to what Lauren Berlant (2011) has called “the present as impasse.” The present is felt as “crisis ordinary” – as a series of crises that are never finally resolved, that are not dramatic, but rather a tense atmosphere that is dealt with daily.

This notion of habit as second-nature, as how new media as update is introduced and persists at a non-conscious level, is central to advertising and Big Data-based understandings of human behavior. According to Charles Duhigg (2012), corporations thrive by embedding products into a habit cycle: they couple a cue with a routine and a reward and, most importantly, do so by creating a craving: an anticipation of the reward that drives habitual behavior (49). In a crucial difference with Ravaillon, Duhigg emphasizes that satisfaction comes not from the habit itself, but rather from an external object that becomes part of the habit cycle. To see new media as habitual is to see new media as habituating us to constant anticipation – a process that also enables our brains to disengage with conscious decisions. However, the constant change of habits and crises also

reveal the difference new media make to habits: through constant updates, habit becomes addiction; through the update, habituation is disrupted.

This notion of new media as habitual also opens up possibilities for different habits and changes and also opens the door to understanding how older cultural formations linger in an era of neoliberalism. As the work on habit reveals, habits are never simply individual, but are ways of reading and producing connections between individuals (Duhigg 2012). It is, perhaps, how society remains in an era of neoliberalism: in an era in which what matters is the individual and individual empowerment. By producing different habits – by engaging the ever-increasing habitual change that makes us stuck in the present – they make possible a different future.

- see CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 23 (SCREEN LIFE); CHAPTER 25 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY)

Notes

- 1 The opposition between user interface-based and machine-based theory is not definite. For instance, José van Dijck's analysis of social media in *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (2013) and other newer work on social media platforms have framed new media as equally affected by technical platforms and user technologies.
- 2 As Jacques Rancière (2010) has argued, this is an old line that stems from a fundamentally limited understanding of democracy.
- 3 The control and surveillance aspect of the Internet has also inspired theorists in other fields to reexamine their own histories. Thomas Elsaesser (2006), for instance, has rethought film history in terms of mass participation and enjoyment of surveillance.
- 4 For more on the relationship between semi-private spaces and critical thinking, see Ellen Rooney, "A Semiprivate Room" (2002).
- 5 Godwin's Law states that the longer an online discussion continues, the more likely it is there will be a comparison of something or someone to Hitler or Nazis.
- 6 As *Wired* editor Chris Anderson (2008) controversially asserted, "the data deluge makes the scientific method obsolete." It is not only humanists who are discussing "the end of theory." This article remarkably places statistical analysis outside theory, as though statistical analyses designed to recognize significant patterns were not themselves theoretical.
- 7 By relying on correlations, Big Data can predict the future because it gives up on causality as a limiting factor: "there is nothing causal between car ownership and taking antibiotics as directed; the link between them is pure correlation. But findings as such were enough to inspire FICO's chief executive to boast in 2011, 'We know what you're going to do tomorrow.'" Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier offer as evidence the already canonical examples of Big Data's success: how Target exposed a girl's pregnancy to her father before she did; statistical methods which produce better translations than grammatical ones; and Amazon's automatic recommendation system, which resulted in more purchases than its "editor choices."
- 8 For more on this, see the work of Jonathan Gratch at the University of Southern California (<http://ict.usc.edu/>).
- 9 Adam, one of the organizers of the proposed London flash mob, commented: "Flash mobs anchor the online world into the real world – they are a manifestation of your 'cc' list" (Shmuell 2003).

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25

Science and Technology*Priscilla Wald*

We may well be living at the end of times. But we are certainly not the first to think so. From floods and fires to cosmic conflagrations, the end of the world is an old story – perhaps the oldest there is. But in a characteristically mythic rhythm, such stories oscillate between impending doom and reassurance of endless renewal. Even as scientific evidence has replaced the old prophetic modes, it remains difficult to fully accept the possibility of human finitude. Recently, a story emerging from a proposed new designation in the Geological Time Scale would put us in a new age. Succeeding the Holocene – and perhaps in its way the Age of Aquarius – the Anthropocene marks the most recent attempt to tell the story of humankind’s destructive planetary impact.

The atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen popularized the term Anthropocene when he used it to designate humankind’s geological and climatological impact on the planet and ideally call us to a greater sense of responsibility for the destruction.¹ The historian Dipesh Chakrabarty put it into widespread circulation among cultural critics when he raised questions, in “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” about historians’ unwitting contribution to the coming catastrophe. Musing on the historical trend, among “postcolonial and postimperial historians” (2009, 198), towards the rejection of Enlightenment universalism for its imposition of biologically based hierarchies on cultural differences – hence, its normalizing of Anglo-European historical subjects – he wonders whether the contemporary subject of history may be obscuring the actions of humanity writ large. The essay issues a call to historians to recuperate the idea of the universal. Chakrabarty advocates a new history of humanity that can reconcile “a universal history of life” with “what is of obvious value in our postcolonial suspicion of the universal.” And he offers “species” as “the name of a placeholder for an emergent, new universal history of humans that flashes up in the moment of the danger that is climate change” (Chakrabarty 2009).²

The Anthropocene invokes a familiar crisis narrative, but it is also a story of human and natural history. And it is a story about “life itself,” which, observes the anthropologist Sarah Franklin, “has always been inextricable from its invocation as a story.” Such stories – about “life itself and its creation” – derive their power from “their invocation of a global reach, a universal essence of humanity, a shared, primordial ontology”

(Franklin 2000, 197–198). Biology becomes cosmology as even the most scientific of these stories reach back into prehistory and summon mysteries through which the sublime edges into the mystical. The historian Joseph Mali uses the term “mythistory,” to mark how creation stories – a term he extends broadly to stories of the emergence of a communal identity – of any kind implicitly circulate the values and beliefs that supply the terms through which the group coheres.³ This ontological dimension of mythistories makes them both inevitable and difficult to challenge, especially when informed by science. Values circulate as truths; identity blends into existence.

Mythistories are necessary, but always evolving and not impervious to influence. The terms of these stories become increasingly visible as they start to lose efficacy, typically signaled by calls for new historical narratives. Often framed in the language of crisis, these calls mark a radical cultural change and an accompanying dramatic transition in the mythistory. The cultural critic Walter Benjamin describes these transitions as moments of danger, as in his famous distinction in his posthumously published meditation, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” between the historicist’s effort to “articulate [the past] ... ‘the way it really was’” and the historical materialist’s attempt to seize “hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (1969, 255). These moments, for him, are also moments of opportunity, as the flash offers the chance to see – and perhaps tell – the story differently. Looking back, the historicist sees a continuum and accordingly inscribes contemporary power relations in a narrative of progressive causality. The historical materialist, by contrast, perceives the repetitions obscured by that narrative and strives to call attention to them, showing how their obscurity perpetuates oppressive structures and inequities. The historical materialist seizes the flash of a memory to show “the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one” (263). It is an act of interpretation; astral figures appear only to those who know how to connect an arbitrary grouping of stars: to participate in an act of imagination along with countless others across time and place who have learned to “see” Orion or the Big Dipper. Analogously, the historical materialist works to turn intuited connections between past and present moments into revelations about how historical narratives justify contemporary structures of power and ritualize “‘the state of emergency’ ... [as] not the exception but the rule” (257).

Chakrabarty troubles his own account of emergence, if not emergency, in his homage to Benjamin, evident in his allusion to the flash of memory and in his redolent title. Stargazing, we might read Chakrabarty’s invocation of Benjamin against the grain of his sense of newness and crisis to see how the mesmerizing urgency of the threat of climate change risks forestalling change by turning an opportunity for questioning and transformation into a ritual of renewal. Chakrabarty’s sense of newness, moreover, obscures earlier efforts to fashion new accounts of humankind that could reconcile the lessons of biology with the quest for a more just and equitable society that respects rather than hierarchizes cultural differences. The question was especially pressing for Benjamin’s surviving contemporaries. While humankind’s confronting its uncertain fate is at least as old as its myths, the ravages of two world wars made clear that new technologies now offered unprecedented powers of rapid global and planetary destruction. The uncertain fate of humankind and its environment inspired urgent inquiries into the nature of humanity that drew on insights from science and political thought. War had accelerated scientific innovations in genetics that yielded new theories of the evolution of the species. At the same time, political and cultural theorists witnessing unprecedented

techno-scientific atrocities as well as the collapse of colonial regimes pondered how best to formulate an idea of “humanity” that respected the diversity and equality of populations. In their responses to coinciding crises of survival and social justice, scientists and political thinkers fashioned new accounts of humankind that registered their grappling with the lessons of science and history. A diverse group of thinkers variously sought a concept that would ensure the inviolability of the human in order to forestall future atrocities. They sought to fashion accounts of humankind that would respectfully acknowledge biological and cultural differences as well as interconnections, that would turn an understanding of human vulnerability into a sense of stewardship rooted in regard for a human – and planetary – future.

The Benjaminian return of this chapter represents my effort to discern a constellation with this mid-twentieth-century moment in which I trace the contours of a critical genealogy for the project outlined by Chakrabarty: the fashioning of historical accounts that reconcile the urgency of the survival of the species (and the planet) with respect and equal standing for diverse populations. The constellation comprises cultural critics and genres not typically considered together, and, conversely, does not include some conventional groupings. But as critics, we too have our stories, and they conceal as well as reveal. The effort to make biological and social sense of humankind in these new accounts conceived as necessary for broad geopolitical change was central to diverse projects, including the study of genocide, totalitarianism, and colonialism, to the emerging mass genre of science fiction, to the rise of environmentalism, and to the concept of biopower. The memory that flashes up for Chakrabarty puts the contemporary problem he outlines in implicit relation to these earlier projects; it suggests how a range of critical projects has emerged from efforts to forge more just and responsible accounts of humankind. A consideration of these accounts also manifests the ineluctable power of mythistory to channel the language of crisis and apocalypse into the promise of renewal and redemption. If, as some geologists have suggested, we might locate the beginning of the Anthropocene in the first test of an atomic bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico on July 16, 1945, these emerging accounts of humankind could constitute a critical counterpart: an effort to understand the transformative power of stories and the need for continuing critical introspection.⁴ Perhaps by the illumination of the memory flashing up in this moment of climate change, we might briefly glimpse the contours (and ineluctability) of our own critical mythistory in the outline of the Anthropocene.

Natural History and its Discontents

If the two global conflagrations of the twentieth century dramatized the uncertainty of a human future, a new scientific theory radically recast its past. A fruit fly geneticist named Theodosius Dobzhansky rocked the scientific world when, in a series of lectures delivered at Columbia University in 1936, he brought genetic research together with natural history to address a problem that had long troubled advocates of Darwin’s theory of evolution: the mechanism of natural selection. In the absence of scientific evidence to support the theory that evolutionary change was gradual and continuous, Darwin’s origin story remained unsubstantiated theory until research in the emerging field of population genetics showed how a single mutation in one individual could result in a significant new characteristic of a population, even, eventually, a new species. The amount

of time required for such a change varied depending on the organism's reproductive cycle – much faster in fruit flies, for example, than in human beings. But the principle was the same, and the conclusions dramatic: the story of humankind, like the species, was evolving.

Julian Huxley named the theory in 1942 with the publication of *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*. An especially effective proselytizer and popularizer, Huxley made accessible the processes through which a single mutation – a chance coding error – had gradually resulted in the separation of human beings not only from primates, but also from extinct lizards that had crawled out of the muck and, before that, single-celled organisms. Clearly, humanity was not the teleological climax of a completed world. The only biological certainty was that the long-term future – if there was one – would not resemble the past. Yet, new evidence notwithstanding, the story assumed a familiar form. Extinction or evolution: the scientific narrative of the human species evinced the characteristic mythic oscillation between impending apocalypse and reassurance of perpetual renewal.

Against this oscillation, Huxley worked to tell a more agentic story of human destiny. The ability to reflect on the concept of evolution, he argued, distinguished humankind from other living organisms and came with the ethical “responsibility and destiny – to be an agent for the rest of the world in the job of realizing its inherent potentialities as fully as possible” (1957, 13). Natural selection, he cautioned, implied neither improvement, nor extinction. Humankind having “by now become the trustee[s] of evolution,” it fell to them to choose whether to be a constructive or destructive force in its processes (Huxley 1942, 578).

Huxley carried his progressive vision for humankind into politics through his founding directorship of UNESCO. The goal of international peace began for him with the recognition of our common humanity. But it was fundamentally the biological concept of the species that he believed could move humanity past its crippling differences. Recognizing that a misunderstanding of evolutionary theory could fuel powerful impediments to this goal, he worked to address “the race problem” through education. Coining the term “ethnic group,” he also helped to revise UNESCO's 1950 statement *The Race Question*, which sought to combat racism in part by dispelling semantic confusion of biological populations and cultural groups.⁵

Huxley never relinquished a utopian faith in the implications of evolution, properly understood. In 1957, he coined the term “transhumanism” to describe the “cosmic self-awareness” of the universe that made “man” the “managing director of the biggest business of all, the business of evolution” (Huxley 1957, 13). Belief in transhumanism, he insisted, would supersede population thinking and thereby lead to the abolition of social ills and a deepening of human consciousness, elevating “the human species” to “a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Pekin man” (17).

For political theorists seeking to make sense of the human capacity for barbarism and self-destruction, however, neither semantics nor scientific literacy sufficed to prevent the dangerous dehumanization of entire populations enabled by superimposing natural history on human history. Thinkers as diverse as the German Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, the Polish Jewish linguist and lawyer Raphael Lemkin, and the Martinican psychiatrist and decolonization theorist Frantz Fanon, all argued for new narratives of humanity that would neither biologize nor subordinate the distinctions among populations, but would respectfully incorporate them. For them, wartime

atrocities had demonstrated the fundamental inadequacy of the Enlightenment concept of natural rights. In the process, they called into question narratives of natural history in which those rights were grounded and on which declarations of human universalism, such as the UNESCO statement, however well intentioned, relied. In fact, the foundation of natural history upon which this humanistic view of humanity rested dangerously obscured the varied historical experiences that made populations unevenly vulnerable to atrocities. The distinction between natural and human history underpinned their critiques of universalism. Natural rights had failed to ensure the claims to humanity to which all human beings *as human beings* were entitled.

Arendt offered the specter of human beings deprived of their “natural” entitlements in the “stateless” or “displaced persons” created by the geopolitical reorganization of Europe following World War I. The mass migrations and expulsions resulting from long-simmering ethnic and racial tensions within nation-states left entire populations stateless and without the possibility of political asylum. These refugees embodied the failure of the concept of natural (or human) rights, showing that “the world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human” (Arendt 1979, 299). The idea of “natural rights,” she observed, endowed nature with a deifying transcendence: Nature as the guardian of humanity; natural laws as those that cannot be disobeyed. Human history, by contrast, showed the need for a basic human entitlement to dignity without which there was no hope for “a new law on earth” (ix) on which, she warned, the future depended. Her critique of natural rights rejected the efficacy, not the basic premise, of the concept.

Lemkin similarly turned to history to show how the systematic atrocities perpetrated against vulnerable populations had long been obscured as a specific crime because of the lack of a name that would distinguish it as a specific category of criminal activity. He had watched the rise of the Nazi Party from Poland, while serving as public prosecutor in Warsaw as well as secretary of the Committee on Codification of the Laws of the Polish Republic. In 1933 he appeared before the Legal Council of the League of Nations to advocate for the “crime of barbarity” as a criminal category in international law. That argument became the basis for his definition of “genocide,” which he hoped would lead to legal codification. His efforts have been historically associated with Nazi atrocities. But in his writings he applied the term broadly to show how, in the long historical precedent for this crime, especially as a feature of colonialism, a narrow (exclusively biological) definition of “population” contributed to its obscurity by making it difficult to recognize different kinds of group annihilation as the same crime.

Lemkin’s lobbying resulted in a UN Convention that defined genocide broadly enough to encompass the destruction of a group’s cultural heritage. The definition rested on the recognition that the coherence of a people relied on shared stories of a past that encode its collective values and beliefs – what Mali would call its mythistory. The UN Convention tacitly affirmed the power of historical narrative as it mandated the respect for diverse populations – conceived through genes or culture – as the basis for the politics of a new world system.

Fanon offered a trenchant analysis of cultural genocide when he illuminated the colonial tactic of inscribing both the cultures and the biology of the colonized in a narrative of natural history. Colonialism saw its past in “the yellow man’s reptilian motions, ... the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations,” in “hordes of vital statistics, ... hysterical masses, ... faces bereft of all humanity, ... distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, ... that vegetative rhythm of life” (Fanon

1963, 42–43). It thereby made “every effort ... to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behavior, to recognize the unreality of his ‘nation,’ and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure” (236).

Like Arendt and Lemkin, although considerably more radical in his analysis and proposals, Fanon believed the way forward lay in a revision of the narrative of the past that interleaved biology, culture, and politics. It fell to “the Third World,” he argued in his revolutionary call to arms, to start “a new history of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe’s crimes ... the differentiations, the stratification, and the bloodthirsty tensions fed by classes; racial hatreds, slavery, exploitation, and above all the bloodless genocide which consisted in the setting aside of fifteen thousand millions of men” (315). Such a story would not merely offer a new account of the past; rather, this history would constitute a new humanity. A new version of humankind would produce a new kind of human: “quite simply,” Fanon maintains, “the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of man by another ‘species’ of man” (35).

Having attended medical school in the years following World War II, Fanon would likely have encountered the new evolutionary theories, and he could well have had such ideas in mind when he formulated political change in biological terms. Political transformation had to entail, first, an understanding of “biology” and “nature” as conceptual tools of oppression. The revolutionary process acts as the conceptual mutation that initiates the slow process of humanity’s evolution. A new history encompassing diverse cultures without imposing a developmental narrative on them would subsequently lead to a biological, as well as political and cultural, metamorphosis of humankind itself as all peoples would be allowed to flourish through self-respect and self-determination.

Huxley’s contention that “the future of man ... must be guided by a deliberate purpose” (Huxley 1942, 576) led him to eugenics (which he did not find inconsistent with his anti-racism). With a deeper understanding of history, the more revolutionary Fanon advocated nothing less for the program of decolonization than harnessing the forces of evolution. Decolonization had to be a full-scale reconstitution, “a historical process” that

influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history’s floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. (Fanon 1963, 36)

Decolonization, that is, had at once to rewrite human history in the textbooks and a human future in DNA; a radical new mythistory would produce a brave new world.

Science Fictional Environments

If humanity’s future for Fanon lay in a retelling of its past, Arendt turned to stories of its future for insight into what she understood to be a self-destructive wish. Opening the prologue of her 1958 study of *The Human Condition* with the 1957 launching of

Sputnik – an event she considered “second in importance to no other” – she remarks on the “curious” expression not of “pride or awe at the tremendousness of human power and mastery,” but “relief about the first ‘step toward escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth’” (1958, 1). She identifies in this wish a dangerously paradoxical desire to evade mortality by escaping nature. “Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven,” she ponders ominously, “end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky?” (1958, 2). As Darwin had observed and the evolutionary synthesis had reinforced, evolution was an ecological process; “the earth[,] ... the very quintessence of the human condition” (2). Lamenting that the “highly non-respectable literature of science fiction” has not yet received “the attention it deserves as a vehicle of mass sentiments and mass desires,” she expresses her hope that the irony inherent in “the wish to escape the human condition” will be recognized before it progresses to the suicidal destruction of the planetary conditions of human existence (2).

Science fiction (sf) emerged as a mass genre against the backdrop of the geopolitical changes and techno-scientific innovations with which these theorists were engaged. While sf registers mass sentiments and desires, there is also perhaps no better record of speculation concerning the conception of the human and the fate of humanity than this speculative genre. Pushing at the boundaries of the credible as well as the knowable, sf manifests the conjunction of the scientific and the social. The critic Darko Suvin defines it as “*a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment*” (Suvin 1979, 7–8). The description, derived from the Russian formalist understanding of artistic technique as intrinsically defamiliarizing, offers sf’s challenge to fundamental scientific ideas about what is possible as an extreme and broad form of this technique; works in the genre promote speculation through uncanniness: either likenesses that are not quite the same or differences that are bizarrely familiar. From its mid-century proliferation, sf writers and critics have debated the relationship of sf to myth. While for many individual writers the distinctions among sf, myth, and fantasy are unclear, the speculative nature of the genre and its comprehensive engagement with the long history of humanity, from the prehistoric past to the indiscernible future, facilitates contemplation of, as it contributes to, mythistory (hence, as well, its particular efficacy as cultural criticism).

If evolutionary theory made apparent that the only certainty for humanity is change, sf explored the many directions those changes could take. Interplanetary travel in the proliferating works of sf in the mid-century moment expressed more than desire for escape; it also allowed readers to consider the strangeness of the human through the eyes of alien species and to imagine new possibilities for interactions through the experience of radically different social structures. Time travel defamiliarized the present as it offered unanticipated futures or traced the logical consequences of dangerous contemporary trends. Or by returning to the past, it allowed readers not only to explore what might have been, but also, like Benjamin’s historical materialist, to recognize the assumptions fueling unwitting repetitions. Even plausible inventions registered changing ideas of the human. Interactive robots illustrated the mathematician Norbert Wiener’s observations about the mechanistic quality of humans, and clones troubled the belief in human uniqueness.⁶

Sf even challenged humanity's evolutionary hubris. In Christian Nyby and Howard Hawks's 1951 sf/horror film, *The Thing from Another World*, an alien vessel carrying a creature comprised of "porous unconnected vegetable growth" lands near an experimental science station at the North Pole (Nyby and Hawks 1951). Explaining to the dubious military personnel summoned to investigate the UFO that "intelligence in plants and vegetables is an old story, older even than the animal arrogance that has overlooked it," the scientists surmise that the creature hails from a planet on which flora rather than fauna took the evolutionary lead. When the lead scientist, Dr. Carrington, discovers seedpods in the creature's arm, he enthuses over the "neat and unconfused reproductive technique of vegetation. No pain or pleasure as we know it. No emotions. No heart." And he is certain that the creature – "Our superior. Our superior in every way" – will reveal "secrets" of the universe "if we can only communicate with it." The gruesome implications of the finding that the creature feeds on blood materializes in the discovery of two of the scientists hanging upside down in the greenhouse with their blood drained, as "in a slaughterhouse." The secret revealed by the creature is the humbling evolutionary insight, familiar in sf, that a superior alien species may have no more regard for humans than "we have [for] a cabbage field": humanity is not a challenging enemy, but a simple food source.

Mid-century sf manifests anxiety not only about the place of the human in the evolutionary food chain, but also about its fundamental instability, even alienability. The ambulatory vegetable that Dr. Carrington so admires lacks the ability of its fictional predecessor, from John Campbell's 1938 novella *Who Goes There?*, to assume its victims' identities. Yet the theme of alien possession proliferated in the 1950s, in works such as Robert Heinlein's 1951 *The Puppet Masters*, the 1953 film *Invasion from Mars*, Philip K. Dick's 1954 "The Father Thing," and, most famously, Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers*, a 1954 serial in *Collier's*, published as a book the following year and appearing in numerous cinematic and fictional incarnations ever since. The threat to humanity evinced in these works is social as well as biological. The doctor protagonist of *The Body Snatchers*, Miles Bennell, expresses nostalgia for the disappearance of small-town community life into the anonymity of an increasingly standardized existence, exemplified by new technology, such as dial phones, which, "marvelously efficient, saving you a full second or more every time you call," are "inhumanly perfect, and utterly brainless," and "none of them will ever remember where the doctor is at night, when a child is sick and needs him" (Finney 1955, 49–50). The emotionless pods incarnate the doctor's concern as well as the message of the story, that "we're refining all humanity out of our lives" (49–50). Finney denied speculation that the emotional conformity of the pod people was an allegory for either communism or McCarthyism, but both contributed to concerns about the loss of humanity in an increasingly global, techno-scientific, and standardized world that are evident in alien possession narratives.

The pods are "completely evolved life," explains Pod Zero, the former botanist Bernard Budlong, with "the ability to re-form and reconstitute themselves into perfect duplication, cell for living cell, of any life form they may encounter in whatever conditions that life has suited itself for" (Finney 1955, 153). The pod people exemplify humanity negatively, by pointing to what is missing. "Only when we have to fight to stay human," intones Miles's cinematic incarnation, "do we realize how precious it is" (Siegel 1956). The unconverted humans embrace their emotions, ambitions, desires, and creativity; their pain is as precious as their pleasure. The novel affirms humanity as intangible and ultimately inalienable, transcending biology, as it defers the evolutionary lessons incarnated in the pods.

While Finney's humans ultimately defeat their alien foe, the fate of humanity remains uncertain in the subsequent cinematic incarnations, as it does in numerous sf works from the period. Even if humanity thwarts the specific alien invasions, nuclear wars, disease pandemics, and environmental disasters or resource exhaustion in mid-century works of sf, the threats remain. "Watch the skies!" enjoins the tag-along journalist, broadcasting from the North Pole, at the end of *The Thing from Another World*. These scenarios potentially position sf to circumvent what Chakrabarty describes as "the historicist paradox" of imagining "the finitude of humanity," which requires us "to insert ourselves into a future 'without us'" (Chakrabarty 2009, 197–198). But that imaginative act is, as he suggests, notoriously difficult, as the works themselves seem to acknowledge.

Disaster averted, humanity in sf, as in history, seems to miss or quickly forget the insight that flashes up as a memory in this moment of danger. The familiar narrative of technological or scientific ingenuity or just plain heroism encourages a sanguine reliance on techno-science to solve the problem. Even when the long history of evolution and intergalactic exploration allows writers to loose their imaginations on a wide array of biological metamorphoses and social transformations, the stories typically manifest historical consciousness. We identify as readers with a humanoid sensibility that regards us in our contemporary moment as we regard our historical forebears; sf allows us, that is, to project ourselves into the future – the "continuity of human experience" that Chakrabarty sees as fundamental to "the discipline of history" (2009, 197). The genre registers the process by which an impending crisis is absorbed into the characteristic mythic oscillation between imminent threat and ritualized regeneration. The challenge of sf as cultural critique is to make that process available for inspection.

The biologist Rachel Carson turned to sf for that purpose in her widely influential *Silent Spring* to show how chemical weapons developed for war metamorphosed into the planetary threat of chemical pesticides and herbicides. Carson opens her book, originally a serialized *New Yorker* piece, with the indeterminate past of a fairy tale: "There once was a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings" until "a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change" (Carson 2002, 1–2). All is beauty and harmony until "an evil spell" in the form of "mysterious maladies" and "a shadow of death" transforms the community, yielding a "spring without voices." The horror of this fairy tale, however, is that it isn't one: "No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world," Carson intones. "The people had done it themselves" (3). With the revelation, she moves into an sf-inflected polemic: the "grim specter" of a non-existent town that "might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world" (3). From an undetermined future, she looks back on the present as an indeterminate past – not history, but the fairy tale of a world (potentially) without us. This "fable for tomorrow" disrupts the expectation of historical continuity.

Throughout *Silent Spring*, Carson turns to the paraliterary (fusions of sf, fantasy, horror, and myth) to estrange the reader's familiar world. What we know from history – or biology – is insufficient to convey the "extraordinary properties" of these chemicals, which

convert plants or animals into a sort of Medea's robe by making them actually poisonous ... The world of systemic insecticides is a weird world, surpassing the imaginings of the brothers Grimm – perhaps most closely akin to the cartoon world of Charles Addams. It is a world where the enchanted forest of the fairy

tales has become the poisonous forest in which an insect that chews a leaf or sucks the sap of a plant is doomed. It is a world where a flea bites a dog, and dies because the dog's blood has been made poisonous, where an insect may die from vapors emanating from a plant it has never touched, where a bee may carry poisonous nectar back to its hive and presently produce poisonous honey. (32–33)

Fantasy turns almost imperceptibly to horror and then, more terribly, to the ordinary; we have made the future uncertain.

Like the pod invasion, “[t]his sudden silencing of the song of the birds, this obliteration of the color and beauty and interest they lend to our world have come about swiftly, insidiously, and unnoticed by those whose communities are as yet unaffected” (103). As the pods assume control of an individual’s cellular information, the chemicals get into the circulatory systems of individuals and the planet, turning our cells “alien and destructive” (230) and our waterways into poison delivery systems. Chemical pollution initiates a “chain of evil ... not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues” which, along with radiation, is “changing the very nature of the world – the very nature of its life” (6). Just as the pod invasion awakens humanity to its self-destruction – perhaps, in the films, too late – Carson stresses the human agency involved in chemical pollution.

Chakrabarty distinguishes between an environmentalist understanding of “human beings as biological agents” and the Anthropocenic formulation of human beings as “geological agents” on the basis of scale: “we can become geological agents only historically and collectively,” he explains, “... when we have reached numbers and invented technologies that are on a scale large enough to have an impact on the planet itself” (2009, 206–207). Yet the web of life that Carson describes is planetary; the silent spring, climatological. Humankind, moreover, is proving to be an irresponsible trustee of evolution; the chemicals “have the power to strike directly at the chromosomes,” threatening “our genetic heritage, a possession that has come down to us through some two billion years of evolution and selection of living protoplasm, a possession that is ours for the moment only, until we must pass it on to generations to come” (Carson 2002, 216). In the *sf* future Carson imagines, moreover, humankind has abnegated its evolutionary advantage in favor of more adaptable creatures: insects mutate quickly enough to outpace the toxins that are destroying humans. Although not quite the giant ants of *Them!* or any of the other mutant insects of mid-century *sf*/horror, Carson’s insects are nonetheless set to inherit a humanless earth. Carson writes *Silent Spring* to awaken humankind from its expectation of historical continuity to an eco-evolutionary “awareness that we are dealing with life – with living populations and all their pressures and counterpressures, their surges and recessions,” and that the survival of the species depends upon achieving “a reasonable accommodation between the insect hordes and ourselves” (296).

The State of the Species

If chemical warfare on flora and fauna turned humans into unwitting evolutionary agents, the first successful experiments in recombinant DNA, announced in 1973, found scientists celebrating that status. News of the experiments reached the general

public largely through media accounts, two years later, when scientists' concern about potential health hazards led to an unprecedented conference among scientists, following a moratorium on the research, to discuss the extent to which they should regulate research on recombinant DNA. But if *sf* had become science in the laboratories, science turned back into *sf* in the media, with speculation about how "these modern Frankenstein creations" would interact with humanity (Gwynne 1976, 106). Cultural commentators worried that with the power to create and potentially patent new life forms, "commercial companies could slowly 'climb' the evolutionary ladder with living organisms, whose rights and development they wish to have solely." Their concern that such a scenario could lead humans to lose "our respect for each other, and for what it means to be human" suggests a belief in a stable biological definition of the human underpinning the social order, and in natural history as the basis for social justice. In its manipulation of species boundaries and commodification of living organisms, the science and business of biotechnology challenged those beliefs (Goodfield 1977, xiii). Anxieties found expression not only in the mainstream media and popular fiction and film, but also in landmark court cases that manifested both the importance of definitions of life and the human and the fundamental conventionality – and instability – of those definitions.⁷

Against the backdrop of these discussions, the cultural critic Michel Foucault articulated a new theory of power that shifted the focus from "disciplinary" to "regulatory mechanisms" (2003, 246).⁸ In a series of lectures, delivered at the Collège de France during the late 1970s, he returns to the Enlightenment to document the emergence of new "techniques of power" (242), which he calls "biopower" (and its corollary form of governance, biopolitics), that operated through the management of life on a collective scale. As proliferating discoveries concerning fossils and geology produced a shift in the relationship of human and natural history, humanity assumed a "dual position": at once "outside history, in its biological environment, and inside human historicity, penetrated by the latter's techniques of knowledge and power" (Foucault 1990, 143).

Foucault's concept of biopower flashes up as a memory at a moment of danger. As the state manifests its control over definitions of life and the human in relation to the emerging (multi-billion dollar) industry of biotechnology, Foucault returns to the rise of a new form of governance that legitimated itself in the incarnation of a population with needs it ostensibly emerged to safeguard. Since concern over excessive governance was a distinguishing feature of liberalism, the liberal state had to justify its exercise of power. Foucault explains how the use of statistics ostensibly measures the life data of a population, thereby constituting a population in the form of a "society" that, in turn, calls the liberal state – "naturally" – into being. As in the U.S. Constitution's "We the People," the state is summoned mythistorically into existence – constituted as a "body politic" – by a people that, paradoxically, such a constitution has in fact defined as such.

Foucault posits evolutionism as a turning point from the use of history to biology as the basis for state power and the configuration of threats from which society had to be defended. "Evolutionism," which he defines as "not so much Darwin's theory itself as a set, a bundle, of notions (such as: the hierarchy of species that grow from a common evolutionary tree, the struggle for existence among species, the selection that eliminates the less fit)," breaks down the "population" into ostensibly biological "subspecies

known ... as races” and locates the threat to “society” as emanating from within rather than from outside of the state (Foucault 2003, 256, 255). Modern racism “is not bound up with mentalities, ideologies, or the lies of power. It is bound up with the technique of power, with the technology of power” (258). Those techniques include the use of scientific discourse – such as the language of natural history (man as species) – to stabilize human differences, and hence social hierarchies and power relations, in biological terms. Natural history – including the vocabulary of “population” and “species” – supplies the justification for the exclusion of members of the population from society and, in effect, from the full expression of humanity.

Foucault’s assertion that “racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide” (257) dovetails with Fanon’s analysis.⁹ And if the memory flashing up at the moment of biotechnology is the power of the mythohistorical discourse of natural history in which “species” is the grounding term – in Chakrabarty’s words, a “placeholder for an emergent, new universal history of humans” (2009, 221) – and racism is its “basic mechanism” (Foucault 2003, 254), then it is clear how a new history of humankind would replace “a certain ‘species’ of man by another ‘species’ of man” (Fanon 1963, 35). Chakrabarty calls for new narratives that begin with the species as a designation for universality in the language of survival, which he disaggregates from questions of equity and parity, and of human difference and hierarchy. Fanon, conversely, advocates for new narratives of humankind that will transform the species. However metaphorically he might intend that formulation, it tacitly recognizes humanity’s contingency on both its environments and its mythohistories, and it depicts evolution as a simultaneously social and biological force. The new history of humanity he proposes replaces the language of crisis and survival with the question of how we want to live justly in a global world.

This chapter has staged a Benjaminian return to the crises that followed World War II: the calls for change emerging from the shock of unprecedented human atrocities, the uncertainty of a human or planetary future, the geopolitical upheavals of longstanding oppression and global inequities. Complementing scientific discoveries and technological innovations, those crises exposed as they disrupted conventional assumptions about the idea of the human. I have considered how a range of critics engaged the question of the human – biological and political – in an effort to fashion more just stories. And I have suggested how, in so doing, they encountered what, following Joseph Mali, I have called the mythohistorical: the powerfully formative stories through which values, beliefs, and fundamental definitions about the nature of being become conventional. I have considered how the mythic features of those stories forestall change: how the familiar apocalyptic rhetoric risks incorporating warnings of impending doom into rituals of renewal, with the language of crisis readily appropriated into a state of emergency as the rule rather than the exception, and how a conflation of species thinking and universal humanism can embed power relations in a narrative of natural history. Mythohistories are inevitable, but not immutable. Their deliberate refashioning is most effective, however, if we recognize their appeal not only as the seductive power of ideology, but also as a necessary theology. In their calls for new histories of humanity, the critics I have considered were searching for ways to harness the power of such stories to galvanize, enchant, and inspire. In my Benjaminian return, I have sought to suggest some of the ways the cultural critic might look to the stars, not only for the illuminations that may afford a glimpse of the mythohistorical, but also for the constellations we form with a critical past in the ongoing struggle for planetary justice.¹⁰

- see CHAPTER 12 (COMMUNITY, COLLECTIVITY, AFFINITIES); CHAPTER 24 (DIGITAL AND NEW MEDIA); CHAPTER 31 (NATURE); CHAPTER 32 (SCALE)

Acknowledgments

For this chapter I have borrowed from earlier essays, including “Science, Technology, and the Environment,” *The Cambridge Companion to American Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Eric Link (January 2015): 179–193; “Botanophobia: Fear of Plants in the Atomic Age,” *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 24 (2013): 7–27; “American Studies and the Politics of Life: ASA Presidential Address,” *American Quarterly* 64.2 (June 2012): 185–204; “Cells, Genes, and Stories: HeLa’s Journey from Labs to Literature,” *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of Race, DNA and History*, ed. Keith Wailoo, Alondra Nelson, and Catherine Lee (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012): 247–265; “Exquisite Fragility: Human Being in the Aftermath of War,” *Blackwell Companion to American Literary Studies*, ed. Caroline Levander and Robert Levine (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011): 437–452.

Notes

- 1 The term “Anthropocene” has numerous antecedents and has itself been used in multiple contexts in the past. The current use of the term was coined by the environmental biologist Eugene Stoermer but was widely popularized by Crutzen, an atmospheric chemist. There have been many accounts of this history. See, for example, Revkin (2011).
- 2 Moving thus from universal to species, Chakrabarty slips from a philosophical term (the universal) into a biological concept (species). The critics I will treat in this chapter were concerned – more or less consciously – with the relationship between them.
- 3 Mali contends that historians have traditionally been too quick to distinguish between the history and myths of contemporary populations. Drawing on a range of theorists of both history and myth, he explores the subtle ways myths turn into histories (or, conversely, histories become mythic), and “the narration of ultimate origins and ends of the most fundamental laws and institutions of the community secures their authority against any rational or historical attack on their validity” (2003, 6). Among his many sources, he cites Friedrich Nietzsche’s well-known formulation, which informs my own work as well, that “without myth every culture loses the healthy natural power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement.... Even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with religion and its growth from mythical notions” (cited in Mali 2003, 15; see also Nietzsche 1967, 135).

I understand the mythic inflection of the histories of a group to be what imparts a particular power to the histories and makes them especially difficult to challenge. At moments of “danger,” to use Walter Benjamin’s formulation, which is to say moments of particular transition, the mythic features surface and become more susceptible to inspection and challenge. These mythic features are inevitable and impart a powerful – even magnificent – aesthetic. They are certainly ideological, but they cannot be reduced entirely to ideology, and they can promote as well as subvert social justice. My understanding of

- myth is indebted to generations of theorists of myth, but among the contemporary theorists, particularly to the work of Bruce Lincoln. See especially *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (1999).
- 4 The point at which to locate the beginning of the Anthropocene is a much-debated topic. For this proposal, see Zalasiewicz et al. (2015).
 - 5 The statement, which drew on the work of Huxley and others, was drafted largely by social scientists, but revised following criticism by Huxley and other biologists. The document defined “a race, from the biological standpoint, ... as one of a group of populations constituting the species *Homo sapiens*.... National, religious, geographic, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups: and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated genetic connexion with racial traits. Because serious errors of this kind are habitually committed when the term ‘race’ is used in popular parlance, it would be better when speaking of human races to drop the term ‘race’ altogether and speak of ethnic groups” (Montagu 1951, 30, 31). The statement notes, moreover, that the classificatory terms (then) currently in use have “embalmed” the “biological processes” that are in fact “dynamic, not static. These divisions were not the same in the past as they are at present, and there is every reason to believe that they will change in the future.... The biological fact of race and the ‘myth’ of race should be distinguished. For all practical social purposes ‘race’ is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of ‘race’ has created an enormous amount of human and social damage. In recent years it has taken a heavy toll in human lives and caused untold suffering. It still prevents the normal development of millions of human beings and deprives civilization of the effective co-operation of productive minds. The biological differences between ethnic groups should be disregarded from the standpoint of social acceptance and social action. The unity of mankind from both the biological and social viewpoints is the main thing. To recognize this and to act accordingly is the first requirement of modern man” (12–13).
 - 6 Wiener provocatively speculated, in *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1954), that “the sort of phenomenon which is recorded subjectively as emotion may not be merely a useless epiphenomenon of nervous action, but may control some essential stage in learning, and in other similar processes.” And while he conceded he could not confirm that speculation, he averred, “those psychologists who draw sharp and uncrossable distinctions between man’s emotions and those of other living organisms and the responses of the modern type of automatic mechanisms, should be just as careful in their denials as I should be in my assertions” (72–73).
 - 7 In a 5–4 decision, the Supreme Court established the patentability of living organisms in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* (1980), thereby spurring the growth of biotechnology into a multi-billion-dollar business. Ananda Mohan Chakrabarty had filed for his patent of a genetically engineered bacterium in 1972, and debates concerning his own and related cases had been moving through both the courts and legislative bodies throughout the 1970s. While *Roe v. Wade* (1973) does not directly concern the emergence of biotechnology, the case put on display the role of courts and the state in defining life and the impossibility of doing so. The anxieties concerning the instability of these definitions is evident in the legal cases and the media discussions of them.
 - 8 Foucault worked through aspects of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics in multiple works in addition to these lectures, including the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (*La volonté de savoir*) and lectures at the Collège de France published as “*Society Must*

Be Defended" (1976–1977), *Security, Territory, and Population* (1977–1978), and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978–1979), with each discussion registering slight changes. The concept has been widely picked up and modified in critical discussions. Giorgio Agamben and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in particular have considerably influenced the definition of the term. I focus here on "*Society Must Be Defended*" because of its priority of articulation and fullest development, and the clarity with which Foucault historicizes and explains the concept, especially in relationship to evolution and racism. For useful chronicles of the many uses of the terms, see especially Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (2011), and Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, "Thoughts on the Concept of Biopower Today" (2006).

- 9 For an excellent discussion of the connections among early modern colonialism, science, and race that complements these claims, see Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500–1676* (2001).
- 10 For invaluable suggestions on the many incarnations of this chapter, I wish to thank Sarah Blacker, Evan Donahue, Joseph Donahue, Nathaniel Donahue, David Eng, Shawn Michelle Smith, Justin Sully, Imre Szeman, and the members of my fabulous writing group, Laura Edwards, Esther Gabara, and Louise Meintjes.

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Section C: Structures of Agency and Belonging

This section explores how power flows through structures of agency and belonging, constituting a multitude of social realities that tend to be understood as “merely cultural” (Butler 1997). The concept of agency refers to an individual’s ability to act on their desires, and is closely related to the liberal ideal of autonomy. Agency is a concept that is crucial for cultural theory’s ability to delineate the contours of the power relations that work to naturalize inequality as inevitable, rational, and commonsensical. For many scholars, a theorization of agency is central to an analysis of political subjectivity: in the absence of the possibility of active resistance, it becomes impossible not to accept existing power structures as inevitable. Ascribing agency to the subject, then, allows us to understand subjects as political actors who can work towards change, rather than passively accepting existing relations of power.

The chapters in this section address the following questions: how is agency enabled or hindered? How are our desires shaped and produced in the first place? How does a sense of belonging (or lack thereof) relate to the formation of political subjectivity? One focus of this section is the role of cultural forms in articulating the social positions through which agency and belonging are structured and understood. A number of categories – including gender, race, sexuality, class, citizenship status, migration background, (dis)ability, and age – play an important role in producing the subject positions through which we understand our ability to act on our desires and work towards change. For instance, as we have seen in Chapter 21, scholarship in disability studies has done important work in rendering questions of agency and belonging more legible by asking questions about how social forms – including institutions, legislation, educational criteria for evaluation, and built landscapes – are all structured in a way that allows for particular people to thrive with much more ease than others. While the role played by social categories in the production of agency has been addressed by numerous chapters in the previous sections of this volume, these questions find more explicit and sustained consideration in the chapters that follow.

The rich bodies of work that explore the way cultural forms engender and reinforce exclusionary structures of agency and belonging are too numerous to catalogue here. The methods through which this work is carried out, too, are multiple. A common tendency shared by most of this research, though, is a critical suspicion of too-neat constructions of wholeness that circulate a misleading sense of equality among a given group of social actors. The erasure or subsumption of difference is a complex process,

especially when we add the consideration of agency to the picture: difference is often figured as a matter of “personal choice” in a manner that problematically affirms liberal ideas of the subject. For instance, the work of the Canadian novelist and cultural critic Dionne Brand explores the mechanisms through which non-normative ways of being, acting, and desiring – including the very presence of racial and sexual difference – are managed within Canadian public culture by relegating these to a “safe” and subordinate position in which the presence of difference ceases to pose a “threat” to hegemonic notions of national culture. As the cultural critic Celia Lury has noted, such complex processes of “culturalizing” difference and social stratification turn persistent forms of structural inequality into matters of individual choice or preference (see Chapter 20, “The Everyday, Taste, Class”).

To revisit Freud’s concept of the unconscious and Marx’s concept of ideology allows for a greater understanding of the production of subjects who are oddly non-identical with themselves, in the sense that our own interests as gendered, classed, and racialized subjects elude us, and we instead identify with and act in favor of the interests of more powerful groups. More recently, cultural theorists have reconceptualized agency in light of economic precarity that has become ubiquitous at the outset of the twenty-first century. Lauren Berlant argues that a consideration of the set of conditions for life under late capitalism reveals that we can no longer assume that individuals’ actions are informed by the kind of intentionality that we have long understood to be constitutive of agency. Individuals’ actions are most often *not* deliberate or even thought through; for Berlant, aligning intentionality with agency has allowed neoliberal ideology to pathologize non-normative bodies. Most people are struggling just to get by, working multiple jobs to try to manage debt, and any ascription of agency as defined by the assumption of intentionality – when structural conditions render intentionality an inaccessible privilege granted with the luxury of free time and minimal stress – is misguided. Berlant asks us to reject “normative notions of agency” (2007, 758) and to reconceptualize agency as merely “an activity of maintenance, not making; fantasy, without grandiosity; sentience, without full intentionality; inconsistency, without shattering; embodying, alongside embodiment” (759).

Critical and cultural theory has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that blunt theories of state and social oppression (originally focusing on race, class, and gender) no longer offer the most effective conceptual approach for understanding systemic barriers and the workings of privilege. Power now operates in new ways, whether technological or environmental, as particular social forms accelerate global warming, creating new forms of social inequalities along with it. The chapters collected in this section explore how cultural forms – as well as the methods we use to study these cultural forms – open up and extend capacities for agency and belonging for some, while restricting these capacities for others. The mechanisms through which these structures are animated, governed, and understood are by no means consistent or transparent; these processes are fraught with complexity and contradiction at every turn, which speaks to the import of scholarship that addresses these questions.

Explorations of theories of structures of agency and belonging take three primary forms. In the first of these, we find theory grappling with questions of access through a focus on the structural conditions of production and circulation. Will Straw, Sarah

Brouillette, and Min Hyoung Song each draw attention to the particular sets of conditions through which agency and belonging are produced, as well as the way in which this conditioning of agency and belonging often results in sharp inequalities. Straw and Brouillette's chapters consider how critical and cultural theory has approached studying culture in the moments of its material production and circulation. In his chapter on race and ethnicity, Song addresses the processes through which social constructions that reinforce and reproduce social hierarchies – such as the concept of biological race – are circulated as “natural kinds.” As Song emphasizes, this preoccupation with the notion of difference as exemplified by race thinking contributes not only to the restriction of access to agency and belonging for racialized people, but also to the kind of distinction made in the form of a “biological caesura” that can result in “the inflicting of ‘premature death’ on some groups” through state-sanctioned forms of racism.

Second, authors Jennifer Wenzel, Stephanie LeMenager, and Justin Sully explore how the situatedness of theory – and our particular locations as critics – shapes our study of the structures that determine social consciousness. In her chapter on decolonization, Wenzel considers the limitations of cultural theory in addressing postcolonial (and neocolonial) contexts. As Wenzel shows, the ongoing struggle for decolonization cannot center solely around the practices of state governance, linguistic and cultural norms; we must also work to decolonize methodological practices and theory that reflects the social consciousness and interests of colonizing power. Considering the role played by the concept of nature in producing structures of agency and belonging, LeMenager discusses the way that social hierarchies and forms of exclusion are maintained through naturalizing discourses. She argues that agency and belonging are embodied relations and that the material and the biological are not predetermined but co-produced together with other more recognizably social forms. Crucial to this focus on the situatedness of critique is the concept of scale. Sully's chapter demonstrates how the scalar plane at which a given inquiry or social practice takes place reflects a particular temporal and spatial situatedness. The analytical reach of our studies, Sully shows, can be expanded if we consider other temporal and spatial scales as we formulate our problems.

Finally, authors Nina Power and Marie-Laure Ryan train their analytical lenses on the ways that an unevenness in agency and belonging structures both how knowledge is produced *and* the content of the knowledge itself. Nina Power explores how we conceptualize collectivity (no small task in the context of the increasing fragmentation of the social in late capitalism) and the processes through which political subjectivities are formed, through a genealogy of how the western philosophy of humanism has developed the concepts of agency and belonging. Ryan's chapter explores the eclipse of grand narrative by the ubiquity of hyper-subjective reflections circulated through social media (often in 140 characters or less). While she acknowledges that narratives – those that traffic ideas of racial inferiority, for instance – allow power to flow down well-trodden paths, perpetuating systemic forms of exclusion and violence, Ryan also emphasizes how narrative can function as an emancipatory tool, particularly in its capacity to affirm and create spaces of belonging for identity categories that have been subject to discrimination and persecution.

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26

Circulation*Will Straw*

For at least four centuries, the term “circulation” has been put forward in periods of social upheaval as a key to understanding how the world has been transformed. The claim that people, things or ideas now “circulate,” rather than remaining fixed within social or physical structures, is a common means of describing a new condition of social life. “Circulation” has come to stand for the disruptions of tradition and crumbling of old edifices which have brought us the modern world in its various forms. Key transitions in world history, from the expansion of capitalist markets in the seventeenth century through the destruction and rebuilding of cities in the 1800s, and on to the growth of the Internet in the 2000s, have been accompanied by the argument that we now live in a world in which circulation reigns.

This use of “circulation” as a symptom of modernity may be traced back to the most important early use of the term – as a way of characterizing the movement of blood in human or animal bodies. In 1628, the English physician William Harvey (1578–1657) published a treatise arguing that, rather than “falling” through the body, or seeping between walls of tissue, blood was set in motion through a circulatory system, as a result of pumping by the heart. Harvey’s theories about the primacy of the heart challenged longstanding theories of the movement of blood, but were also part of a shift towards understanding broader social phenomena in terms of their circulation. As Thomas Wright has shown, while Harvey’s discovery revolutionized medicine, the physician was drawing on ideas that were already shaping the English language in the decades just before he published his findings:

It is surely significant that around this time, many words relating to circles, circular patterns and circulation entered everyday parlance, along with the alchemical terms such as ‘circulation.’ “Circuit” (‘to go or move in a circuit’) was first used in 1611; the adjective ‘circuitous’ came into being in around 1620; ‘circulator’ (i.e. ‘he who or that which circulates’) entered the language in 1607, while ‘circularity’ had been employed since the 1580s. The currents of the English language undoubtedly carried Harvey towards his theory. (Wright 2012, 175)

The concept of circulation quickly became important as a tool for thinking about social life in general, with two consequences. One of these is that the terminology used to describe circulation (which included such words as circuit, conduit, and vessel) moved into a variety of non-medical domains. This generalization of the idea of circulation, Erik Swyngedouw suggests, would become particularly intense by the time of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, when political upheavals encouraged the sense that ideas, rumors, and emotions were circulating uncontrollably through Parisian society. “Circulation,” in this moment, and in others to come, would seem to capture the character of a restless world in which old hierarchies were dissolving and new social forces were being set in motion. A second consequence of the new interest in circulation, to which we shall turn in detail shortly, was that society itself came to be envisioned on the model of the human body. The smooth movement of money, people, and goods would be seen as crucial to a society’s “health,” just as the unconstrained movement of blood sustained the human or animal body.

From our present-day vantage point, we may point to three broad areas of thinking in which ideas of circulation have proved influential. Each of these will be examined here in turn. One such domain is that of the economy. Concepts of circulation have been at the heart of models of capitalism and markets, and economists have long puzzled and argued over the relationship between the circulation of money and that of goods. A longstanding question here is whether commodities enter into circulation with their values already embedded within them or, rather, they acquire such value in their circulation through markets. A second broad area of application emerged with the incredible growth of cities. From the nineteenth century onward, the idea of urban space as a set of overlapping systems of circulation has proved highly influential to scholars studying cities and to those grappling with the problems of city governance. A key question here is whether a city is best seen as a community, defined by the social relations which have taken shape within it, or as a circulatory space, defined by the pathways of movement along which people, things, and ideas travel. Finally, we will examine the use of “circulation” as a way of describing the movement of information and cultural expression. From the oral communication of the revolutionary street in eighteenth-century France through the sharing of news items on contemporary social media, ideas of circulation have been invoked to capture those processes by which cultural expression of all kinds moves and finds its audiences. The crucial question here, forever debated in the study of culture, is whether the meaning of cultural artifacts (like films or email messages) is somehow carried within these artifacts, from person to person (or place to place), or is instead a function of the circulatory routes along which a cultural object travels as it traces links between people and places.

The Circulatory Economy

For Karl Marx, understanding how a capitalist economy differed from one based on barter (that is, the simple exchange of one good for another) required that one turn to ideas of circulation, and then move beyond them. Put simply, capitalism for Marx is an endless process, in which each act of exchange initiates the movement of capital towards new commodities or new forms of investment. The fundamental deception of capitalism, Marx argues in *Capital*, has to do with the misrecognition of just what, in the process of

circulation, is moving things along. As money is used to purchase commodities, and as these commodities drop out of circulation (in order that they may serve a particular use-value), it may appear as if the movement of money is producing value and keeping economic activity alive. In fact, Marx argues, the movement of money is nothing more than “the expression of the circulation of commodities,” a residue of the ongoing transformation of use-values into exchange values which are expressed in monetary terms. In Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx devotes the entirety of chapter three to questions of circulation, stating, in an evocative phrase, that, under capitalism, “[c]irculation sweats money from every pore” (Marx 1887).

If circulation “sweats” money, however, this did not mean that value was the product of circulation. Marx believed that for economics to be a genuine science, it must move beyond the study of circulation and place capitalist relations of production at the heart of its analysis. Value was the surplus produced in the difference between the return on goods and the investments needed to sustain the social classes who engaged in the labor which produced those goods. Nevertheless, in Marx’s discussion of circulation we find several of the key motifs which will appear in later treatments of the concept in several fields. These include, first, the argument that circulation is an endless process, rather than a circumscribed transaction between individuals, and second, the recognition that circulation fundamentally transforms the relationship between people.

The sociologist Georg Simmel, writing in the late nineteenth century, took up these motifs in highly influential terms. In modern capitalist societies, he wrote, the restless circulation of money worked to dissolve the certainties of an older world, changing the ways in which people related to tradition and to each other. As Peter Fritzsche usefully summarizes his thinking, what Simmel saw as the “substantial things and honorary ties” of an earlier world – the objects made and used within communities and the bonds of respect and responsibility which joined people together – had disappeared amidst the functional relationships of modern capitalism (Fritzsche 1996, 238). The circulation of people, from country to city or nation to nation, weakened the structures of family and social class which had once given people a clear sense of their own identities. The circulation of goods, far away from the places and traditions in which things were made, weakened the meaning of objects and contributed to a broader debasement of everyday life. In a variety of ways, then, the modern inhabitants of capitalist societies, cut off from tradition and community, circulated in estranged fashion through the social world, with money circulating around them as one cause of their estrangement.

Debates over whether capitalist economies are defined by circulation, or whether circulation merely hides an underlying “truth” of economic life (such as the exploitation of one class by another) continue, through the present, within and outside Marxist theory. Kojin Karatani’s influential book *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange* (2014) usefully summarizes these debates, building the author’s own argument for the primacy of exchange and circulation over production. Recently, as well, social critics and scholars have turned to circulation as a way of mapping the different kinds of mobility that characterize present-day capitalism. Whereas once the economic analysis of circulation focused on the movement of money and goods, it is now increasingly preoccupied with the migration of people and with the forces encouraging and controlling this migration. A commonly noted feature of contemporary life is that, while the organization of capitalism on a global basis has facilitated the free movement of commodities and capital (through international trade

agreements and other mechanisms), the movement of people is limited by tightened controls over human mobility. These constraints are, much of the time, rooted in racist immigration policies or alleged security risks. As Didier Fassin has shown, the liberalization of trade since the 1970s has gone hand in hand with restrictions on the transnational circulation of people. These restrictions, Fassin notes, affect “the majority of the population of the planet” (Fassin 2011, 214). To put it simply, money and things now circulate with relative ease, while most people do not.

Circulation and the City

Ideas of circulation have been central to how people imagine cities in the modern age. The French philosopher Michel Foucault has shown how for French town and city officials of the 1700s, the problems of governing municipalities came to be defined in large measure as problems of circulation. How could one open up a town or city so as to encourage the circulation within it of people, things, and money? How could one ensure that one’s own town was well connected to broader spheres of circulation – that it was not cut off from the flow of people or capital (Foucault 2007, 27)? Foucault shows how municipalities learned to distinguish between what he called “good and bad circulation”: the desirable movement of goods and money, on the one hand, and “the influx of the floating population of beggars, vagrants, delinquents, criminals, thieves, murderers, and so on” on the other (34). By the 1800s, officials in cities like Paris were speaking of a “circulatory torrent” of animals, machines, and people which cities had to move quickly to control and channel along efficient pathways (Barles 2001, 191). The building of wide boulevards, sewage and water systems, telegraph lines, railways, canals, and other conduits throughout the last two hundred years has made cities into spaces in which systems of circulation are overlaid and intersecting.

In the nineteenth century, as the literary theorist Karlheinz Stierle has argued, the images which came to stand for well-known cities had less and less to do with a central place (like a government building) which was recognizable to all and through which the city expressed its identity. Rather, the city had become a circulatory system, an open totality in constant movement. Images of such movement now became the favorite means by which a city’s character was represented; scenes of busy boulevards or transportation systems pushed aside those of iconic buildings (Stierle 2001, 322). As Matthias Armengaud has written of European cities, “the centre is no longer the palace square, but the network of ordered and controlled circulations” (Armengaud 2009, 71).

We may distinguish two broad ways of imagining the city as a circulatory space. One has taken shape in the thinking and actions of bohemians or artists. From the nineteenth-century poet Charles Baudelaire through late twentieth-century radical movements like the French Situationists, artists have engaged in the activity of drifting along city streets, immersing themselves in the circulatory flow of people and things. When large cities were new, as they were for Baudelaire’s *flâneur*, this drifting was meant to open the artists’ eyes to the rich and unfamiliar diversity of city life. A hundred years later, artists were more likely to seek out the unusual in cities which by then seemed to have become sterile and uniform. Urban activists like the French Situationist Guy Debord set out to challenge the stifling conformity of post-World War II urban planning through an activity called the drift (or *dérive*). The Situationists moved through the city

(usually Paris) in groups, tracing pathways different from those highlighted in official maps. The “psychogeography” of Debord and his companions produced alternate versions of a city map, seeking to restore, to the highly functional modern city, a sense of the unexpected and miraculous. In the Situationist *dérive*, the circulation of emotions and intensities through a city was of more importance than the pathways of automobiles or commodities (Sadler 1998).

Another, very different idea of the city as circulatory space has been at the heart of major (and usually controversial) initiatives in city planning and urban design over the last hundred years. Well-known science fiction images of futuristic cities (such as those we see in films like *Metropolis* from 1927, or *Just Imagine*, 1930) show us walkways in the air which link buildings, or highways in the sky along which automobiles travel with few impediments to their movement. Unlike the twentieth-century city, which had come to be associated with traffic jams and congestion, the imagined cities of the future would contain infrastructure for smooth circulatory movement. The building of freeways in western countries, particularly in the decades following World War II, was intended to turn cities into efficient spaces of circulation. If, in the famous words of the architect Le Corbusier, the house was a “machine for living,” the city was to be a machine for the smooth circulation of people and goods. “A city made for speed,” Corbusier said, “is made for success” (Le Corbusier 1987, 179).

The urban theorist Ben Highmore has suggested that circulation may no longer be the most useful term with which to think about the structure of contemporary cities. As older infrastructural elements like freeways or plumbing systems come to seem less important than electronic networks, we might ask, with Highmore, whether “circulation has been transplanted by communication” (Highmore 2005, 138). In this case, perhaps, Harvey’s model for the circulation of the blood may give way to modes of imagining cities which are based on the analogy of the nervous system, with its pulses and synapses.

Circulation in the Domain of Discourse

Since the early 2000s, the term “circulation” has enjoyed something of a boom among those engaged in the academic study of cultural forms. By cultural forms, we mean both media objects (like magazines and DVDs) and genres of discourse (like novels or news) which may be “carried” by a variety of media objects. For a long time, those engaged in studying cultural forms had debated the relative importance of producers and consumers in determining the meaning of cultural expression. In studies of literature and media, the notion that meaning was something deposited in a work of culture by its author, and then transmitted in its coherent totality to a reader/consumer, had long been dismissed as overly simplistic. In the place of a creator-centered study of culture, a variety of methodologies argued for an emphasis on the ways in which meaning took shape within acts of reading, reception, and consumption.

Notions of circulation entered this debate when it was felt that both these approaches – those centered on either producers or consumers – still assigned too much importance to the isolated encounter of a cultural object (a book or television program, for example) and the person reading or consuming it. Important, manifesto-like articles by Gaonkar and Povinelli (2003) and Lee and LiPuma (2002) urged those

who analyze culture to move beyond a model centered on producers and receivers in order to examine what they called “cultures of circulation.” To study these “cultures of circulation” meant to study the distances across which cultural forms travel, the rhythms of their movement, and the conditions which make possible various kinds of encounter. The encounters in question are not simply those between cultural objects and their consumers, but, just as importantly, those by which cultural objects join up with each other and position people in new relationships to cultural expression. Large-size screens which display the tweets of those attending public events, for example, bring short messages to readers in new ways, taking them out of individual devices and making them the focus of collective attention. The same kinds of display also set small-scale messaging amidst the posters, video screens, Powerpoint presentations, and other forms of expression which make up the media environments of these events. Tweets are therefore made to circulate across new kinds of visible surfaces, where they join together with other forms of expression which each have their own pathways of circulation.

As Highmore has noted, “rhythmic terms such as ‘circulation’ overcome the sort of fixity that comes from studying production and consumption in isolation from each other: circulation is the articulation of their relationship” (2005, 9). In influential scholarship on the early development of the printed press in the United States, Michael Warner showed how the existence of a “public” for newspapers and magazines required “not just diffusion to strangers, but a temporality of circulation” (2002, 66). By “temporality of circulation,” Warner meant a certain rhythm of publishing, but he was also referring more broadly to the ways in which the circulation of printed matter produced a particular experience of time. One issue of a periodical might refer to earlier issues of the same periodical or anticipate issues to come. The texts in one magazine might engage in polemical discussion with other articles appearing alongside them, in other periodicals, perhaps by denouncing those other articles as out of date. As magazines spoke to each other and succeeded each other, they produced Warner’s “temporality of circulation,” distinctive rhythms through which the new replaced the old, and by which readers experienced time as forever moving forward.

The usefulness of “temporality of circulation” as a concept does not require that we know much about the content of individual articles appearing in these periodicals. We may say that the speed of circulation acts independently of content to give particular realms of culture their specific character. Niilo Kauppi, in a study of French intellectual life in the 1950s and 1960s, shows how the rapid circulation of ideas – in books, magazine articles, and television talk shows – led thinkers and writers in France during this period to adopt extreme positions on culture and society in order to hold the public’s attention. Here we have evidence of circulation producing a rapid sense of change and encouraging high levels of differentiation between those involved in the world of culture. Conversely, we may see the global circulation of present-day paperback crime novels, by well-established writers from places like Scandinavia, as slowing down the rate of change in crime literature by relying on a system of translation and promotion which extends the life of any one novel, while also setting in place a readership (often consisting of air travelers) that remains loyal over several years to familiar writers and formulaic plots.

Some of the most suggestive recent uses of circulation theory have been in relationship to digital media. Two characteristics of such media have highlighted the usefulness

of “circulation” as a concept. One is the fact that images, texts (like novels), and audiovisual works (like films) now move across several different technological devices and formats, like smartphones, tablets, and computer screens. Part of the life of a text today is its ability to change form as it circulates across the different interfaces through which it will be consumed. In the circulation of a film across platforms, for example, its size, proportions, and intensities (of color and sound) will shift; so, too, will the extent to which consuming it involves holding it close to one’s eyes or setting it at a distance. From one experience of a film to another, the interconnection between the human body and the technological interface is different, and the ratio of human senses brought into play will be altered. We can no longer speak of a primary, pure vision of the film, but rather of a body of digital information that circulates across different contexts of viewing and is transformed for each such context.

A second characteristic of digital media highlighting the pertinence of circulation is the relative simplicity or triviality of so much content. As individuals share or transmit dozens of video clips or photographs on a daily basis, a deep analysis of each one of these seems less important than measuring the rhythms of their sequential transmission or mapping the patterns by which they are shared. The speeds and pathways by which bits of culture travel in the contemporary world seem to say more about the role and place of culture than the meaningful substance of any one of those “bits.” In this respect, as I have argued elsewhere, present-day cultural life lends itself with particular ease to what the literary theorist Franco Moretti has called a “distant reading,” in which the interconnection of small elements becomes more important than the deep interpretation of any one (Moretti 2005; Straw 2010).

A key terrain in which this “distant reading” shows its usefulness is that of contemporary journalism. We are accustomed, with the Internet, to seeing news stories broken down into photographs, quotes, opinions, and other units which may gather in one story, then are pulled apart and sent off to join up with other “bits” on different sites. Any online piece of journalism, in this sense, becomes the raw material for processes of circulation which send its various materials elsewhere. As Henrik Bødker shows, the logos which invite us to share a story on Twitter or Facebook are triggers for this circulation: “these are the various ‘handles’ that allow people from different cultures to hurdle an image or text further on out of and into (new) cultures of circulation; to follow such trajectories would be something like following a space explorer capsule as it is propelled into the galaxy by the gravity of different planets” (Bødker 2015).

Some of the most interesting treatments of circulation in relation to culture have been in the field of the visual arts. Many of these treatments begin with the recognition that images, or other cultural objects, have been in abundance for some time. The problem of culture, then, is not how we might produce more cultural expression but how this expression circulates through society. In their study of France during the 1930s – a time of heightened political tensions and cultural activity – Andrew and Ungar speak of the difficulty, for political movements or cultural “fronts,” of controlling or channeling the enormous amount of cultural expression in circulation. While political forces (like the left-wing “Popular Front” which took power in 1936) took shape in the slow clustering of people around political aims, culture circulated quickly through and around these clusters, sometimes joining with them (to support or give voice to a political project), and sometimes disrupting them (by serving as distractions) (Andrew and Ungar 2005, 13).

One way of understanding these processes is through the tension between the slow (what Andrew and Ungar call “molecular”) circulation of people around political forces and the more dynamic and rapid circulation of cultural objects like films or newspapers.

Writing of contemporary art worlds, the critic-scholar Jorg Heiser has argued that we no longer live in a world in which the typical artist works in solitude, then brings forth a work which finds an audience. Rather, the artist is likely to work with things already in the world (preexisting images, documents, places, and so on) and then find ways of bringing these to audiences in distinctive arrangements and specific contexts. “The term ‘circulation,’” Heiser writes, “is shorthand for the ways in which the fluctuating relations between forms (from both inside and outside art) co-define the relations between artists and their audience” (Heiser 2005). For an artist to bring objects such as food, bureaucratic documents, or children’s toys into a space that is used, if only temporarily, for art events, is to be part of a culture of circulation, in which forms, objects, and people are pulled out of their pathways of circulation and brought together in new, usually short-lived combinations.

If culture is more and more defined by circulation, by its movement between places and people, then the question of what effects this movement might have on the value of culture becomes inescapable. Key twentieth-century debates over mass-produced, popular culture were in part about whether the wide circulation of culture was democratizing (in the positive sense of expanding accessibility to culture) or degrading (because, in order to travel far, culture was required to make compromises with popular taste and a market economy). Among the most interesting recent interventions in this debate is that of the U.S. art historian David Joselit, who suggests that while the mass circulation of culture once depleted its value, in part by rendering it over-familiar, circulation is now necessary to mobilize the interest and attention of large populations of people, rendering culture more and more subject to compromises intended to enhance its appeal to popular taste. The “buzz” which accompanies the circulation of a cultural object, and which is so often condemned as a sign of that object’s triviality, is now proof that culture has acquired meaning:

A buzz arises not from the agency of a single object or event but from the emergent behaviors of populations of actors (both organic and inorganic) when their discrete movements are sufficiently in phase to produce coordinated action – when bees, for example, organize themselves into a swarm. Such events are not planned or directed by a single focused intelligence – they are “distributed” over several small acts that, taken individually, may have no intention, or consciousness of a bigger picture. Buzz indicates a moment of becoming – a threshold at which coherence emerges. (Joselit 2012, 18)

In this vision, works of culture circulate, gathering up the small “bits” of attention or excitement which render them meaningful in collective life. “Buzz,” then, is the by-product of circulation, the force which drives it forward and the energy it gives off. Whether we see “buzz” as the ultimate sign of culture’s debasement (its transformation into little more than hype) or proof of culture’s ability to mobilize public attention and interest, writers such as Joselit insist that it is central to our present-day culture of circulation.

Conclusion: Circulation Forever?

While few would deny that ideas of circulation are useful for understanding the behavior of social and cultural phenomena in the world, some key disagreements continue to surround the concept. One of these has to do with whether circulation is best conceived as a liberating process, in which people or ideas become detached from constraints which limit their movement, or is more accurately seen as a kind of entrapment, by which we become stuck to deeply rooted circuits and pathways. Circulation may be both of these, of course, but the ways in which we imagine it will determine the extent to which the very concept inspires or limits the making of a better world. Is circulation a casting-off and setting-free, by which we come to follow ever-expanding circles of possibility? Or is it, like the rounds of employment offices followed by job-seekers, a sign of the futility and repetition which mark so many lives?

The double meanings of circulation are nicely conveyed in the distinction made by geographer Clive Barnett between circulation as either a “scattering and dispersal” or as a “circular, tightly-bound process” (Barnett 2008). The difference between these two visions of circulation may be illustrated using two examples from the history of the urban newspaper. The spread of metropolitan newspapers in the nineteenth century had much to do with the presence of armies of newsvendors, usually young boys, who moved chaotically through urban spaces calling out headlines and seeking buyers through chance encounters. In this process, the spread of the newspaper was marked by “scattering and dispersal,” as news and those who sold it moved in multiple directions. By the middle of the twentieth century, the distribution of newspapers in North American cities had become much more of a “tightly-bound process,” as middle-class young people delivered them to individual homes along well-established routes administered from central offices. In the first example, the circulation of news is part of the chaotic unpredictability of urban life; in the second, it stands for the repetitive, bureaucratized character of routines.

A larger tension surrounding ideas of circulation has to do with the applicability of the concept across history. The question, put simply, is this: has the circulation of people, things, and ideas always been central to human societies, or has it only become significant in recent times (in the last 150 years, for example)? Does “circulation” name the process by which people and objects participate in every society, or is it appropriate only to those societies in which high levels of mobility have followed the breakdown of earlier forms of stability? Is our present-day world more “circulatory” than in times past?

The most common answer to this question is that circulation is a product and symptom of modern (or postmodern) times. For thinkers like the sociologist Georg Simmel, the ascendancy of circulation is a historical phenomenon, a result of the multiple disruptions which transformed life in western societies in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Before these transformations, Simmel suggests, ideas and habits were held within the stable structures of tradition, just as people and goods remained more tightly rooted in the places in which they were born. With the death of tradition, Peter Fritzsche has written, the nineteenth-century inhabitant of western cities confronted “fugitive appearances, unexpected encounters, and rapid fluctuations” – symptoms of a world in which circulation now reigned.

On the other side of this debate are thinkers like the Japanese theorist Karatani, for whom the history of societies across time must be rewritten in order to give primacy to processes of exchange and circulation. Challenging the Marxist emphasis on modes of production, Karatani argues that we must see exchange and circulation as the fundamental processes governing relations between people (2014, 161–162). Elsewhere within present-day cultural theory, the emphasis of Deleuze, Guattari, and their followers on the flows and circuits along which desire, capital, and other forces pass offers another model in which circulation has always been primary and in which the key political struggles are against those forces which seek to constrain or divert it (see, for example, Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Middle-ground positions are more and more staked out by those engaged in intellectual or economic history, who continue to push the rise of circulation further back in time, challenging our sense of earlier worlds as static through new histories which trace the mobility of people, things, and ideas within and before what historians call the “early modern” period (roughly from 1500 to 1800) (e.g., Roche 2003; Beaurepaire 2014). The debate over whether societies have always been circulatory, or have only become so recently, returns us to fundamental questions about the conceptual tools we need to make sense of the cultures in which we live.

- see CHAPTER 11 (DIASPORA AND MIGRATION); CHAPTER 24 (DIGITAL AND NEW MEDIA); CHAPTER 32 (SCALE)

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Cultural Production*Sarah Brouillette*

There is no agreed upon theory of cultural production and no single methodology is used in studying it. Examination of cultural production is instead an approach or disposition toward cultural objects and practices, which reads them in relation to the productive conditions from which they emerge. Its conclusions are inordinately varied because scholars disagree over the precise content of the term “relation.” What relation can be said to exist between culture and its conditions? Does culture mediate those conditions in some way, or is it rather determined by them? How does this relation, whatever its nature, make it possible for us to distinguish between culture on the one hand and culture’s conditioning context on the other?

Identifying the object of analysis has also been a diverse activity. Scholars interested in cultural production have written about the history and impact of cultural institutions and associations (Born 2004). They have studied artistic practices, ideals of aesthetic autonomy, and the affordances and restrictions that come with the growth of viable commercial markets for culture (Wolff 1981; Miège 1989). They have studied the formation of audiences and of ideologies of taste, and how the reception of culture is itself a productive activity (Jenkins 1992). They have considered culture’s distribution, circulation, marketing, and systems of evaluation, reward, and prestige (English 2005). They have examined the countless ranks of intermediaries who inform what culture is available, including editors, agents, curators, and managers, as well as those who shape how what is available is then consumed, such as reviewers and marketers (Squires 2007). They have assessed how new technologies – for instance, the cylindrical press (Müller-Sievers 2012), the Sony Walkman (du Gay et al. 1997), and social networking Internet sites (Manovich 2009) – permit and restrict certain forms and uses of cultural expression. They have written about state and corporate control of cultural infrastructure (Schiller 1969, 1976), about the expanding global power – and uneven development – of transnational media corporations (Schiller 1989; Bagdikian 2004).

They have even written about production having its own culture, arguing that economic, managerial, organizational, financial, regulatory, and technological activities involve signifying practices that constitute unique cultural formations (du Gay 1997, 7).

There is the culture of Apple computers, dot.com culture, the culture of the classical music conservatory, and the culture of stock traders. So is there anything that is not in fact culture? If not, then how can we begin to say that there is some force that produces culture, that makes, shapes, mediates, determines, or delimits culture from outside? Inversely, what exactly is it that produces culture? When we talk about considering culture in relation to its production, to what are we relating it? Scholars will refer to the economy, economic forces, material forces, productive forces, the base, the economic base, or the material base, or, in a more sociological vein, to people and their practices, variously ritualized and codified – the forms of agency they possess, the kinds of institutions they create.

The term “production” has something of a Marxist aura; indeed, it has sometimes been suggested that cultural production scholarship is too insistent about the determination of culture by economic or material forces, and that this is a crime of which the Marxist binary that places an economic “base” above a cultural “superstructure” is most guilty (Williams 1973, 6). The caricature of this scholarship suggests that Marxism sees culture as a simple reflection of the material conditions in which it is produced, a reflection that never reveals the reality it pretends to perceive but only reproduces the ideology that conditions its perception. The interpretation of discrete cultural works must then be restricted to reading in them the signs of their belated and helpless reproduction of what exists, while texts convinced of their oppositional force must suffer from a false consciousness that is poignant at best and contemptible at worst. While this approach to culture certainly exists, it is a weak feature of the Marxist tradition, and it influences cultural production research more in the breach than the observance. Just as common, certainly, is work in which the very idea of the determination of culture by some sort of economic or productive base is a key source of contention and debate, and in which the sense that there is a constitutive tension between culture and economics is evident. The attempt to understand this tension as a dialectical one of dynamic interrelation, and to conceive it in some historical perspective makes up a significant part of the Marxist tradition, and is as important to cultural production research as any more deterministic formula.

Indeed, even Marx himself does not consistently suggest that a material base simply determines a cultural superstructure. One of his most oft-cited takes on this topic states that:

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (1970, 4)

First, productive relations are here said to “condition,” rather than determine, what occurs in the other spheres; and the subsequent statement, in which the issue of determination is indeed raised, refers not to the economy but to a “social being” that structures human consciousness. To argue that consciousness is the product of social forces, and that it cannot be considered separately from those forces (except, perhaps, as a set of sinews and synapses operating within the brain, but the materialism of the physical sciences is not the materialism of Marx), is hardly controversial. Marx was a critic of idealism, of course – idealism of the kind that suggested that the mind was

the primary and supreme originator of ideas and expressive culture untouched by anything outside itself. But he was also a critic of those varieties of materialism, for example that which animated Adam Smith's work, which treated capitalism as a preeminent, inevitable, natural, and desirable product of human evolution. The historical materialism that develops in and from his work is, similarly, not a set of blank statements about the priority and power of material forces. As is well known, its point rather is to provide a critical account of capitalism as a stage in the ongoing history of struggle over control of the means of production and thus over material resources. It is the emphasis on struggle that particularly matters. It can be said that in the Marxist tradition the question of culture's relation to capital is a crucial and generative problematic rather than a settled matter.

It is useful to contrast, here, the work of scholars affiliated with the production of culture school. It is this school, which actively disclaims any political affiliation, which can be said to have fostered the most consistently deterministic treatment of the relation between base and superstructure. The school emerged in U.S. sociology departments in the 1970s under the leadership of Richard Peterson, who applied the methods of industrial sociology to the cultural sector and claimed that his focus was the "complex apparatus which is interposed between cultural creators and consumers" (1978, 295). Production of culture research reads the content and form of cultural or symbolic "elements" as a function of the various contexts of their creation, manufacture, marketing, use, and evaluation. It positioned itself deliberately against critical theoretical approaches to culture, such as the Frankfurt School and British cultural studies, which sought to critique the "apparatus" rather than viewing it with deliberate neutrality. To Peterson and his allies the industries of cultural production were not social problems but rather social facts to whose study class and exploitation were irrelevant (Santoro 2008, 10).

Poised against this approach from the start was the political economy of culture, which aimed to show how the ownership and financing of cultural production, supported by government (de)regulation of markets and of business conduct, impact the diversity of what is communicated to the public and structure how audiences are able to access and use what is available (Garnham 1990). The political economy of culture was a combative response to the growth, consolidation, and global expansion of the industries of cultural production, which it claimed began in the early twentieth century under market capitalism, leading by the 1970s to a situation in which a handful of powerful corporations controlled cultural commodity production and circulation. Scholars suggested that this domination limited the range of cultural options available to the public, and affected artists who were asked to accede to the prerogatives of cultural management if they wished to be successful.

Frankfurt School theory – in particular, the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the "culture industry" – deserves mention here as a significant precursor to the political economy of culture, though the latter tradition was keen to break with some features of the Frankfurt approach. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that, with the expansion and consolidation of large cultural corporations, the drive to secure profits had led to rationalization procedures and thus to the standardization of cultural output, and had encouraged a "pseudo individuality" in which people were enjoined to express their ostensibly unique identities and values through their utterly routine consumer practices. At the same time, Adorno maintained a vision of the possibility that

culture could be something better; indeed, the “culture industry” thesis involves a historical argument that there had once been an authentically avant-garde culture genuinely separable from the economy and capable of some critical purchase on it. It had been subsumed within the culture industry and was threatened by its operations. Adorno argued that the true art work needed to resist these operations by refusing to be readily and passively consumed. The autonomy of this art could only be dialectically defined: it would be powerful because powerless, significant because insignificant and even a-signifying in its avoidance of capitalist rationalities.

Frankfurt School thought was a polemical contribution to a broader debate about the coming of mass culture. It imagined that the relationship between base and superstructure was shifting rather than fixed and that with the rise of the culture industry the relative autonomy of the superstructure was being threatened by the dynamism of the base. These claims resonated with political economists of cultural production who, in the 1970s and 1980s, feared that if only a few corporations manufacture and distribute cultural products, and own the rights to the profits that result, then standardized generic commodity forms and homogeneous content are inevitable (Schiller 1989). Indeed these scholars claimed that corporate domination was already jeopardizing the diversity of human culture and the critical thinking that results from exposure to a variety of perspectives, while the concentration of mass media conglomerates in the western world was undermining the ability of non-western people to tell their own stories and see their experiences expressed in cultural form (UNESCO 1980). Below we will see how political-economic approaches have adapted with the shift from mass production of ostensibly homogeneous cultural objects to flexible production of niche experiences.

For now we can summarize that the production of culture school, which denied having any politics, and political economy approaches, which tended to have a Marxist cast, emphasized the production side of the equation. Their approach to culture was more or less epiphenomenal: they saw it as a by-product of the base, and thus as subsumed within objective and observable economic relations. Both approaches were viable in the 1970s and 1980s, but they were already at times at odds with scholarship emphasizing culture’s constitutive or mediating role and its relative power to overcome and exceed the conditions that determine its emergence.

Raymond Williams’s work, which was so formative for British cultural studies, has been perhaps most influential in this respect. Friendly to Marxism but eager to critique its terms, Williams defined his own practice of “cultural materialism” as “a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism” (1977, 5), and held that culture can in fact shape how history unfolds as it achieves some modicum of separation from material forces to reflect upon those forces and influence their future constitution. He tended to present his work as more attentive to Marx’s own impulses than much of what claimed a Marxist pedigree. What he saw in Marx was an avowedly social emphasis on the worker as his own “productive force”: he is not produced as a worker, as a deterministic theory might hold, but rather retains an integral freedom to produce himself as a radical subject and to join up with other people producing themselves as the collective agents of social change. If there is a “base” in Williams’s theory, it is not what appears in what he calls “degenerate” arguments about “primary production within the terms of capitalist economic relationships” (1973, 6). It is rather – harkening back to Marx’s “social being” – all of those practices that make up the production and reproduction of society itself.

Williams thus claims that those interested in cultural production must emphasize that it does not simply result from an existing social order but is rather an element in the constitution of that order. As the whole “signifying system through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored,” culture cannot but be taken as constitutive (1981, 13). Cultural production is a set of social practices and social relations that also mediates those practices and relations. Culture thus does more than reproduce a particular ideology; instead it is dynamic and conflictual, instantiating determinations but also tensions and conflicts, innovation and change (1981, 29). Williams’s influential theory about the coexistence within a given social situation of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural forms complements his insistence on the possibility of authentic conflict. No single cultural dominant truly “exhausts human practice, human energy, human intention” (1973, 12); historical change occurs because humanly willed emergent forms arrive to unsettle things.

Williams’s work contributes in these terms to an emerging focus, subsequently strongly identified with the birth of cultural studies, on the ability of the individual to use culture to intervene actively within her social situation rather than passively reproducing its values. For some scholars, this kind of materialism is so insufficiently interested in the extent to which the economy plays a determining role that it should probably not be deemed materialist at all. Malcolm Daly reads Williams as working in a post-Marxist tradition because he appears to deny any “sense of priority in determination” (Daly 2011, 1007). Where the base–superstructure model for all its faults at least works to understand and question a hierarchy of determination, and even the more dialectical materialisms accept the basic fact of hierarchy while permitting “elements of the superstructure a reciprocal (though often weak) effect” (*ibid.*). Williams’s materialism seems to collapse any sense of hierarchy completely and to reject the necessity of establishing a theory of determination – a necessity Daly sees as integral to any materialist treatment of culture.

Daly may be partly right, but Williams provided his own response to this kind of charge. He claimed that his focus on culture was a necessary corrective to the failure of the base–superstructure model to account for the constitutive role that ostensibly superstructural elements, like legal systems and prevalent ideologies, play in maintaining a particular class’s domination. In a sense, then, studying the constitutive work that the superstructure could be made to do was for him another way of critiquing the power of the base to which it was beholden. Williams was attracted to Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony as a replacement for base–superstructure formulae for this reason. It seemed to get at the reality of social experience more effectively. It accounted at once for the lived experience of power and the delimitation of common sense by a dominant order. This order suffused culture and economics, self and society, but it was not a totality impervious to critique. It could rather be reformed by the productive force of its subjects.

While Williams’s theory engages the base–superstructure model, at least to affirm the political intent behind it, Pierre Bourdieu, who has been more recently influential, appears to avoid it entirely. We do however find traces of it in his identification of autonomous and heteronomous cultural spheres that diverge because the latter embraces economic wealth while the former disavows it. In terms of depth of analysis and reach of influence, no theory of cultural production has matched Bourdieu’s argument about intersecting and overlapping “fields” of activity that structure the agency of

actors as they attempt to accrue varieties of cultural, social, and economic capital and the power to determine their continued circulation. Two features of Bourdieu's thought, both addressing the problem of culture's autonomy, are important to note here.

First is his emphasis on the field of cultural production, contained by a broader field of power and made up of a variety of subfields, such as the field of literary production, in which agents play by a set of predefined rules that are exceedingly difficult to change. He suggests that certain "position takings" can restructure the relevant subfield and field, and develops the idea that there is a "space of possibles" which arrange position-taking by defining the thinkable and the unthinkable for agents in the field (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 216). To some scholars this means that he is rightly cautious about the possibility of any revolutionary transformations in culture, in that transformative moments are always dependent on the possibilities present in the positions inscribed in the field (*ibid.*). To others his theory is simply unable to account for the concrete realities of innovation and creativity; he privileges the iterative over the transformative and has no good answer to the question of how the habitus – the structuring of dispositions within the field – can be questioned (Born 2010, 181). There appears to be little agential autonomy here.

Contrast, however, his claim that the rise of commercial markets for culture was accompanied by an ideology of artistic separation from market concerns. He contends that this particular ideology contributes to the field of restricted or elite cultural production, which exists only anxiously within a larger marketplace reliant on large-scale production as a means of capitalist accumulation. Bourdieu's analysis of the development of a belief in artistic autonomy in a sense debunks the notion of artistic disinterest and shows that those who try to separate themselves from socioeconomics are, by the very gesture of separation, in fact delimited and determined by them. However, Bourdieu was worried about the corporatization of culture in which he saw a disappearance of the division between elite and mass production; he thought it represented a threat to what autonomization had achieved in creating the conditions for "the full creative process proper to each field" and for some "resistance to the 'symbolic violence'" exerted by the dominant system that made economic rather than cultural capital its lodestar (Benson 1999, 465). Bourdieu thus offers a critical historical account of the forms that autonomy has taken, while asserting strongly that this autonomy has positive dimensions worth preserving. Not least, the power of intellectual intervention in the political sphere would continue to depend upon social validation of the values of disinterestedness and expertise associated with them (1996, 340). Distance and engagement merge here, as a distance sanctioned by society is necessary to expert engagement. In this way Bourdieu pits himself in opposition to the dominant economics of the market in much the way nineteenth-century writers he studied had done. There is no contradiction here. If one assumes already that autonomy is not an absolute value, the task then becomes the reflexive one of situating one's own claim to autonomy by tracing the historical emergence of the social and economic conditions that made it possible. Autonomy only makes sense at all when one recognizes the paradoxical and compromised character of its emergence, and grants that the issue of its status is eternally relevant because the "obstacles and powers" it is poised against are "ceaselessly renewed" (1996, 343).

Bourdieu has little to say about large-scale commercial cultural production, except in so far as its operations matter to the way the restricted subfield's participants imagine themselves: for instance, that they are autonomous while commercial culture is

heteronomous, or that their culture is the product of artists' own intellectual impulses rather than a response to external demand. His field theory has thus been especially generative for those who take elite production as their focus, such as literature scholars or art historians. Indeed in the 1990s, under the auspices in particular of the discipline of cultural studies, Bourdieu's theory, along with Williams's cultural materialism, appeared to be quite dominant. At the same time, the U.S. production of culture school found its own kind of success as it was absorbed into the mainstream of policy and management analysis of culture-sector businesses; the political economy of culture either went underground or stayed alive by abandoning some of its own first purposes.

It is important that this shift in cultural production scholarship occurred at the same time that many were identifying culture's increasing centrality to the "advanced" economies. Production was shifting there from manufacture of material goods to creation of immaterial content, and even the most resolutely non-cultural economic sectors were falling under the influence of sign systems like advertising and marketing. The cultural industries were evidently rich and growing, and increasingly global in scope, and marketers were turning all products into cultural artifacts by associating their consumption with desirable values and aspirations. These changes belong to a broader shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production. Whereas once production was dominated by mass production techniques, with assembly lines making things in hugely capitalized plants, it was now becoming flexible, driven by digital automation that allowed for specialization in small-batch production to serve niche interests. The technical possibility of flexible specialization and the culturalization of products are mutually constitutive (du Gay 1997, 5–6). Under post-Fordist conditions, featuring "customized production for customized markets" (Mosco 2010, 571), industry is ever more attuned to the minute cultural distinctions between niche consumer groups and increasingly invested in the culturalization or aestheticization of all consumer products and acts of consumption. Post-Fordist production thus encouraged a marked aestheticization of identity, a focus on the individual as a productive consumer of available media materials able to assemble a unique self from the various possibilities on offer. Meanwhile identity politics displaced what was perceived as an outmoded class struggle over material resources with an insistence that real change could be negotiated in and through cultural representation and performance of the self.

It is not surprising then that it became exceedingly difficult to maintain any strict divide between culture and its determining contexts. The economic and the cultural appeared rather as hybrids interpenetrating in a variety of important ways. It is hard not to read the shift in cultural production scholarship away from a sense of the economy's determining force and toward an emphasis on culture's mediating power as a response to these large-scale changes. What came to dominate – though not without challenge, of course – was a new focus on the politics of consumption and a tendency to treat the aesthetic not as the space in which artists yearn for freedom from economic rationalities but instead as the process of stylizing one's life in a way that intervenes in and engages with the dominant order. The fate of reference to the culture industry is telling here: gradually divorced from its Frankfurt School origins, it began to appear most often in social science and policy work claiming a neutral interest in studying the growth of the cultural sector of the economy (Throsby 2000; UNESCO 2009). It was also turned into the plural form, "the cultural industries" – a grammatical shift nicely symbolizing

the rejection of the culture-industry thesis as insufficiently interested in the sheer variety of industrial cultural production and reception by diverse and interactive audiences.

These developments motivated some scholars to debate whether the economy was itself just another sign system, another semi-autonomous “superstructural discourse” with no material base worth studying or whether in fact the superstructure was being “invaded by the base,” such that the very idea of culture’s new force arose with its total incorporation into capitalist markets (Garnham 1979, 130). If the distinction between base and superstructure was breaking down, which was collapsing into which? Or did this particular way of talking simply need to be abandoned? Scott Lash and Celia Lury (2007) argue that at one time the language of base and superstructure did make sense. It was a fine way of thinking about Fordist cultural production under which subjects were made into members of nuclear families whose single homogeneous purpose was the reproduction of capitalism (12). This era has been displaced though by a post-Fordist age built on a “design-intensive production of difference” that spans the globe (5). Globally, culture is now so rich, diverse, and ubiquitous, they argue, it “seeps out of the superstructure and comes to infiltrate, and then take over, the infrastructure” (4) or “collapses into” the material base as “goods become informational, work becomes affective, property becomes intellectual and the economy more generally becomes cultural” (7).

Recall that Adorno and Horkheimer saw the one-time heterogeneity of the cultural superstructure reduced to the deeply troubling capitalist rationalities of the base. For Lash and Lury that trend is now reversed by a shift from identity to difference: from the production of homogeneous objects with fixed meanings to the circulation of indeterminate objects defined by the heterogeneous ways in which they are used; from standardized commodity goods whose value is determined by commercial exchange to diverse brand properties, which acquire their value through mediated events; from culture as something to be interpreted to culture as something to be used as one fashions oneself. Though they claim as their subject the “global culture industry,” Lash and Lury offer this analysis not in a spirit of Frankfurt School critique but instead as a neutral description of the services cultural objects render to knowing consumers. Their claims thus seem a perfect instance of the shift in focus in cultural production work from production’s determining priority to the protagonism of the cultural – a shift that reflects a broader movement of the advanced economies toward post-Fordist production models.

Yet it must be noted also that in recent years the realities that interest Lash and Lury have also prompted a return to political economy approaches, evident in particular in studies of labor. Political economists have argued, for instance, that whereas at one time television producers would work to cultivate mass audiences for mass-produced goods, now they work to build “programs that create customized audiences,” and, in the case of “reality” television shows, for instance, they use those audiences to reduce their own costs by replacing paid unionized labor with audience performers (Mosco 2010, 573). Moreover, just as a skilled, professional, developed-world workforce demands higher wages and more creative control, their tasks are shipped overseas while, as in the case of film special effects and animation, development of the technological content of programming reduces labor costs even more (574). These developments have been persuasively read as the latest in a long history of attempts to manage the risks inherent to an industry dependent on the most notoriously recalcitrant kind of worker: the artist.

In the early 1980s, political-economic studies complicated their own habitual focus on the determinative priority of productive forces by stressing the particularity of cultural work and cultural products. Bill Ryan (1992) notably challenged the Frankfurt School theory of the standardization of production by arguing that what structured corporate management of culture was precisely the uniqueness of the things from which it attempted to extract profits. Ryan pointed out that, while capitalist relations are defined by a distinctive form of anonymous labor, the artist is historically constituted as a named individual with talent and a claim to original creativity. For these reasons “the artist [...] represents a valorisation problem in the capitalist labour process” (25), and certain structures within the cultural industries can be explained as a response to the situation of the artist’s unusual work. For example, Ryan argues that as corporations have struggled to realize culture’s potential value, they have made recourse to formatting (emphasizing generic links between products), as well as on marketing, in their attempts to overcome the inherent risks that come with the attempt to valorize so many diverse and distinct products. The production of the cultural commodity is thus structured around the simple assumption of the artist’s autonomous labor; many cultural products – but literary works are a primary example – circulate within the market on the grounds that they are attached to a unique individual irreducible to his or her own capitalist valorization.

This kind of argument about culture’s particularity has proven useful to more recent scholarship that addresses the transformation of cultural workers’ sense of their own distinction into an asset for managers. Corporations benefit from the extra engagement and effort of those with a passion for their work and easily correlate the artist’s desire for uniqueness with the market demand for non-replicable cultural expressions and experiences (Ross 2004; Terranova 2000). In a situation in which more and more work appears to resemble cultural work, because it is meant to be done out of passion and conviction, and as an expression of one’s real self and personal development, scholars have considered how exactly the artist’s oppositional impulse has come to support what it once and sometimes still seems to oppose. In addition to these studies of the mainstreaming of artistic conceptions of work, there has been an extension of political economy’s conception of the cultural producer to embrace the users of culture, who are increasingly asked to contribute their own free labor to the production of cultural commodities. In a situation in which a participatory culture’s “prosumers” appear to have notable power to influence the culture they receive, scholars have studied the shifts in corporate structure that reflect and encourage the contribution that users of products and services make to marketing and development. In both of these cases – study of culture-sector producers as ideal flexible workers and study of the use of cultural consumers as a ready pool of free labor – emphasis is placed on the affective investments that people make in culture because they believe it offers them something other than economic reward. They thus reveal to us the continuing relevance of the tension between culture and capital, freedom and constraint, superstructure and base.

The realities of digital cultural production have perhaps most occasioned the renewed interest in thinking about cultural production as a political-economic matter of power and domination (Terranova 2004). The 1990s spread of the World Wide Web platform, decreased costs of media capture and playback, and the growing consumer economies of countries entering the neoliberal order after the 1990s, have all led to the proliferation of online user-generated content. Our creative writing, photos, videos, music, tweets,

and more sustained musings occasioned – and are now surely occasioned by – the Web 2.0 companies that capitalize off hosting all of this “content” (Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube amongst them) (Manovich 2009, 324). Most scholarship on digital culture celebrates the productive consumer as its premier agent (Jenkins 2006). It is the individual who is taken as co-producing culture, whether because she actively processes and reimages what she consumes or because she creates her own content and posts it online. It is said that the mass consumption of commercial culture is being replaced, most notably with the help of user-generated digital content, by mass production of cultural objects by users. For those in the political economy of culture tradition, however, these developments are evidence of a further consolidation of the power of the corporate cultural industries. That the Internet is an immaterial medium free from constraint is of course a myth. It is regulated and owned; its vast server farms are powered by electricity whose production is resolutely material and extractive still; and the hardware behind it is made by workers in industrial factories whose scope Henry Ford could scarcely have imagined.

The imagination of the consumer of digital culture might appear moreover to have been colonized by the commercial entertainment industries, as they “make their own cultural products that follow the templates established by the professionals and/or rely on professional content” (Manovich 2009, 321). Companies are designed with this active consumer in mind, and “have developed strategies that mimic people’s tactics of bricolage, reassembly, and remix,” which means that the subcultures that themselves appropriate and remix commercial culture find their practices turned into corporate strategy (Manovich 2009, 324). Hence, as the Internet unleashed a “collective potential for creative expression” – the platform for consolidation of the new “multitude” poised against capital (Hardt and Negri 2000) – it was rapidly apparent that the forms of expression that resulted were quite immediately valorized and captured by the mainstream of cultural commodity producers. This point repurposes for the Internet age Bill Ryan’s argument about capital’s need to channel and subdue some of culture’s most unique features. It is hardly the case that only the artist conventionally defined has an interest in autonomy and creativity. Cultural production – and indeed, under post-Fordism, all production has been culturalized as the innovative result of ever new forms of “creative destruction” – requires the maintenance of spaces in which creativity is able to flourish; this includes, now, Internet platforms in which collective creativity is called forth and developed. But of course when people are given opportunity and means to actually engage in creative acts, together or alone, it is impossible to ensure that what they come up with will be something from which a profit can be derived. Their creativity instead has to be managed into some kind of consumable commodity form, and the work of making it so is uncertain and open to challenge. In light of this process, which is made particularly perceptible by digital cultural production, though it is not unique to it, critical scholars have been reimagining the “user” upon whom so much seems to depend. She is now less that heroic agent of productive self-making and more a carrier of the potentially transformative and universal creativity that cannot be reduced to sales.

This is nothing short of asserting again that there is such a thing as culture whose apparent autonomy has to be respected. Even as we ask what forms of material relation have made it possible, have mediated it and, yes, have sometimes determined it, this appearance of autonomy is real to many people, which means that the desires that it represents are evidently not being met by capitalist cultural production. Again, then, we

see that cultural production research is often quite distant from the impulse to describe the determination of culture by the conditions of its production. It comes instead from acts of wondering what is not mere material, what is not reducible to economics.

This return to an interest in the problem of autonomy from capital has occurred in some recent studies of literary writers and other artists as well. Self-proclaimed study of cultural production remains more common in sociology and in communications and media studies than it is in literary studies, perhaps due to the latter's historical aversion to establishing affinities with the social sciences, whose techniques are sometimes mistakenly represented as simply quantifying and counting rather than assessing, interpreting, and critiquing. Yet production approaches have in their way fundamentally transformed literary study since the 1970s, after the emergence of a vibrant "sociology of literature" developed by thinkers like Pierre Macherey, Lucien Goldmann, Terry Eagleton, Francis Barker, Colin Mercer, and Graham Murdock, with major contributions from both Williams and Bourdieu. This scholarship refuted the new critical focus on the "text itself" by reading the history of literature's forms and interests in terms of "external" social forces. If there are few people now self-identifying as sociologists of literature, this is probably because the field's basic terms of faith are now mainstream, as reflection on the connections between a text and the social conditions that existed at the time of its emergence and reception has become common practice (English 2010, vii).

Where production studies do happen in a more self-conscious fashion is within the history of the book and print culture studies, also labeled the history of texts, the sociology of texts, or the social history of print culture, books, or texts. Scholars in these overlapping areas tend to present empirical evidence of the methods of making, disseminating, and receiving texts, with, among other things, circulation, marketing, bookselling, authorship, design, and bookmaking, the legal frameworks of copyright, censorship, and postal regulations, and publishing companies and infrastructures, all accounted for. It should be said that, despite the influence of figures like Richard Altick and D. F. MacKenzie, work in this area does tend to avoid avowed politics, and even when it does intimate an objection to some feature of corporate or state regulation of the circulation of texts, or to some dimension of a text's marketing or reception, it rarely partakes of a distinguishing trait of the sociology of literature: its linking of culture to class struggle, power, and domination. Like the cultural materialist tradition to which many of its scholars belonged or owed debts, the sociology of literature identified historical connections between the production of culture and the reproduction of class relations, and objected to the depredations of those relations as embodied in the controls exercised over the means of cultural production. In this sense it might be said that book history scholarship tends more toward the U.S. production of culture model in which social circumstances are observed rather than lamented. It also tends to avoid – and indeed appears to have been designed to avoid – the conflictual and evaluative work of interpreting texts, preferring instead to reveal how texts have been interpreted by various socially and historically situated reading communities.

These tendencies mean that book history scholarship has been very good at reading writers' professions of aesthetic autonomy as the product of a history of material processes like the formation of viable commercial markets for culture and the formation of copyright but of limited use as a means of engagement with the aesthetic as a positive and generative feature of the making of culture as practitioners understand it. A revived,

self-conscious, and genuinely interdisciplinary sociology of literature, drawing upon the materialist tradition as so much production scholarship has, will be better placed to see how artists confront the conditions that structure their own agency. An interpretive critique informed by sociological analysis can credit the way fields of creative practice, shaped by the realities of cultural production, are dialectically constituted, enabling aesthetic agency as much as they restrict and delimit it (Born 2010, 192).

- see CHAPTER 1 (FRANKFURT – NEW YORK – SAN DIEGO 1924–1968; OR, CRITICAL THEORY); CHAPTER 4 (BIRMINGHAM – URBANA-CHAMPAIGN 1964–1990; OR, CULTURAL STUDIES); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES); CHAPTER 20 (THE EVERYDAY, TASTE, CLASS); CHAPTER 24 (DIGITAL AND NEW MEDIA); CHAPTER 26 (CIRCULATION)

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28

Decolonization

Jennifer Wenzel

Rather than simply signaling a linear, diplomatic transfer of power from colonial to postcolonial status, decolonization equally constitutes a complex dialectical intersection of competing views and claims over colonial pasts, transitional presents, and inchoate futures.

— Christopher J. Lee, “Between a Moment and an Era” (2010, 8)

...quick, quick, let's decolonize.

— Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963, 70)

Climate change is colonialism. Fuck your empire.

— Handwritten sign, People's Climate March, New York, September 2014

When asked during a 1931 visit to London what he thought about western civilization, Gandhi is said to have replied, “I think it would be a very good idea.” The same might be said about decolonization. Gandhi's quip deftly turns cultural and civilizational absurdness into critique and aspiration, at the very moment when European imperial control was at its height. Although the decades of the twentieth century most closely associated with the project of dismantling European empire – the 1950s through the early 1970s – may seem from our early twenty-first-century vantage point to be a distant era of settled history, there's a lot to be gained in understanding decolonization not as *fait accompli*, but instead as an unfinished project, an unfulfilled promise, and perhaps even a utopian aspiration: something that would *still* be a good idea.

Decolonization has registered as a matter of importance for cultural theory primarily through postcolonial studies, which began to emerge in the Anglo-American academy at the very moment when the formal era of historical decolonization had drawn to a close: the publication of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 is one commonly cited moment of origin for what was then known as colonial discourse analysis, and later as postcolonial theory. But it is helpful to look beyond this conventional academic narrative, in order to understand more capaciously the relationship between decolonization as a historical process (with world-historical, geopolitical significance) and postcolonialism as field of scholarly inquiry and debate (primarily in the humanities and interpretive social sciences). This approach would involve looking further into the past, for a

broader genealogy of anti-colonial thought and praxis, and to the present and near future for ways in which the process and project of undoing empire (if we read *decolonization* literally) remain an urgent concern. This approach might also allow us to think in new ways about theory itself – what it is, where it comes from, and who theorizes.

To simplify matters, we can ask two questions about decolonization, about its objects and subjects: *What* gets decolonized? *Who* decolonizes?

Objects

A stubborn etymological literalness would indicate that *colonies* are what get decolonized: that is, that decolonization is fundamentally a matter of politics (in the most conventional sense), state sovereignty, and the transformation of colonies into independent nation-states. To witness decolonization in action, one need only trace the burgeoning roster of United Nations member states in the two decades after its inception in 1945, which was, not incidentally, the dawn of the classical decolonization era, with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 and Sri Lanka in 1948. These new members of the community of nations were not created *ex nihilo*, or out of whole cloth, but rather out of what Pakistani nationalist leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah vividly called the “moth-eaten” artifacts that colonialism had made and unmade.

A similar etymological literalness would remind us that it was this political aspect of decolonization to which *post-colonial* (with the hyphen) initially referred. Indeed, Neil Lazarus emphasizes the matter-of-factness in the initial usages of the term “post-colonial” by Pakistani sociologist Hamza Alavi and Canadian political economist John S. Saul in the early 1970s: “they were using the term in a strict historically and politically delimited sense, to identify the period immediately following decolonization” when “colonial state apparatuses” were transformed into new nation-states. “Post-colonial’ ... was a periodizing term, a historical and not an ideological concept. It bespoke no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order” (Lazarus 2006, 2). Used primarily as a descriptor for these new nation-states and the historical moment of their emergence, *post-colonial* was the political counterpart to the “homogeneous, empty time” that Walter Benjamin associated with modernity: in a Cold War sea of ideologically laden terms attached to myriad aspirations, movements, and geopolitical blocs (e.g., anti-imperialism, Third World, self-determination, underdevelopment, dependency), *post-colonial* was a neutral descriptor for the period and political state of affairs that followed decolonization. “It was as simple as that,” Lazarus writes (2006, 2).

This seeming absence of connotation or ideological freight in these early uses of *post-colonial* in the 1970s now appears to be willfully naïve about how un-simple decolonization as a historical process was turning out to be. The process of transforming colonies into independent states varied widely, unfolding through uprisings in city streets, armed conflicts in killing fields and casbahs, negotiations around conference tables and in diplomatic cables, or some combination thereof:

Different forms of colonization have ... given rise to different forms of de-colonization. Where *deep settler colonialisation* prevailed, as in Algeria, Kenya, and Vietnam, colonial powers clung on with particular brutality. Decolonization itself, moreover, has been unevenly won. (McClintock 1992, 88)

The end of formal colonial or dependent status in British southern Africa, for example, meant intensified segregation and white settler domination. In this formal sense, South Africa has been “post-colonial” since the 1910 Act of Union, while Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965, despite its liberatory-sounding name, was intended as a bulwark against what British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had described a few years earlier as the “wind of change” sweeping the African continent; the UDI meant the opposite of emancipation for Rhodesia’s black majority. If decolonization in the political sense has been incomplete, it has been incomplete in different ways and for different reasons.

Even with its complexity, unevenness, and unfinishedness as a geopolitical process (a topic to which I will return), decolonization would likely not be much of a concern for cultural theory were its workings limited to questions of political economy. In other words, colonies/nation-states are not the only objects of decolonization. The Kenyan writer and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o captured these other aspects in the title of his 1986 collection of essays, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. The terrain of colonial conquest was not merely geographical, but psychic and cultural as well; this was the truth that the Martinican psychiatrist and theorist of anti-colonial national liberation Frantz Fanon expressed when he wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today. (1963, 210)

Constructing a counter-history to confront this negation was the aim of Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, who remarked in his 1965 essay “The Novelist as Teacher”:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels...did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them. (1989, 45)

Similarly, in “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,” Achebe identified the “fundamental theme” of his fiction:

that African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain. (1964, 157)

Achebe’s first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, was published in 1958, two years before Nigeria’s independence from British rule. Even though it depicts the onset of colonial rule rather than its end, the novel epitomizes this work of recuperating history, regaining dignity, and decolonizing the mind – tasks that mid-twentieth-century anti-colonial

liberation theorists like Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Amílcar Cabral saw as inseparable from the capture of state institutions and the national economy: “if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of *culture*,” Cabral wrote in 1970 (2005, 56). In its most radical and fully realized form, decolonization in anti-colonial liberation praxis would mean a total transformation, not unlike the end of capitalism for Karl Marx: an entry into history and humanity. Decolonization in this sense is “*tabula rasa*,” “not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man,” “a whole material and moral universe ... breaking up” (Fanon 1963, 35, 246, 45).

One crucial object of this psychic and epistemological decolonization was language, since colonialism often involved the suppression of native languages and imposition of European ones, or their use as a gateway to socioeconomic privilege among some fraction of the colonized. Achebe and Ngũgĩ are often seen to have taken diametrically opposed positions on the question of language and decolonization; Ngũgĩ provocatively suggested that for African writers to continue to use European languages (as Achebe did throughout his career) was analogous to politicians arguing that Africa still needs imperial rule (1986, 26). However, it’s important to recognize their fundamental (if tacit) agreement about the need to decolonize language *in some way*, because of the violence inherent in the colonial imposition of English, “this world language which history has shoved down our throats,” in Achebe’s visceral description (1975, 79). For many postcolonial writers, the work of undoing this violence involves claiming as one’s own the language that colonialism forcibly imposed. Indian novelist Salman Rushdie borrows metaphors of geographical conquest and counter-conquest to describe this process:

those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, become more and more relaxed about the way they use it – assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers. (1992, 64)

In addition to being a landmark text in this process of reclaiming the English language, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is also important for its account of colonialism as a knowledge project, devoted as much to the suppression of extant ways of knowing as to the creation of archives full of data about colonized peoples and territories. The District Commissioner, who at the novel’s end reveals himself to be a “student of primitive customs” (Achebe 1994, 207), demonstrates the colonial origins of ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology more broadly. Likewise, so many of the academic disciplines that have organized knowledge in the modern university trace their origins or institutional consolidation to colonialism, as Gauri Viswanathan demonstrated with regard to literary studies in *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989) and Mary Louise Pratt with natural history and botany in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). Beyond their attention to the colonial imbrication of these disciplines, what’s remarkably similar in these two studies is their identification of a posture of innocence, which “masks” and sublimates the violence – both physical and epistemological – of colonialism. Pratt finds in Enlightenment-era natural history’s putatively harmless botanizers an ideological trope of “anti-conquest”: “a utopian image of a European bourgeois subject simultaneously innocent and imperial, asserting a

harmless hegemonic vision that installs no apparatus of domination” (1992, 33–34). Concerned to reveal the subtle harms of the civilizational aspects of colonialism (what would today be called soft power), postcolonial studies as it emerged in the Anglo-American academy from the late 1970s onward can be seen as undertaking the work of *decolonizing the disciplines*.

This decolonization struggle, if we can call it that, transpired not on battlefields nor around baize tables but instead in the pages of academic journals and in the classrooms and corridors of the university after the era of formal decolonization drew to a close. Anthropology was arguably the earliest of the disciplines to confront its complicity in the colonial project; Talal Asad’s edited collection *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* appeared in 1973, five years before the watershed publication of Said’s *Orientalism*. In literary studies, this endeavor has expanded the curricular purview of English departments to include Anglophone writers from former British colonies, and has elucidated literature’s historical role in European imperialism and anti-colonial resistance.¹ Analogous work in the discipline of history occurred in various contexts, including the Subaltern Studies collectives, originally in India and later in Latin America, and the radical history movement in South Africa at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle. Even Achebe’s fictional(ized) District Commissioner and his colonial-ethnographic work-in-progress *The Pacification of the Tribes of the Lower Niger* find their postcolonial, decolonizing counterparts in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s short story “The Headstrong Historian” (2008), which imagines a young Nigerian woman writing back against such colonizing gestures in a book she will call “Pacifying with Bullets: A Reclaimed History of Southern Nigeria.”

Although the chronology I have sketched here might imply a narrative in which academics – working mostly from institutions in the First World – continued the struggle for decolonization by other means and turned their attention to the epistemological and psychological aspects of colonialism after political and economic independence had been won, such a narrative would be inadequate and problematic, for several reasons. First, as I have suggested above, matters of political economy, epistemology, and psychology were understood to be inseparable aspects of colonial domination and anti-colonial liberation by those who put their lives on the line in the decolonization struggles of the mid-twentieth century. Second, the achievements of decolonization in the realm of political economy were themselves tenuous – always partial and fragile, rather than providing a firm foundation for a later phase or realm of action. Third, the rise of postcolonial studies in the academy from the late 1970s onwards can be understood in ambivalent or even somewhat antagonistic relation to earlier decolonization struggles, rather than a seamless and faithful continuation of them.

Neil Lazarus makes the historical observation that postcolonial studies has tended to offer

a rationalization of and pragmatic adjustment to, if not quite a celebration of, the downturn in the fortunes and influence of insurgent national liberation movements and revolutionary socialist ideologies in the early 1970s.... We could argue that “postcolonial criticism” could not possibly have existed before the 1980s, not because it would have lacked an adequate audience then, but because it would have made no sense at all in the historico-ideological context of the 1970s. (2006, 5, 7)

This analysis stops just short of claiming that it was the exhaustion, containment, derailment, and/or failure of decolonization and the eclipse of its historical era that made the rise of postcolonial studies possible. (In an important 1994 essay that pulled no punches, Arif Dirlik went so far as to accuse postcolonialism of complicity with global capitalism by ignoring its neo-imperial depredations in the present; he depicted the field as having been “designed to *avoid* making sense of the current crisis and, in the process, to cover up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries” [353].) To outside observers, it might seem somewhat surprising that postcolonial theory in its late twentieth-century heyday subjected the concept of the nation and the achievements of nationalist movements to trenchant critique (as elitist or derived from European models), and even disavowal.

One could explain this phenomenon in terms of the historical disappointments of decolonization that had become impossible to ignore by the 1970s, the general rightward shift and constriction of discourse of the Reagan/Thatcher 1980s, a multiculturalist focus on individual identities rather than totalities, structures, and systems, or, perhaps most importantly in the context of this volume, the philosophical anti-foundationalism and critique of essentialism that derived from the influence of French poststructuralist theory.² It is no slight to Said’s magisterial, epochal achievement in *Orientalism* to observe that its central methodological premise boils down to an application of Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse to European writing about the Orient. In the context of the present volume, we might pause to ponder the ironies in this conflicted and contested genealogy of postcolonialism, which emerged in the academy at the moment when the momentum of revolutionary anti-colonialism was under siege and the prestige of “high theory” was at its very height. The poststructuralist strand – evident, for example, in Homi K. Bhabha’s Derridean/Lacanian reading of subjectivity in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) – had the effect of undermining, defanging, marginalizing, or simply forgetting the radical *theorizing* of decolonization undertaken by the resistant and/or revolutionary subjects of empire earlier in the twentieth century. Critics who objected to this tendency in postcolonial theory complained about its “culturalism,” which they saw as reducing colonialism to a textual matter and obscuring its violence from view. (Note the irony: in effect, postcolonial theory itself stood accused of being a latter-day “mask of conquest” – the handmaiden of colonialism, or its late twentieth-century legatees, neo-imperialism and neoliberal global capitalism.) Bhabha hints retrospectively at the costs of the poststructuralist turn in his 2005 foreword to a new translation of Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*:

Coming to us from the distances of midcentury decolonization, Fanon’s demand for a fair redistribution of rights and resources makes a timely intervention in a decade-long debate on social equity that has focused perhaps too exclusively on the culture wars, the politics of identity, and the politics of recognition. (2005, xviii)

Bhabha urges us to read Fanon’s “timely,” half-century-old text, as if for the first time.

One additional object of decolonization further illustrates the complex, non-linear relationship between mid-twentieth-century struggles and postcolonial theory: nature. In terms of the trajectories I have described above, the relationships among nature, colonialism, and decolonization are instructive both because their effects are at once material and conceptual (i.e., with important implications for both political economy

and epistemology), and because they were so crucial to mid-twentieth-century decolonization struggles, yet until quite recently have not received much systematic attention in postcolonial studies.

The journals of Christopher Columbus teem with wide-eyed depictions of the prodigious natural wonders of his newfound lands. The Dutch East India Company planted a garden in the shadow of Table Mountain to provision its ships as they rounded the Cape of Good Hope; they envisioned this outpost in southern Africa as little more than a way station and watering hole, as yet unaware of the gold and diamonds that lay buried in the interior. Nature – almost immediately reframed in anthropocentric terms as “raw materials” or “natural resources” – was one of the most important spurs to European exploration, colonial conquest, and imperial rivalry, beginning with spices, silver and gold, sugar and slaves, and continuing to this day with oil and rare earths. Colonialism treated native plants and native peoples in remarkably similar ways, by subjecting them to taxonomies of classification and transporting them around the globe. Discourses of agricultural improvement went hand in hand with practices of enclosure that misrecognized and swept aside extant systems of land tenure and stewardship, thereby creating wealth and entrenching privilege for some but displacing and dispossessing many more.

In his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), Aimé Césaire stages the collision between these orientations toward nature:

They dazzle me with the tonnage of cotton or cocoa that has been exported, the acreage that has been planted with olive trees or grapevines.

I am talking about natural *economies* that have been disrupted – harmonious and viable *economies* adapted to the indigenous population – about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries, about the looting of products, the looting of raw materials. (1972, 22)

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon too offers a litany of the riches of “the soil and the subsoil” that colonialism had looted for centuries: “diamonds and oil, silk and cotton, wood and exotic products,” as well as “the blood of slaves.” Turning on their head the discourses of colonial improvement that claimed to disseminate the blessings of European civilization throughout the world, Fanon shows how all good things have instead flowed *towards* Europe and made its opulent “civilization” possible; in this vein he declares, “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World” (1963, 96, 101–102). The Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil observed that Marxian (and other) analysis has largely ignored what he called the “international division of nature” (1997, 29), with the unfortunate consequence that the colonized world has been viewed as a belated arrival and peripheral participant in modernity, rather than materially indispensable to it (2000, 356). It’s crucial, then, that Fanon emphasizes the fundamental importance of colonialism’s disruption and appropriation of nature, and the need for its dialectical reversal in decolonization: “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (1963, 44). In terms that complement Achebe’s project of historical and cultural retrieval in the name of dignity, Fanon draws a straight line from nature to livelihood to psychic emancipation.

As part of the mid-twentieth-century struggle for decolonization, Césaire and Fanon were calculating and theorizing what we would now call Europe's ecological debt to the colonized world, accrued not only in the extraction of resources and the despoiling of ecosystems, but also in the (initially) unwitting expropriation of the earth's atmosphere and oceans as sinks for greenhouse gas emissions from the industrialized North whose effects will be felt most urgently in the global South. One important and under-studied aspect of the mid-twentieth-century struggle to decolonize nature was the effort to establish in international law the principle of *resource sovereignty*: in order to be meaningful, postcolonial sovereignty had to include the right to dispose freely over natural resources. In *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (2005), Anthony Anghie shows how newly independent United Nations member states in the 1950s and 1960s articulated the principle of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (PSNR), which held that the resources of a territory belonged to its inhabitants before, during, and after colonialism, and that colonial powers had often expropriated these resources without meaningful consent from the colonized. Although the effort to codify resource sovereignty in international law met with some success in the inclusion of PSNR in human rights instruments like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (both 1966, came into force 1976), in effect the former colonial powers were able to avoid paying compensation or reparation for their ill-gotten gains, as part of the containment of decolonization's most radical possibilities.³

On the one hand, PSNR offers an important example of how the decolonization of nature was high on the agenda of the mid-twentieth-century struggle for national liberation: only by reclaiming and revaluing nature could postcolonial nation-states (re)build their economies, after centuries of colonial extraction for the purpose of generating European wealth. On the other hand, even the limited success of PSNR demonstrates a more fundamental failure to reckon with what a true decolonization of nature would entail: PSNR demonstrates the persistence of a resource logic that understands nature only in terms of its instrumentalization for human (and often capitalist) use. Assessing the ecological (rather than economic) implications of PSNR, human rights law scholar Conor Gearty sees it not so much as a way to arrest and seek redress for colonial exploitation, but instead as the "seemingly authorized plunder" of ecosystems in the so-called national interest (2010, 13).

The colonization of nature was not only physical and material but also epistemological and even ontological: colonialism brought into contact and collision radically different ways of knowing and being in nature. As with other aspects of European civilization, some colonized peoples adopted and internalized colonizers' ideas and practices of nature, as is evident, say, in Jamaica Kincaid's ambivalent reckoning with her possessive passion for plants in *My Garden (Book)* (1999). Feminist scholars like Carolyn Merchant (1980) and Val Plumwood (1993) have identified a broader, more pervasive process in which women, racialized others, and nature were all similarly subjugated, objectified, and relegated to the wrong side of a binary opposition as the Other of Europe. The resulting dualism allows humans to view nature as something other than themselves, disposed for their use, and subject to their control. Note here the intersection and distinction between colonialism's *literal, material* transformations of particular ecosystems and capture of discrete resources outside of Europe, on the one hand, and the

conceptual “colonization” of Nature as a whole (minus humans, or at least the normative white male ones), characteristic of capitalist modernity (with earlier roots in Judeo-Christianity), on the other. Friedrich Engels linked the two through analogy when he wrote in *Dialectics of Nature* (1883):

Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures. (1954, 242)

The decolonization of nature, then, would still be a very good idea. In the literal, material sense of the (still mostly one-way) traffic in natural resources, the postcolonial era has seen *intensified* extraction in the formerly colonized world to the benefit of multinational corporations (see McClintock 1992, 94). The burgeoning practice of companies and countries leasing agricultural land in Africa for monoculture export production is a new scramble that once again promises to entrench a small class of elites while displacing communities dependent on territories ceded to these land- and water-grabs, which are also occurring in Brazil, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The much-vaunted withering away of the nation-state under contemporary globalization masks the *repurposing* of the postcolonial nation-state to facilitate resource extraction (see Coronil 2000). In Ayi Kwei Armah’s classic novel of postcolonial disillusion, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), the unnamed protagonist probes the reasons why the luminous hopes inspired by a nationalist leader (modeled on Kwame Nkrumah) have turned to shit, corruption, and coups d’état in independent Ghana. The novel leaves implicit the irony that the man finds satisfaction and beauty only in his job, which is to coordinate the trains carrying timber, bauxite, and other minerals from the interior to be loaded onto foreign ships waiting in the harbor. “A loot-a continua,” Ngũgĩ writes sardonically in his satiric novel *The Wizard of the Crow* (2007, 201), punning darkly on the 1970s national liberation struggle slogan “a luta continua” – the struggle continues – to mark instead the continuity of looting in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Yet Arturo Escobar has something else in mind when he writes of the continuing “coloniality of nature,” referring to the broader epistemological capture and philosophical subordination of Nature described above, which underwrites these material processes of exploitation around the world (2008, 121).

This persistent coloniality of nature might help to explain the disconnect between the fundamental importance of land and resource sovereignty in mid-twentieth-century decolonization struggles and the relative paucity of systematic attention to environmental questions in postcolonial literary studies until the past decade. (Environmental history and anthropology in the era of postcolonial studies have, by comparison, devoted more attention to the intersections between colonialism and nature.) Yet a profound irony – of the sort produced by historical amnesia – inheres in the all-too-common notion that environmental concern is one more invention of the West to be shared with – or imposed upon – the rest of the world, like some newfangled green gospel. In other words, one encounters arguments that posit environmentalism as “western” not only in laudatory, Eurocentric histories of mainstream ecocriticism but also in protests

against statist policies and practices in the colonized or Third World that dispossess and further marginalize people in the name of conservation, population control, or, more recently, climate change mitigation. Such arguments, however, rarely confront how the coloniality of nature (which surely is a European invention) persists and has created the need for environmentalism in the first place. The counter-discourses of environmental justice and the environmentalisms of the poor can be seen as attempts to decolonize not only nature, but also environmentalism itself – in part by undertaking a Saidian/Foucauldian critique of how power shapes what comes to count as nature, environment, or environmental concern.

Subjects

Who decolonizes?

The unevenness and unfinishedness of decolonization might be explained, at least in part, by considering whom exactly we assume to be the subject, agent, or protagonist of decolonization, as opposed to the objects that are to be decolonized. My attention to anti-colonial national liberation theorists might imply that it was such leaders, along with the wretched masses they sought to mobilize and transform into an independent citizenry, who did the primary work of decolonization. On the other hand, a more strictly lexical logic would suggest that only those who colonize can de-colonize. And when colonizers decolonize, liberatory ideals like freedom, justice, equality, democracy, self-determination, and sovereignty in its various forms (including resource sovereignty) are not necessarily their most urgent concern.

Indeed, alongside Fanon's vatic account in *The Wretched of the Earth* of decolonization as the dialectical, world-destroying and world-creating emergence of nothing less than a new humanity is a more clear-eyed assessment of the cynical calculations that erstwhile colonizers and their collaborators in the colonized bourgeoisie were making in the late 1950s and early 1960s: even at the level of style, the poetry of utopian possibility in *The Wretched of the Earth* jostles with the prose of postcolonial disillusion. Decolonization in this latter, prosaic sense is a defensive maneuver of the powerful against the more radical impulses that threaten imperial domination and hegemony. In other words, a liquidation of overt political control aimed to forestall greater losses as the "wind of change" swept the colonized world:

a veritable panic takes hold of the colonialist government.... Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation towards the right, and to disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonize. Decolonize the Congo before it turns into another Algeria,

Fanon wrote in 1961, still reeling from the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba months earlier (1963, 70). The counterintuitive urgency felt by colonizers who undertook decolonization as a form of counterinsurgency and containment is vividly expressed in Fanon's observation that, in the face of armed resistance,

colonialism seizes upon the “godsend” of more moderate, accommodationist factions among the colonized, and then

transforms these “blind mouths” into spokesmen, and in two minutes endows them with independence, on condition they restore order.... In plain words, the colonial power says: “Since you want independence, take it and starve.” (1963, 73, 97)

In the case of the Belgian Congo, this seemingly exaggerated account of extreme haste is not far off the mark: after having formulated in the mid-1950s a plan to grant the Congo independence over the course of a thirty-year tutelage, Belgian leaders turned on a dime in 1959, in the face of nationalist agitation, and decided upon a six-month transition instead! The “independent” Congo envisioned in this plan B for decolonization would leave Belgium firmly in control of foreign affairs, defense, finance, and, above all, Congo’s vast mineral wealth. Five days after the ceremony on June 30, 1960 in which King Baudouin ostensibly transferred power to Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu, the Belgian Lieutenant General Émile Robert Janssens, still the commander of Congo’s Force Publique, gathered his troops and succinctly described the new dispensation as nothing other than a continuation of the old one: “before independence = after independence,” he famously wrote on a chalkboard. “Your politicians have lied to you,” he told the men in his pivotal speech. Having expected something more from decolonization, Janssens’s Congolese troops mutinied, helping to spur the Congo crisis, one of many high-stakes conflicts in which local struggles and colonial histories intersected with Cold War geopolitics at a planetary scale.

While we might say (as I have argued elsewhere) that the assassination of Lumumba and the fate of the Congo epitomized, and in no small part catalyzed, the derailment of decolonization by European and U.S. interests (see Wenzel 2006), to understand that series of events as a derailment would assume that decolonization was actually a freedom train in the first place. Although I have used the terms proximally in such a way as to imply they are synonyms, *decolonization* and *anti-colonial national liberation* do not necessarily signify the same thing. For Fanon, the difference between “the farce of national independence” (1963, 67) and the world-shattering task of national liberation is called *violence*, by which he means the total commitment to mass struggle that forges the nation, a conscientized populace able to reject the “old colonial truths” and to recognize their contradictions, and who are thereby “forewarned of all attempts at mystification, inoculated against all national anthems” and the other mere trappings of sham-independence:

Without that struggle, without that knowledge of the practice of action, there’s nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets. There’s nothing save a minimum of readaptation, a few reforms at the top, a flag waving: and down there at the bottom an undivided mass, still living in the middle ages, endlessly marking time. (1963, 147)

Violence for Fanon means having staked one's self and very life for liberation, rather than being handed an empty independence. Beyond the pageantry and pomp of the independence ceremony lies a more elusive and more fundamental goal:

national liberation takes place when, and only when, national productive forces [i.e., means of production, the economy] are completely free of all forms of foreign domination ... the chief goal of the liberation movement goes beyond the achievement of political independence to the superior level of complete liberation of the productive forces and the construction of economic, social, and cultural progress of the people,

Amílcar Cabral wrote in 1970, late enough in the decolonization era to have seen far too many new flags hoisted up while old powers continued to pull the strings (2005, 54, 62). One way of understanding the asterisk that hovers over the post- in *postcolonial* is to recognize that decolonization nearly always brought independence, but almost never liberation.

If, as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, men make history but not under circumstances of their own choosing, then we might say that both colonizers and anti-colonial nationalists decolonized, but under circumstances shaped by the Cold War. Histories of decolonization often point to the experience of African and Asian soldiers who fought overseas on behalf of European powers in World War II as an important catalyst for anti-colonial agitation, but it was the postwar rivalry between the U.S. and Soviet blocs, with the threat of nuclear annihilation raising the stakes beyond all imagining, that determined how decolonization unfolded. From the perspective of the two superpowers, each newly independent country joining the United Nations in the 1950s and 1960s was either a prospective client or a puppet for the other side; from this logic resulted the imperative of containment and the proxy wars, many of them in sites of anti-colonial struggle, that gave the lie to the idea that no one dies in a Cold War. Some of the most powerful protagonists of decolonization, then, did not have seats at the negotiating tables; U.S. presidents and Soviet premiers, not to mention their military advisors and their covert counterparts in the CIA and KGB, played crucial roles that are still not fully understood.⁴

In retrospect, perhaps what is most impressive about the mid-twentieth-century struggles for decolonization and national liberation is that so many of them dared to take on not only their colonial masters and their whips, dogs, guns, and fabled civilizations, but also the bipolar world order of the Cold War and its "you're either with us or against us" Manichean logic. Rejecting the assumption that they would of necessity have to align with one of the two blocs – the capitalist First World or the communist Second World – the newly independent nation-states of the Third World determined to find an alternative: a third way of self-determination and non-alignment. Although one of the tragedies of decolonization is that the term must be now disaggregated from its accreted vulgar, colloquial sense that connotes eternal poverty, disease, "backwardness," and corruption, one nonetheless catches epiphanic glimpses of alternative possibility when students today learn that *Third World* named the utopian promise of decolonization, rather than its failures: "a coalition of new nations that possessed the autonomy to enact a novel world order committed to human rights, self-determination, and world peace" (Lee 2010, 15). This "Bandung Spirit" (named for the 1955 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bandung, Indonesia) endures as a vision of solidarity and other possible worlds that is all the more poignant and necessary in an era of

imperialism resurgent, capitalism unchallenged, inequality exploding, and oceans rising: “The Third World project is forever ... the new living map of the planet ... a project of futurity whose potential lives on as a critique of globalization” (Veric 2013, 5, 16).⁵

The inverse and dark shadow of this “living dream of decolonization” (ibid.) that endures as a resource for resistance in the present is the persistence of forms of colonial harm not easily undone at the stroke of a pen, even in the best of all possible worlds where colonizers would actually mean *liberation* when they said *independence*. “Slow violence” and “imperial ruin” are names that Rob Nixon and Ann Laura Stoler have given to these forms of enduring harm, often environmental, whose temporality exceeds that of a transition between political regimes: “the lopsided risks that permeate the land long term, blurring the clean lines between defeat and victory, between colonial dispossession and official national self-determination” (Nixon 2011, 5). The effects of such violence do not cease when their source is interrupted, but instead work through “temporal overspill” (6). Stoler uses *ruin* not as a noun denoting an archaic remnant that invites melancholic contemplation, but instead as a verb, the process of creating *ruination*, whose effects persist into the living present, in “shattered peoples and scarred places,” long after colonizers and their descendants have (perhaps) seen the error of their ways (2008, 196). In this sense, the half-life of colonialism – sometimes a quite literally radioactive or otherwise toxic one – has still not come to pass, more than a half-century after the most heady days of the decolonization era, which seemed poised to turn the world upside-down.

Coda: Decolonizing Theory

Implicit in the discussion above is a question analogous to those I raised about nature and environmentalism: what counts as theory? On the one hand, the rise of postcolonial theory in the final decades of the twentieth century radically transformed scholarly methods, ways of knowing, intellectual horizons, and even polite common sense. It is difficult now to hear just how radical in 1955 was Aimé Césaire’s plainspoken rejection of the equation between colonization and civilization, or to perceive fully the dangers in his commitment “to see clearly, to think clearly, – that is dangerously” (1972: 10). On the other hand, the institutionalization of postcolonial studies in the Anglo-American academy can also be seen to have entrenched a cartography of knowledge production whose traffic lines were congruent with those of colonialism: “postcolonial theory” in this academic sense was something produced mostly in the First World, even if by intellectuals with origins in the colonized world, to be consumed (or rejected as “western”) in the peripheries. The history and lived experience of colonialism, decolonization, and postcoloniality (particularly among migrants to the First World) became grist for the mill of theory, raw materials for the work of generalization and abstraction in an international division of intellectual labor that echoed the extraction of natural resources that drove the Industrial Revolution in Europe.⁶

I have attempted to complicate such a narrative by emphasizing the *theoretical* work of decolonization undertaken decades before the emergence of postcolonial high theory. The genealogy of postcolonial theory must look further back than Said to consider Achebe, Cabral, Césaire, Fanon, and others like them in the mid-twentieth century – not to mention elite anti-colonial nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, or the prophet-leaders of primary resistance to colonialism before that. To do otherwise would be a form of historical violence.⁷

Fanon himself makes a different connection between violence and theory that has everything to do with the question of who theorizes: anti-colonial violence (in his valorizing account) has a cognitive effect on the colonized masses that could be described as the capacity to *theorize* one's situation, to understand it in systemic, almost deconstructive terms, more attuned to the cross-cutting contradictions of race and class than the "primitive Manicheism of the settler" could ever be (1963, 144; see passim 132–147). In his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre strategically deploys this settler Manicheism to make an analogous point about the intellectual task of Europeans (and, I might add, Americans) confronting their complicity: "we in Europe too are being decolonized: ... the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out" by the shock of recognizing that "all of us without exception have profited by colonial exploitation ... the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters" (Fanon 1963, 24–26). Even if one does not accept the radical expansion of decolonizing theory implied in these moves (which would turn all of us grappling with these questions into theorists), there is nonetheless an unambiguously salutary gesture in Fanon's remark that "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to deal with the colonial problem" (1963, 40) – a dictum that, I might add, applies doubly to Foucault. Such "stretching" is a decolonizing gesture that paradoxically enhances the explanatory power of theory by acknowledging the limits and blindnesses of its historical situation.

- see CHAPTER 7 (DELHI/AHMEDNAGAR FORT – WASHINGTON, DC/BIRMINGHAM JAIL – PRETORIA/ROBBEN ISLAND 1947–1994; OR, RACE, COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM); CHAPTER 9 (CHILE – SEATTLE – CAIRO 1973–2017?; OR, GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM); CHAPTER 11 (DIASPORA AND MIGRATION); CHAPTER 29 (RACE AND ETHNICITY)

Notes

- 1 See Ngũgĩ, Owuor-Anyumba, and Liyong, "On the Abolition of the English Department" (1972) for an account of their early, radical effort to decolonize literary studies in Kenya.
- 2 In the late chapters of *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001), Robert J. C. Young makes an intriguing counterclaim by pointing to Jacques Derrida's Algerian *pied noir* background as evidence of the postcolonial origins of poststructuralism.
- 3 For a discussion of PSNR and its relationship to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, see Wenzel (2014).
- 4 Ongoing revelations about CIA funding of cultural initiatives in Africa and elsewhere during the Cold War continue to reshape our understanding of the hidden ironies entailed in decolonizing the mind (see Rubin 2012). One should also note the important role played by the mere specter of a communist threat that repressive regimes, e.g. in apartheid South Africa or Mobutu's Zaire, cannily invoked in order to maintain U.S. support and delegitimize internal dissent.
- 5 I have elsewhere described this spirit as *anti-imperialist nostalgia*, not a romanticized longing for what never was, but instead a critical attachment to the visions of liberation

- that drove anti-colonial movements: past's futures that have never yet been. See Wenzel (2006 and 2009).
- 6 For an analysis of this cartography of knowledge production with regard to the sciences in colonial and postcolonial Africa, and its collusion with economic exploitation, see Hountondji (1992).
 - 7 One can debate whether such an expansive genealogy should rightly be called "postcolonial"; what's crucial is the work of grappling with the history of European imperialism and anti-colonial resistance as longstanding objects of theory – a task that the alternative disciplinary formations of world literature and global modernism are largely untroubled by, and not to their credit.

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29

Race and Ethnicity*Min Hyoung Song*

When we look back at the history of their usage, the distinction between *race* and *ethnicity* turns out to be muddy. It was not unusual, for instance, to come across phrases like the “Negro race,” the “Jewish race,” and the “Irish race” in nineteenth-century publications. At the start of the twentieth century, it was possible to make reference to a “Chinese race” or a “Japanese race” alongside references to an “Oriental race.” By mid-century, the situation gets even more confusing as African Americans – or “negroes” – could be referred to both as a race and an ethnicity. And while most outside commentators might refer to the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi by the Hutus in Rwanda as an ethnic tragedy, many Rwandans themselves understood it in explicitly racial terms (Gourevitch 1998, 56). No wonder, then, that the noted film critic and cultural theorist Rey Chow argues, “Their frequent conflation is not the result of mental sloppiness on the part of scholars but rather a symptom of the theoretical fuzziness of the terms themselves, a fuzziness that, moreover, must be accommodated precisely because of the overdetermined nature of the issues involved” (2002, 21–22).

By “overdetermined,” what Chow seems to mean is that it is too simple to assume race names something biological while ethnicity names something cultural. As most critics in the humanities and social sciences now agree, both are social constructions. This means they are produced through a complex history of self-serving ways of thinking, convention making, and negotiations with competing interests. While they often seem to refer to something that is very old *or* intrinsic to an objective reality, they are constantly renewing themselves, and framing what can be known at any given time. They don’t reflect what was already in existence as much as they call into existence a sense of a reality. This reality simultaneously claims to be timeless and changes all the time. As such, they comprise regimes of truth that legitimate themselves on the body or in folk traditions, making their categories seem somehow natural even as they are the product of a process of inventing nature as such.

If we wish to maintain a useful distinction between the two terms, we cannot simply focus on the objects to which they refer. What is biological? What is cultural? As Robert J. C. Young (1995) has observed, the idea that race was somehow always grounded in concerns about the body ignores the ways in which such concerns were shot through with cultural considerations. Just as importantly, “Culture has always marked cultural

difference by producing the other; it has always been comparative, and racism has always been an integral part of it: the two are inextricably clustered together, feeding off and generating each other” (54). The lines between biology and culture, in other words, remain as muddy as the lines between race and ethnicity, so that using the former as a way to denote the distinction between the latter only gives the pretense of solving a conceptual problem. Given such considerations, we are much better served if we focus on the etymological history of categories of race and ethnicity, and consider why they came into circulation when they did. By doing so, we can also consider how the meanings of these categories continue to evolve, serving multiple purposes that we can partly track and that we can hopefully find ways to expand in potentially liberating ways for those currently shackled by them.

As I have argued elsewhere, “race is about difference in a way that ethnicity is about resemblance” (Song 2013, 102). In what follows, I want to elaborate on this point, to explain why this is the case, and how maintaining such a distinction can enrich our understanding of the theoretical debates that surround our discourses about identities. I then turn to how Michel Foucault’s ideas about knowledge production and biopower have affected our understanding of race in particular. Many scholars have, for instance, turned more and more to thinking of racism as what the geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) describes as “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (28). When we think about the future of how we define ourselves, it seems, we are compelled to think about the ways in which we maintain and produce a sense of difference that can allow for important biopolitical calculations about lives deserving enhancement and lives deserving neglect or worse. As a result, race remains important in ways that require us to think carefully about what makes it distinct from ethnicity.

Ethnicity’s Origins

Ethnicity is both older and newer than the term race. It is older in the sense that its root word, ethnic, can be traced to the Greek noun *ἔθνος*, or *ethnos*, which loosely translated can mean nation or people, or generally any group which is not a part of my own and exhibits qualities that mark them as “other.” Ethnic is also more directly derived from *ἔθνικ-ός*, or *ethnikos*. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the third edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary* notes, *ethnikos* was used as a translation for *goyim* or gentile, and from there the word ethnic as it found its way into the English language acquired its association with the word heathen, in the sense of being neither Jew nor gentile. This meaning became dominant for a time, and continues in the present to remain in use in its adjectival form – although now rarely observed.

Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) explicitly warns that ethnic should not be thought of as sharing a common etymology with the word heathen. This confusion seems to have emerged from the fact that ethnic was sometimes spelled heathenic. The word heathen does not derive from the latter, however, but from the Gothic *haiþi*, meaning heath. A heathen is thus someone who lives in, or comes from, the heath, or some rural place where older forms of worship linger, while ethnic, before its appropriation by translators of the Bible, referred to a more general difference that distinguishes one group from another. Nevertheless, that ‘ethnic’ and ‘heathen’ are

often thought to derive from the same origin suggests that the word 'ethnic' was once used to denote any group who was neither Jewish nor Christian. It was, in short, a religious designation.

Sometime in the nineteenth century, 'ethnic' shed its religious meaning and began to revert to its more ancient signification. In the early twentieth century, the word also began to circulate more regularly in the specialized circles of social scientific research. In such circles, the word was used as a complement to, and eventually a substitute for, race. While the latter continued to be used, albeit in a loose way, to refer to differences between whites and non-whites, 'ethnic' became a useful way to talk about what made white groups distinct among themselves and secondarily as a way to talk about differences within other racial groups. As an example, consider the way the word is used in the article entitled "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular Reference to the Negro" (Park 1914). In it, the prominent American sociologist Robert E. Park argues that a "process of assimilation" is always ongoing, "in which groups of individuals, originally indifferent and perhaps hostile" (610), arrive at a "practical working arrangement, into which individuals with widely different mental capacities enter as co-ordinate parts" (609).

The analogy Park uses to explain what he means by this arrangement is worth noting: "A dog without a master is a dangerous animal, but the dog that has been domesticated is a member of society. He is not, of course, a citizen, although he is not entirely without rights. But he has got into some sort of practical working relations with the group to which he belongs" (609). In short, assimilation allows individuals to attain some rights within an adopted society. While such individuals cannot expect to share all the rights of the fully accepted citizen, they nevertheless enjoy enough rights so as to make the giving up of their former independence attractive. The society also gains in conceding such limited rights to assimilated individuals because the latter are no longer completely outside its power, and therefore a danger to it. What is striking about this analogy is how it animalizes the persons whom a society seeks to accommodate without fully enfranchising. That Park never seems to consider such an analogy inappropriate points to the way in which hierarchical valuations of peoples were normalized in his milieu.

On occasion, the article goes on to observe, the process of assimilation, or "domestication," is halted because of racial – as opposed to ethnic – differences, which gets us to the main point of this discussion:

It is not because the Negro and the Japanese are so differently constituted that they do not assimilate. If they were given an opportunity the Japanese are quite as capable as the Italians, the Armenians, or the Slavs of acquiring our culture, and sharing our ideas. The trouble is not with the Japanese mind but with the Japanese skin. The Jap is not the right color. (610–611)

By contrast, while the Russian peasant in the early nineteenth century existed in a material state similar to, if not worse than, the black slave in the American South during the same time (neither were allowed to intermarry with their social superiors, they were geographically segregated, they maintained separate "customs and traditions," and so forth), "one could hardly say that the Russian peasant had not been assimilated." Unlike the black slave and the white master, Park reasons, "The Russian noble and the Russian peasant were likely to be of the same *ethnic* stock" (614).

The use of “ethnic” in this article resonates with assumptions. First, it gestures to a sense of commonality that allows for accommodations to be made, even if antagonisms remain and unequal relations are naturalized. Indeed, what is striking is that the “dog” in the analogy Park uses to explain what he means by assimilation refers as much, if not more so, to the Russian peasant as the black slave. Both are potentially dangerous, but the danger has, through assimilation, been domesticated. Second, ethnic is imagined here as a subcategory to race. Hence, Russians are white in the way “the Italians, the Armenians, and the Slavs” are, but the Japanese cannot be. Third, ethnic also seems primarily reserved for explaining subcategories of whites, while non-whites seem defined more exclusively by race. Hence, Japanese is not an ethnic group but a race, just as “the Negro” is not an ethnic group but a race – although the latter’s advances in producing a “Negro literature” has, according to Park, “attained an ethnocentric point of view” (619). What makes “ethnocentric” a term of approbation (as in a quality to be “attained”) is the fact that ethnic seems connected in this article to subcategories of whiteness. To be ethnocentric is to acquire a sense of uniqueness – a positive affirmation of belonging to a group with recognizable cultural accomplishments – that defines whiteness, and therefore to travel further toward being of equal racial status to whites. While it’s not going to happen soon, the liberal promise made by this passage is that, given enough time, some rough parity might become possible.

These nuances are an important part of the way ethnic is used in this article, made more so for those of us reading it a century after its publication because the word is only used once in full. The infrequency suggests how new this usage is, and how the word was still becoming part of a specialized vocabulary at the time. For Park, the preferred term for talking about human difference remains race. It is only later, then, that ethnic and ethnicity begin to be used more extensively. Indeed, it was only in 1941 when “ethnicity” was likely coined as a noun with the now familiar suffix attached to its root word and referring specifically to a group defined by common ancestry or shared culture (Sollors 1986, 23). As Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan observe in the introduction to their influential volume *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (1975), the word does not appear in dictionaries before the 1960s, and during that decade only intermittently: “It is included in the *Webster’s Third New International*, 1961, but did not find its way into the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* of 1966, nor the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1969” (1).

One reason we can give for why ethnicity received the attention it did starting in the mid-twentieth century is that it allowed us to talk about human differences in a way that wasn’t tarnished by the concept of race. The latter term had, of course, lost much of its former prestige in the wake of Nazi claims to Aryan racial superiority and the many atrocities such claims licensed. Werner Sollors explicitly makes this argument as a way to explain the recent coinage of his preferred terminology: “In fact, the National Socialist genocide in the name of ‘race’ is what gave the word a bad name and supported the substitution of ‘ethnicity’” (38). If so, we might say that ethnicity has gained the reputation as being more precise, more scientific, and more grounded in culture than the problematic terrain of biological difference that underwrites ideas of race because it has both the advantage of novelty and an ancient etymological pedigree.

It could thus be used untarnished by the disrepute that the term race had fallen into by mid-century while also being made to feel somehow as if it were naming something of which humans had always been conscious. It was at once new enough that it carried none of the baggage of recent events while pointedly old enough that it didn't seem simply made up. It was a neologism that could plausibly claim not to be one.

Perhaps it is for this same reason that the term continues to find extraordinary circulation, so much so that its explicit contradictoriness is easy to overlook. It may even be possible that, as Chow points out, its very utility, and wide circulation, might depend precisely on the way its meanings contradict themselves: "The ethnic is both the universal, the condition in which everyone can supposedly situate herself, *and* the local, the foreign, the outside, the condition that, in reality, only some people, those branded 'others,' (are made to) inhabit. And it is this wavering, unstable state of the ethnic that enables politicians to manipulate populations by appealing to one version of ethnicity or another, depending on the political agenda at hand" (2002, 28). We are all ethnic, but some of us are more ethnic than others. Moreover, some ethnicities, through their greater salience, mark one as being someone less universal, less capable of dispensing with the confines of tradition and culture, and hence less able to be just themselves, self-fashioning and autonomously individual.

This sleight of hand – between ethnicity's universality and its particularizing asymmetry – seeks to conceal the ways in which ethnicity is often used as a substitute for race and as such a way to index a sense of a group's superiority over an Other. Since to talk of race or to notice race makes one increasingly a racist in the aggressively colorblind United States, and the West more generally, ethnicity becomes an even safer way to talk about group differences that can provide the semblance of being grounded in culture and hence divorced from biology. Since we are all ethnic, ethnicity refers to an undifferentiated experience, a way of being in the world and understanding one's place in it that is remarkably true for everyone. While being Japanese is not the same as being Russian, the two are like each other nonetheless in that each is a form of ethnicity.

Still, to the degree that some of us are more ethnic than others, ethnicity also allows us to talk about differences and the values we place on them without seeming to do so. We just prefer to do things in this way because of our ethnicity, while that group over there, whose members somehow can't seem to find a well-paying job or have too many children for their own good or end up disproportionately in prison or find themselves constantly at war with their neighbors, are following their own ethnic folkways. Their culture, which they rightly embrace because everyone naturally affirms his or her belonging to an ethnic group, seems to us to be not as functional as it can be, or is too functional in a way that's disadvantageous to us. In his influential *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai seeks to counter such claims by defining ethnicity as "the idea of naturalized group identity" (13), and in the process makes clear why he rejects most extant social science accounts of ethnicity as an explanation for identity making. In short, ethnicity leads us back to the same problem posed by the use of race, because it connects culture to something established long ago at a time of small settlements defined by shared ancestry, and ultimately sustained by biological ties. Ethnicity thus has a propensity to "naturalize" what is socially constructed.

The Many-Headed Hydra of Race

The etymology of race has a murkier provenance than ethnicity. According to the OED, it is derived from the Middle French *rasse*, or “group of people connected by a common descent”; the *American Heritage Dictionary*, however, insists it comes from the Old Italian *razza*. Any attempt to trace the origins of the word further back in time seems to lead to further controversy, with some arguing that it is a shortening of the Latin *generatio*, or generation, while others argue it comes from the Latin *ratio*, or reasoning. A third line of argument traces the word back through the Italian *razza* to an old French word, *haraz*, which relates loosely to the breeding of horses.

What is more important than its exact origins is how the word gained circulation in the West as a way to give a name to the rising importance intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike were granting to biological differences between peoples. As Thomas Gossett observes at the start of his magisterial history of the concept, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (1963):

Now that the idea of race consciousness has spread all over the world, it is frequently assumed that any conflict in history which cannot be readily explained in some other way must have been due to race antagonism. On the other hand, before the eighteenth century physical differences among peoples were so rarely referred to as a matter of great importance that something of a case can be made for the proposition that race consciousness is largely a modern phenomenon. What is certain is that the tendency to seize upon physical differences as the badge of innate mental and temperamental differences is not limited to modern times. The racism of ancient history, even though it had no science of biology or anthropology behind it, was real, however difficult it may be for us to judge the extent of its power. (1997, 3)

According to this passage, the use of physical differences between peoples as a way to categorize and discriminate against some of them is at once as old as human society itself and simultaneously of a more recent vintage, a product of intense inquiry that went into the question of differences of various kinds that emerged out of Europe’s long colonial expansion into far-flung parts of the world: “Even though race theories had not then secured wide acceptance or even sophisticated formulation, the first contacts of the Spanish with the Indians in the Americas can now be recognized as the beginning of a struggle between conceptions of the nature of primitive peoples which has not yet been wholly settled” (16). In short, as European imperial conquest became a fact of life everywhere in the world, the conquered required ever more comprehensive and sophisticated systems of distinction, categorization, and codified valuation. The controversy generated by this claim has tended to cohere around the topic of historical continuity. Some want to argue that rather than being age-old, “racism as *race*-ism is a distinctive product of the modern West that subsequently spread – along with ‘race consciousness’ – to other parts of the world as an effect of Europe-centered capitalist development, the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, and European colonialism and imperialism” (Baum 2006, 9).

Regardless of where scholars might align themselves in this debate about historical continuity versus historical novelty, there does seem to be strong agreement that race

as a modern concept emerges with European colonialism. The literary scholar Lisa Lowe offers a provocative discussion about how race refers to the expanding reach of European power in an article entitled “The Intimacy of Four Continents” (2006). As she puts it, “My investigation begins in 1807, and extends to the surrounding years, in order to examine particular connections between Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas just after the Haitian Revolution, when the British abolished the slave trade and introduced Chinese indentured laborers into their West Indian colonies in the Caribbean” (192). In this passage, the early nineteenth-century West Indies becomes a meeting place of peoples from all over the world who were brought into physical proximity with one another during one of capitalism’s moments of intense primitive accumulation and who provided the conditions for ideas of the family, self, home, and freedom to flourish as integral to modern humanism. As much as this history may seem to us to belong squarely to the past, our contemporary habits of racial categorization point to the ways in which this history continues to structure the present world. This structure was from its start both global and national: the genocide of native peoples, the enslavement of African workers, the contrasting freedom granted to European settlers and yeomen, the separation of the United States from its southern hemispheric neighbors, whom it would seek to control and exploit from afar, and the Asian indentured worker who occupied some interstitial zone between enslavement and freedom.

“Modern hierarchies of race,” Lowe continues, “appear to have emerged in the contradiction between humanism’s aspirations to universality and the needs of modern colonial regimes to manage work, reproduction, and the social organization of the colonized; the intimacies of four continents formed the political unconscious of modern racial classification” (204). While race was once an organizing principle for colonial enterprises to keep track of their various workers, keep them apart, and compel them to labor under often brutal conditions of physical hardship, and while it has been used since as the basis for racist structures of power played out through bodies, sexuality, housing, employment opportunities, and so forth, its categories also powerfully maintain residues of what is forgotten in its retelling: “The affirmation of the desire for freedom is so inhabited by the forgetting of its conditions of possibility, that every narrative articulation of freedom is haunted by its burial, by the violence of forgetting. What we know as ‘race’ or ‘gender’ are the *traces* of this modern humanist forgetting” (206). If so, then the intimacy of four continents to which our contemporary ideas of race speak refers to the ways in which those thrown into physical proximity in places like the West Indies in the early nineteenth century also made possible “the volatile contacts of colonized peoples” (203). Every time a colonial administrator told a cautionary tale about the dangers to be avoided in managing diverse populations, the tale itself recalled those fraught and elusive moments of revolt, novel cooperation, and solidarity that colonialism made possible.

Race was thus developed as a concept to divide populations and keep them apart to fit the needs of capital production. Just as important, the concept of race also recalls this history of division that led to contemporary inequalities of all kinds and an even more buried history of creative collaborations that made subjugation survivable, and even vulnerable to organized resistance. As such, by paying attention to race, we can fight the forces of forgetting, and make sense of how inequalities are historically produced rather than naturally occurring – and how they also spawn revolutionary forces. Building on

the insights afforded by Paul Gilroy's argument about a black Atlantic (1993), the historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (2000) chronicle a long iconographic tradition circumnavigating the Atlantic that imagines governance as a Hercules frustratingly cutting off the head of a multi-headed hydra of revolt, only to see two heads grow to replace it:

From the beginning of English colonial expansion in the early seventeenth century through the metropolitan industrialization of the early nineteenth, rulers referred to the Hercules-hydra myth to describe the difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labor. They variously designated dispossessed commoners, transported fellows, indentured servants, religious radicals, pirates, urban laborers, soldier, sailors, and African slaves as the numerous, ever-changing heads of the monster. But the heads, though originally brought in productive combination by their Herculean rulers, soon developed among themselves new forms of cooperation against their rulers, from mutinies and strikes to riots and insurrection and revolution. (4)

The paradox of race might thus be summed up in this way. It is at once the precondition of the management of a diverse workforce brought together from far-flung places in the world to occupy different niches in an economic order and the residue of such laboring practices that are constantly being erased from memory in lieu of universalistic claims of what constitutes the human as such.

Scholarly arguments that seek to dismiss all racial discourses as a form of ideology, or what Karen Fields and Barbara Fields (2012) suggestively call *racecraft* (to rhyme with *witchcraft*), tend to focus only on the former part of this paradox, and as such understandably find little use for any attempt to think with a concept that admittedly has a sorry and despicable history. Other scholars who continue to turn to this term, led by researchers such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994), Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007), and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2009), insist on its importance for unraveling our exclusionary ideas of the human, and of recognizing the ways in which ideas of the human already come bundled in incoherence and denial. At a self-proclaimed post-racial moment, to talk of race is to recognize the need to sort through the ways in which our many differences fit together into some more elaborate structure of perpetual inequality-making. Race conjures differences and makes them seem natural, but for a purpose that can be critically analyzed for a radically opposed alternative.

Biological Caesuras

By looking at the history of these two terms, what we find is a study in contrasts. Ethnicity has an old and distinct etymology that can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, but the way we use the word today, as a generic way of talking about how any one group defines itself through cultural heritage and shared ancestry, is actually quite new. Race has a more recent and murkier etymology, not seeming to have much purchase on the European mind until Europeans began to travel in earnest to distant places and conquer people who to them seemed vastly Other. While Gossett may be

correct when he says physical differences have been an easy, and frequently availed, way of rationalizing the abuse of one group of people over another for a very long time, it also seems important to insist that our common concept of race as a systematic attempt to make sense of physical differences between humans emerges out of a modern history of European imperialism and capitalist expansion that has yet to come to an end.

Race is inextricably mired in this history and ethnicity is mobilized as a corrective term that can transcend this same history, to talk more neutrally about human differences of almost any kind (although it also nevertheless contains the sense of marking Otherness). This difference of usage is what makes the two words distinct. By naming differences, race conjures the potential for radical cooperation. And, vice versa, by focusing on resemblances, ethnicity disavows its keen regard for dismissing some groups as more ethnic than others. If so, what latter-day arguments about race have in common is the sense that race names a process of marking differences, of seeking in the body proof of an existence of such differences prior to the act of marking, and of becoming in turn a functioning of an unequal status quo.

Almost all of these latter-day arguments have been directly or indirectly influenced by Foucault's arguments about how knowledge constructs objects after the fact, rather than seeking merely to make knowable what is already there. Knowledge, moreover, is also always shot through with considerations of power. In a characteristic commentary about a methodology that can be tracked back to these arguments, the historian Bruce Baum (2006) observes,

Taking a genealogical approach to race requires that we go beyond an analysis of how shifting social and political struggles and power relations (e.g. European colonialism; the Atlantic slave trade; emergent nationalisms; and struggles over immigration, citizenship, and labor market relations) have shaped the relations between so-called races of people. It simultaneously demands that we explore historically how such power dynamics have shaped the production of scientific and popular knowledge about race. (12)

To take this approach to the study of race seriously has also meant taking seriously Foucault's idea of biopower, which he developed relatively late in his career. As he explained in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1978), biopower replaces older forms of sovereign power by being more focused on life. Hence, while the king's power was premised on the ability to "take life or let live," power has since evolved with the development of technologies like statistical data collection, water and waste management, epidemiology, and so on to be able more and more "to foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (138). Biopower is premised necessarily on a positive improvement of life, the perpetual optimization of life expectancy, comfort, and health. And yet, as Chow again vividly explains, "When life becomes the overarching imperative...all social relations become subordinate to the discursive network that has been generated to keep it going, so much so that even a negative, discriminatory fact such as racism is legitimated in the name of the living" (2002, 9). As Foucault hypothesized in his *Collège de France* seminar, "Society Must Be Defended" (1997), racism serves an important function in the routine exercise of biopower in that it "is a way of establishing

a biological-type caesura within a population that appear to be a biological domain,” so that one can then determine “the break between what must live and what must die” (255, 254). We no longer kill to punish; in the era of biopower, we kill in order to make life for everyone else better. This means that biopower, while ostensibly concerned only with the prolongation and enhancement of life, also concerns itself as much as the more ancient form of sovereign power it has largely come to replace with the need to kill. What is novel about biopower vis-à-vis sovereign power is that it must exercise this right to make dead always in the name of life, always on behalf of what is best for the living body of the community it has sworn itself to enhancing and making ever more perfect.

So it is, as the postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe observes in his article “Necropolitics” (2003), that the exercise of biopower by the modern state “presupposes the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others” (17). Inevitably, then, “That *race* (or for that matter *racism*) figures so prominently in the calculus of biopower is entirely justifiable. After all, more so than class-thinking (the ideology that defines history as an economic struggle of classes), race has been the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples” (17). Racial discourse’s preoccupation with difference, then, leads directly to the making of “a biological caesura” that enables biopower to determine who must be made to live and who must be made to die. The rest of Mbembe’s article is dedicated to expanding on this notion to get beyond biopower’s stated interest in life, to show how the exercise of contemporary power is driven, especially in regions of the world like Palestine, the Balkans (especially in the bombing of Kosovo), and many countries in Africa, by a politics paradoxically preoccupied with death. Such a *necropolitics*, Mbembe argues, is dedicated to the deployment of weapons for the “maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (39).

As this last example may suggest, turning to the topic of biopower can quickly lead to the contemplation of how contemporary racism resembles, and builds upon in terrifying ways, racist practices of the past. Moreover, the countries in the periphery of the major global centers of power continue to be spaces of colonization where a relation of oppression can be openly flaunted, and where the caesuras introduced into definitions of the human make it possible to imagine those who are subjugated to be less than human, animal and savage, in that they are “something alien beyond imagination or comprehension.” Mbembe observes, “The savages are, as it were, ‘natural’ human beings who lack the specifically human character, the specifically human reality, ‘so that when European men massacred them they somehow were not aware that they had committed murder’” (24). The last quotation comes from Hannah Arendt (1966, 192) who, along with Carl Schmidt, Giorgio Agamben, and Frantz Fanon, enables Mbembe to elaborate theoretically beyond the limits of Foucault’s thinking. The diversity of the philosophical traditions Mbembe draws on demonstrates how those who have sought to make use of Foucault’s idea of biopower have also needed to supplement it with other approaches that broaden and provide more complexity to the topic of race and colonialism, which Foucault himself did not discuss at much length; an omission for which he has been

criticized (Stoler 1995). What emerges as a result of such elaboration is the importance of the way power worked in the colonies, where deployment could be harsh and unimpeded. Innovations thus arose in the colonies and were eventually imported into the conquering countries, often with devastating results.

If biopower breaks down so completely, and horribly, in those almost always non-white parts of the world, which are viewed somehow as a periphery, a colony, or an outside to the inside of properly managed states (not always just white) dedicated to fulfilling the potential of life, then it must be said that similar kinds of caesuras also mark the treatment of populations along racial lines *within* those states as well. Consider the extremely large, majority African American and Latino, prison population in the United States. If the working definition of racism we are abiding by is the inflicting of “premature death” on some groups over others whose differences have in some way been accentuated, we can see how prisons – by restricting so many, often in racially differentiated applications of criminal law, of the rights of individual mobility, and the exercise of personal and collective autonomy; by robbing inmates of future opportunities once released (but perhaps never freed); and just as importantly by depriving the communities from which they have been taken of their presence – enable an acceleration of death, and the imagining of a life that is not much more than mere “surviving” (Cacho 2012, 33). The injustice of such differentiation, both in the United States and abroad, can be difficult to perceive if we are not willing to concede that race operates in ways in which ethnicity alone cannot illuminate.

- see CHAPTER 4 (BIRMINGHAM – URBANA-CHAMPAIGN 1964–1990; OR, CULTURAL STUDIES); CHAPTER 7 (DELHI/AHMEDNAGAR FORT – WASHINGTON, DC/BIRMINGHAM JAIL – PRETORIA/ROBBEN ISLAND 1947–1994; OR, RACE, COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM); CHAPTER 28 (DECOLONIZATION)

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30

Humanism

Nina Power

A certain 20th century lets itself be identified, in its middle, around the fifties and sixties, by the confrontation between radical humanism and radical anti-humanism.

—Alain Badiou, *The Century* (2007, 171)

Why did the question of man, quite suddenly in the 1960s, especially in France and in somewhat polemical terms ... crystallize into a critical reflection upon humanism?

—Dominique Janicaud, *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* (2002, 14)¹

In his autobiography, Louis Althusser points out that his project of “theoretical antihumanism,” which entailed reading Marx without depending on concepts such as “man” and “subject,” was all along an attempt to clear the ground for a better understanding of what “practical humanism” could mean once shorn of its ideological connotations. What Althusser’s statement reveals is that the so-called “humanism–anti-humanism” debate, the set of oppositions in French thought that we associate with certain theoretical and philosophical movements in the middle of the twentieth century (existentialism and phenomenology on one side, and structuralism, psychoanalysis, and linguistics on the other), did not reveal the true stakes at the heart of these debates. The problem of “practical humanism” ultimately preoccupied both parties, *however different their theoretical perspectives on it were*. Two points follow from this initial claim:

- 1) That the humanism–anti-humanism debate masked a more fundamental shared concern.
- 2) That the unanswered and often implicit, but crucial, issue in this debate was the question of who or what a collective political subject is, both in terms of its structure and its capacities.

Philippe Sollers’s claim that “the continuation of the false debate between ‘humanism’ and ‘anti-humanism’ entails the impossibility of posing the materialist question of the *subject*” (1974, 141)² remains relevant for much current work in critical and cultural theory, which continues the ideological battle, but at a remove from the political crises

and conflicts that accompanied the original polemic. If the question of the subject is what is really at stake beneath the historico-ideological humanism–anti-humanism debate, between “idealist verbiage” and “minimal catechism,” as Sollers puts it, then a displacement of the terms of the original debate is needed in order to correct the idea that, in the final analysis, the humanism–anti-humanism debate was what it claimed to be.

Why, however, should this debate be worth revisiting – as tied up with the real political concerns of its era as it was – except as an object of purely historical study? The easy answer is that the issues are very much still in play. There are a whole series of positions that claim to be “anti-humanist,” if for two slightly different reasons. The first takes its cue from a loose concatenation of so-called poststructuralist attempts to displace the human. Thus we have Michel Foucault’s “Death of Man,” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s attempt to break with the centrality of anthropic categories, and Jacques Lacan’s description of the human as a “maladapted animal,” all of which provide points of reference for contemporary thinkers to declare themselves “anti-humanist” without any real understanding of the political context of the original debate.

The second contemporary “anti-humanist” strand finds its origins in Martin Heidegger’s claim, made most famously in “The Letter on Humanism” but present throughout his work, that humanism remains “metaphysical,” and as such must be dissolved so that the true aim of thought can be achieved, namely, to get beneath such “ontic” speculation to a more fundamental realm of being. In this vein we can also refer to the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, but also to Giorgio Agamben and his unusual fusion of Michel Foucault’s work on biopolitics with a Heideggerian critique. Both contemporary anti-humanist tendencies amount, deliberately or otherwise, to a decoupling of philosophical speculation from what I will be claiming here are its intricate etymological and conceptual links with the political implications of the use of terms “subject,” “man,” and “humanity.” Furthermore, many contemporary “humanist” thinkers also tend towards a non- or a-political conception of humanity, and see themselves as merely providing a non-religious set of ethical or practical guidelines for living.

Whilst the attack on religion provides much of the impetus behind texts such as Ludwig David Friedrich Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus* (1835) and Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), and can be (and was) integrated into a non-political humanism by some of their successors, the implications for philosophy and politics extends beyond this religious critique, and as such demonstrates the relevance of humanism to a politically charged philosophical tradition that may begin with Feuerbach and Marx but continues in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Althusser, and Alain Badiou. The later “humanism” debate in French thought in the 1950s and 1960s was conceptually prefigured in the German discussion of “Man” in the 1830s and 1840s.³

Although the terms humanist and humanism are relatively recent (five hundred and two hundred years old, respectively), humanist ideas, broadly understood as involving a positive ethical approach to human existence and an appreciation of human endeavor, are much older, stretching as far back as the naturalist philosophers of ancient Greece and the Islamic Renaissance, as well as featuring in ancient Chinese thought, particularly that of Confucius. The basic principles of humanism – the recognition of the worth of all human beings, and their thoughts and actions – have thus existed for as long as human civilization has existed. Although often used in vague or dismissive ways, an understanding of the term humanism is crucial for political theory: all forms of political

philosophy and social organization, as well as critical and cultural theory, depend explicitly or implicitly upon a theory of human nature and some idea of what human beings have in common and what they value.

There have been many varieties of humanism, both religious and secular, although contemporary humanism is more frequently associated with atheism than with any particular form of religious belief. Debates about humanism in the twentieth century have caused and continue to cause much controversy, particularly in Marxist thought and European philosophy more broadly conceived. Although the term “humanism” has dropped out of favor for the most part, many thinkers continue to hold humanist ideas, regardless of whether they describe them as such. These include believing in the moral worth of every human being, being committed to the idea that human beings can solve environmental crises through the application of science and technology, and demanding equality through the enforcement of human rights. On the other hand, others would describe themselves as anti-humanists, either because they think that science has actually ‘de-centered’ the human in favor of more fundamental entities, such as genes, or because humanism has been responsible for some of the more disastrous political projects of the past few centuries – that human hubris has created threats to its own well-being through the invention of the atom bomb, for example. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a political theory that doesn’t invoke a theory of human nature, regardless of how it conceives of that nature, and even genres of thinking that describe themselves as ‘post-’ or ‘trans-’ humanist often depend upon fairly distinct ideas of the capacity of humanity to go beyond itself via technology or through a revised relation to the animal.

Despite an interest in post-humanist and trans-humanist ideas, the most prevalent philosophical counters to humanism in contemporary thought tend to follow Heidegger’s attack on Sartre in “The Letter on Humanism.” More recently, against Heidegger’s line of thought, Étienne Balibar proposes a program of “philosophical anthropology” (that would also be intrinsically political) that ought to begin with a critical discussion, “both historical and analytical,” of the notions of *man*, the *subject*, and the *citizen*. Balibar outlines the main reasons why a critique of Heidegger’s critique of philosophical anthropology is necessary in order to preserve the political import of the term.⁴ Balibar defends a certain reading of philosophical anthropology against Heidegger’s double-pronged attack on Man as *animal rationale*, which he claims is both obscure and present-at-hand, and the idea of man as transcendent being as “rooted in Christian dogmatics” (Heidegger 1962, 71–77). Not only does Heidegger’s critique form the basis for a tradition of the dismissal of the question of philosophical anthropology when there is yet much work to be done, but it also unilaterally separates philosophy from politics. Heidegger’s negation of the notion of philosophical anthropology is part of his larger argument that it is only via the analytic of *Dasein* that any future philosophical anthropology may legitimately be founded:

the analytic of *Dasein* remains wholly oriented towards the guiding task of working out the question of Being ... It cannot attempt to provide a complete ontology of *Dasein*, which assuredly must be constructed if anything like a ‘philosophical’ anthropology is to have a philosophically adequate basis. (1962, 38)

As Derrida puts it in “The Ends of Man”: “We can see ... that *Dasein*, though *not* man, is nevertheless *nothing other* than man” (1987, 143).

Using Balibar's dissection of the Heideggerian program as our guide, it is instructive to compare Heidegger's comments on philosophical anthropology with his formally similar claims regarding humanism from the 1946/1947 "Letter on Humanism." Throughout this piece, Heidegger projects a strange relationship between his ontology and humanism, presenting man's possible relation to being as something more like an "ahumanism" – "ahuman" because man is not imagined as the *limit* of thinking (as it is for Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*). As Heidegger puts it: "in the determination of the humanity of man as ek-sistence what is essential is not man but Being – as the dimension of the *ecstasies* of ek-sistence" (1993, 237). Because man is not what is *most* essential in his formulation, Heidegger rightly asks, can we still call this humanism? Throughout the essay we witness a perpetual and deliberate oscillation towards the term, at once somehow going beyond it and simultaneously thinking it more "originarily." Thus Heidegger will state both that "humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough" and that "with regard to this more essential *humanitas* of *homo humanus* there arises the possibility of restoring to the word 'humanism' a historical sense that is older than its oldest meaning chronologically reckoned" (1993, 234, 247).

This is why we can speak of Heidegger's paradoxical ahumanism/hyperhumanism (just as we can speak of his paradoxical anti- yet pro-philosophical anthropology): *ahumanism* because the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* consists in a thinking of Being that ends up *indifferent* to man, as the figure has been thought in terms of social, political, anthropological questions posed by modern philosophy; *hyperhumanism* because Heidegger nevertheless thinks that this questioning of any metaphysical understanding of man points to a conception of the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* that precisely allows for an opening onto Being: "the essence of man consists in his being more than merely human ... more originally and more essentially in terms of his essence" (1993, 245). As with the question of philosophical anthropology, Heidegger undermines the term "humanism" only to propose on a "deeper" level its reclamation, posing the question of Man in a lateral way that evacuates the question of any primary or ontological political content. In the very brief comments we have from Heidegger concerning Marx, we also see a repetition of this double-edged strategy. If Marx finds Man's essence in society, as Heidegger argues he does, this is already "metaphysical" in a way that prohibits asking the question of the relation of Being to the essence of Man. Heidegger thus has no real *political* critique of Marx, and his refusal to engage with him on this level is indicative of a willful neglect of the real challenge posed by Marx's work.

Heidegger's exclusion of politics from the thinking of humanity is also evident in his attempt to exclude politics from any discussion of the "subject." Heidegger criticizes Immanuel Kant's notion of the subject: "he altogether neglected the problem of Being; and, in connection with this, he failed to provide an ontology with Dasein as its theme or ... to give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject" (1962, 45). But Heidegger is missing the double sense of Kant's notion: the way the political and the transcendental are inseparable. While Heidegger tries to deny the very possibility of asking the question of the nature or essence of Man without also thereby enclosing philosophy in an unsurpassable metaphysical circle, it is clear that this is only the case if you neglect the political threads in the composition of the terms "Man," "subject," and "humanity."⁵ If these terms are understood as inherently political and historical, even within their most abstract "philosophical" formulations, then we

recognize the revolutionary potential in any discussion of the collective political subject as that which reformulates the question of what it means to be human in a practical, processual sense.

Back to the 1840s: Political Humanism in Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx

In order to understand the relevance of political humanism today, it is important to go back to some of the key debates that stem from the reception of Hegel's work in the middle of the nineteenth century. At this time, claims about universalism, individualism, and the definition of "man" start to become politicized in important ways. Similarly, the humanist critique of religion takes on a nuance that is often lost in contemporary forms of "New Atheism." Hegel's claim, from the "Doctrine of the Notion" in his *Encyclopaedia Logic*, that "only in Christendom is man respected as man, in his infinitude and universality" incorporates several key moments: the idea that Christianity is the most universal of religions, encapsulating and surpassing the truth of all others; that Christendom is the physical embodiment of this universality; and that the universal is intricately associated with "the principle of personality."

Hegel does not however mean by this that personality is immediately apparent to the "person" him- or herself – elsewhere in the *Encyclopaedia* he criticizes Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi for speaking of personality in terms of a form of idealist intuition (1991a, 97). The slave's self-recognition, in particular, would not be enough to reveal to him his own universality, according to Hegel.⁶ Indeed, without external recognition, the slave is not a person at all: he does not partake, as Hegel elsewhere puts it, in "the principle of the Western world, the principle of individuality" (1991a, 214). Hegel does not therefore understand this "principle of personality" in terms of a personal relation to God of which any man or woman could be the subject, as a typical "personalist" might – indeed, this is what his Christian theological detractors, such as Friedrich Julius Stahl, found so problematic. In Hegel's later and last major text, the *Philosophy of Right* (1821), "persons" occupy the realm, between the private sphere and the state, of bourgeois (or civil) society [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*]. What persons have in common, however, is not their reason, nor feeling (as in the family), but *ownership*: private property and the collective ties that expand and regulate these relations: "When we say that a human being must be *somebody* [*etwas*], we mean that he must belong to a particular estate ... A human being with no estate is merely a private person and does not possess actual universality" (1991b, 239).

"Universality" is thus understood as the systematic interweaving of individual and family ownership and institutions. The implication of Hegel's so-called universalism, therefore, is that one can be human in a biological sense, and yet have no actual relation to personhood or to the "actual" universal. Women, in particular, according to Hegel, cannot contemplate "universal" activities such as philosophy or governance, precisely because "their actions are not based on the demands of universality but on contingent inclination and opinion" (1991b, 207). If we come to Hegel expecting a certain kind of universality to arise in the shared, if differential, capacities of the species (what we might name humanity or Mankind, comprising both men and women), we will be disappointed, finding the breadth of this term restricted in the *Philosophy of Right* to the

permutations of marriage and reproduction, “Life,” or “the actuality of the species” (1991b, 200). Not the life of men and women as it is lived in society, but the mere fact of the propagation of the species, which is, in turn, subsumed by civil society as marriage, thus relying on differentiation at a lower level in order to defend a rather circumscribed “universalism” at a higher level. There is a tension between Hegel the philosopher and Hegel the thinker of the articulation of the state and civil society, a battle in which the universality of the human is ultimately subordinated to concrete social hierarchization.

Despite Hegel’s insistence (following Spinoza’s Axiom in the *Ethics* that “Man thinks”) that “Nature has given every one a faculty of thought,” this “generic thought” does not reach the level of the universal until it “*feels its own universality*” (1991a, 38). So whilst self-reflecting thought is that which constitutes the distinction between humanity and animals, in the realm of thought, the philosopher and the bourgeois property-owner share the distinction of being in exclusive possession of the ability to attain the universal: “the philosophic mode gets to be different from the more general thought which acts in all that is human, in all that gives humanity its distinctive character” (1991a, 4). A mode of thought that, as noted, women and slaves are by definition unable to practice, according to Hegel, because of their “inability” to attain the level of the universal either via the legal recognition of their full right to property (or limited forms thereof), or because of their “natural” restriction to the level of the contingent and the individual. Even in marriage and childrearing, the woman can only attain the level of the generic [*Gattung*] by uniting with her husband, via “their consent to *constitute a single person*” (1991b, 201).⁷ Above them, too, stands civil society as the “universal family,” in the face of the relative arbitrariness and contingency of the married couple as parents (1991b, 264).

In his earlier work, the “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State,” Marx will make explicit the narrowness of Hegel’s conception of the universal and attack the idea that the “universal interest” should be commensurate with the task of upholding legality (1991b, 329). The Universal is repeatedly qualified by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right*: “the process of legislation should not be represented merely by that one of its moments whereby something is declared to be valid for everyone; more important that this is the inner and essential moment, namely *cognition of the content in its determinate universality*” (1991b, 310). Everywhere in Hegel the universal is given, but circumscribed: everyone thinks, in principle, but only philosophy, and/or, the law-abiding property-owner thinks *universally*. This is why a critique of philosophy, such as undertaken in Feuerbach’s attempt to inaugurate a “non-philosophy,” is also a critique of the bourgeois, “cognizing” subject that underpins it. Everyone has an abstract relation to Right, yet one must have cognizance [*die Kenntniss*] of the content of the law in order to partake of it. As Marx puts it: “the universal appears everywhere as a determinate particular, while the individual never achieves its true universality” (1992a, 99).

Karl Löwith notes that, for Hegel, “man is far from being conceived as a member of a general class; rather the life of this class itself, society, is conceived as a framework external to the individuals, a restriction upon their original independence. The only bond holding them together is ... need and private interest” (1964, 242). Those thinkers that followed Hegel, not only Marx, but those who Marx read, respected, and argued with in the early years, most especially Ludwig Feuerbach, oriented their projects towards a series of complex tasks: how to rescue the universal from its Hegelian

limitations and thus render it truly universal; how to redeem Man (understood as men and women) without simply redeeming the bourgeois man of property and security; how to learn the lessons of the dialectic, and to criticize it, *without* retreating to a pre-Hegelian problematic that could easily be criticized and subsumed by the subtleties of the all-consuming Hegelian system. As Feuerbach succinctly put it in 1843, “The *culmination* of modern philosophy is the Hegelian philosophy. The *historical necessity* and *justification* of the new philosophy must therefore be derived mainly from a *critique of Hegel’s*” (1972, 203).

There are a number of factors to bear in mind here. By the early 1840s, not only did the original unifying force of the “rationalist” Hegelian system appear to have been dissolved in its apparent opposition to the reality of the political state (namely, the ascension of Pietist King Frederick Wilhelm IV and the political and academic hostility towards Hegelianism), but the Hegelian school’s own unity was shattered by the splintering off of myriad Hegelian factions (Löwith 1964, 66). Practically, this meant that criticisms of theology were inextricably intermingled with those of politics (theoretical or existing). It is Feuerbach who best summarizes the theoretical landscape post-Hegel, when discussing his proposal for a future philosophy: “The new philosophy is the *negation of rationalism* as much as *mysticism*; of *pantheism* as much as *personalism*; of *atheism* as much as *theism*; it is the *unity of all these antithetical truths as an absolutely independent and pure truth*” (1972, 170). Although Warren Breckman argues against ascribing too much influence to the political circumstances of the 1840s as being responsible for radicalizing the left Hegelians, pointing to the fact that the unity of religious and sociopolitical concerns in Feuerbach’s criticisms of personalism of the 1830s already exhibits characteristically radical themes, it is clear that there was a heightened alarm at the increasingly repressive political state of affairs in Germany in the 1840s (cf. Breckman 1999).

The issue of religion, though it formed a major part of the conservative attack on Hegel and now dominates our understanding of what “humanism” means today, did not centrally preoccupy the left-wing Hegelians. That honor goes instead to the question of “political humanism,” as I will name the thematic of Feuerbach and the early Marx, understood as the attempt to restore to men and women certain forms of their own power in the face of allegedly natural forms of hierarchy (sovereignty, monarchy, lordship and the newer, and more complex, form of domination, capitalism). This project of de-alienation goes far beyond a simple reversal of the tyranny of religious oppression. It is thus disingenuous to state, as Jean Hyppolite does, that “one may see in Christianity, as it is interpreted in Hegelian philosophy, the source of everything in Marxian humanism” (1969, 99). Similarly, Karl Ameriks’s claim that “the notion of the human species itself is Feuerbach’s epistemological, ontological, and ethical *substitute* for the absolute role that was previously played by the notion of God as traditionally understood” (2000, 262) again underestimates the political elements in Feuerbach’s work, which is not simply an analysis of theology, but also, and at the same time, of philosophy and certain theo-political conceptions of civil society. Feuerbach and Marx’s early humanism represents more than a simple transmutation of the veneration of the transcendent (God, idealism) to a veneration of the immanent (man, materialism). “Political humanism” is not solely the replacement of theology with anthropology. If it were, we would expect it to retain the precise structure of theological arguments, rendering it vulnerable to criticisms along the line of Proudhon’s claim from the mid-nineteenth century that to

celebrate humanity is merely the repetition and echo of religious belief. The so-called “deification” of the species that Pierre-Joseph Proudhon attacks in humanist atheism does not, and cannot, be a presupposition in either Feuerbach or Marx, for it is precisely awareness of how stuck humanity has gotten in the face of its oppressions that guides their criticisms of Hegel and theology.

This question of the formal reversal of philosophical-theological writing is, in any case, preempted by Feuerbach in 1843: “The *contradiction* of the modern philosophy, especially of pantheism, consists of the fact that it is the *negation of theology from the standpoint of theology* or the negation of theology which itself is *again theology*: this contradiction *especially characterizes the Hegelian philosophy*” (1972, 204). This is neither a theological negation of theology, nor the negation of the *content* of theology without a simultaneous destruction of its *form*. Admittedly, Feuerbach does give some weapons to his critics when, especially in the later works, he occasionally make claims like “My aim in reducing theology to anthropology is rather to raise anthropology to theology in just the same way as Christianity, by reducing God to man, elevates man into God, even if into a transcendent, fantastic God far removed from man” (1972, 257). But his more comprehensive attacks on the formal ties between theology, philosophy, and the “nature” of civil society are more salient to the question of humanism *per se*, and it is to those that I will turn.

Some caveats, however: As willing as Feuerbach was to connect his critique of religion with socialism, it is clear that Marx’s subsequent identification of socialism with the proletariat’s struggle actually militates against the core of Feuerbach’s own emancipatory project. Feuerbach never identified the proletariat as the universal class whose emancipation would liberate all mankind. Instead he remained committed to the task of the universal emancipation of humanity as such, and this must include proletariat and capitalist alike. In this sense, Feuerbach is attempting to make good the promise of the universal that Hegel never carried out. However, we know, too that the universal plays a large role in Marx’s 1843–1844 work on Hegel. The formation of a class with “radical chains,” the proletariat, is precisely a *negatively universal* class: its suffering is universal, its total “loss of humanity” is a universal loss. It is as if Marx, with this notion of the proletariat, is taking his cue from Feuerbach’s claim that “only he who has the courage to be absolutely negative has also the power to create something new” (1972, 146). If it is only one part of humanity that emancipates itself, this “one particular class” nevertheless “undertakes from its *particular situation* the universal emancipation of society” (1992a, 99). Marx has here taken up Feuerbach’s “completed Hegelianism” and added the beginnings of a more material political critique, without yet dropping the language of the universal. The relationship between the reformulation of the universal between Feuerbach and Marx is critical: it is here, rather than on the question of humanism *per se*, that they will ultimately diverge, as Marx becomes less and less convinced by strictly “philosophical” conceptions of politics and humanity. However, the question of how and in which ways this humanity individuates itself is also at stake: while Feuerbach will remain in the realm of that which binds at the level of the generic (thought and love), Marx will, particularly in the wake of Max Stirner’s attack on Feuerbach, give much more prominence to the role of the complex “individual” (not to be understood as a substantive “person” in Hegel’s sense). As Stathis Kouvelakis puts it, “when it is a question of determining, in positive fashion, the ultimate human essence, Marx becomes

highly elliptical, precisely where Feuerbach ... is prolix" (2003, 213). There is thus a shift in the conception of "political humanism" from Feuerbach's 1839 claim that "[t]he species is *indifferent* to the individual. The reflecting individual carries the consciousness of the species within himself" (1972, 92–93) to Marx's 1845 claim in *The German Ideology* of communism as the "power of ... united individuals" (1970, 86). Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's conception of generic humanity retains Feuerbach's concern for that shared humanity; what he does eliminate, however, is the idea of an ahistorical opposition between the individual and the species, such that species-being would be revealed only ideally (in self-consciousness, for example, as Feuerbach argues in the preface to *The Essence of Christianity*). Already we can see hints of Marx's disagreement with Feuerbach on this point in 1844: "The real, active relation of man to himself as a species-being, or the realization of himself as a real species-being, i.e. as a human being, is only possible if he really employs all his *species-powers* – which ... is only possible through the cooperation of mankind and as a result of history" (1992b, 386). Man, for Marx, is identified neither with the isolated individual, nor the species as the revelation of shared capacity, but with the practice of real individuals in their shared, if differentiated, conditions and their historical specificity.

Marx makes the addition to his early form of humanism of a particular idea of *democracy* that makes more explicit the immediately political nature of human emancipation, thus further distinguishing himself from Feuerbach and avoiding some of the problems inherent in the notion of "species." As Kouvelakis remarks:

The reference to the species is haunted by a constitutive instability; that it is a provisional notion subject to progressive destabilisation; and that it operates like the spectral trace of a different social logic, one which comes from the future and is yet lodged at the heart of bourgeois social relations. For its part, 'true democracy,' defined as the self-presence of the human essence, would be more an appeal ... for a democratic political practice that does not yet exist or, more precisely, has not yet been recognised – and cannot yet be 'named' – rather than a stable concept awaiting its systematic presentation. (2003, 314)

We can of course ultimately question, as Marx did, whether Feuerbach really achieves a truly *novel* conception of explicitly political humanism as he imagines he did (we can see just how preoccupied Feuerbach was with questions of futurity and temporality, and the immediate need for a new kind of thinking from perusing the titles of his works: "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," "The Necessity of a Reform of Philosophy," "Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy"). When Feuerbach states "Philosophy steps into the place that religion had occupied. This means, however, that a totally different philosophy replaces all previous philosophy" (1972, 148), the question is to what extent this *new* philosophy (or sometimes, this "non-philosophy") can serve as an adequate account of the really existing state of affairs, and to what extent we would want to resurrect this notion of political humanism today. The debates of the 1840s contribute profoundly to any discussion of political humanism today, and deserve close attention if we are to understand any of the recent, complex history of the present.

- see CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 15 (SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND HIERARCHIES); CHAPTER 25 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY)

Notes

- 1 “Pourquoi, assez soudainement dans les années 1960, et surtout en France, la question de l’homme s’est-elle cristallisée dans les termes passablement polémiques d’une réflexion critique sur l’humanisme?” My translation.
- 2 “La continuation du faux débat entre ‘humanisme’ et ‘anti-humanisme,’ qui permet de ne pas poser la question matérialiste du *sujet*” (Sollers 1974, 141 n.4).
- 3 Whilst in some sense there has been a resurgence of interest in categories such as humanism, the human, human nature, human rights, they often do not go beyond an ethical or moral dogmatism (and thus are prey to Marx’s critique of both bourgeois humanism and the simple reversal of theology onto Man). Contemporary work on “biopolitics” and the man/animal boundary, however complex, remains locked into a biological understanding of the human that neglects the elements that Sartre, Althusser, and Badiou bring to the concept: those of rationalism, history, and the subject.
- 4 Something about Balibar’s own philosophical concerns should be noted here. While in the earlier collection he co-authored with Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, Balibar was clearly presenting a political critique of universalist humanism (“[it] is not incompatible with the system of hierarchies and exclusions which, above all, take the form of racism and sexism” [Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 9]), there is a sense in his more recent work on philosophical anthropology that there is a return to a heavily modulated and attenuated form of the demand for a universalist “equaliberty.” In other words, a “right to politics” that goes beyond the critique of universalism (however important this remains with respect to gender and race, amongst other things) in the earlier work. We might compare the work of the later Balibar to the wish expressed in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* that we need to move “toward a new humanism” (Fanon 1986, 9).
- 5 With regard to Heidegger’s claim (also found in Derrida’s work) that humanism possesses a reworked Christian concept of man, we need to reinsert the original critique of religion *and of transcendence* that we find in Feuerbach and Marx in particular, as it is precisely on the basis of an unqualified notion of transcendence that Heidegger and Derrida claim that all humanism remains formally indistinct from ontotheology.
- 6 It is interesting to compare Hegel on this point to later socialist writers. Lassalle, writing in 1864, will say: “Under free competition the relation of an employer to the employed is the same as to any other merchandise ... This is the leading feature of the present age. In former times the relations were those of man to man: after all, the relations of the slave owner to the slave, and of the feudal lord to the serf were human” (1990, 51–58).
- 7 A claim not helped by the obvious play on words *Gattung* (genus) with *Gatte/Gattin* (spouse).

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31

Nature*Stephanie LeMenager*

Nature can be Nature or nature, as Raymond Williams has eloquently explained. Capital “N” Nature refers to an abstract singular, as in the essential force of all things or the material world in its entirety, while small-case “nature” suggests a specific singular, the particular character of something. In *Keywords*, Williams charts the development of an abstract Nature from specific natures through three areas of meaning, including (1) the essential quality or character of something – specific, circa the thirteenth century; (2) the inherent force which directs either the world, human beings, or both – abstract, circa the fourteenth century; and (3) the material world itself, including or not including human beings – abstract or specific, circa the seventeenth century (Williams 1976, 219). The epochs of these semantic developments suggest epistemological watersheds, when Nature came to be conceived as handmaiden to God, or as a vast machine, or as the evolutionary principle of survival of the fittest. What makes N/nature “perhaps the most complex word in the language” is that “all three senses, and the main variations and alternatives within the two most difficult of them, are still active and widespread in contemporary usage” (Williams 1976, 219). Throughout this chapter I make reference to both Nature and nature, as context permits. I consider N/nature as idea and as language, a word circulating through Anglophone speech communities that have conferred distinct meanings upon it. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), small “n” *nature*, noun, presents itself in the history of usage as both abstract and specific, a grab-bag of heady, framing concepts and of explicit, even dirty, things – from the cosmos to excrement, from the defining form of a being to semen, sex drive, and menstrual fluid. Empty and full, space and time, beginning and end, Nature is an *ou-topos* concept, the good place or the no-place. It marks the aspiration to know the good and the true – and simply to know.

As the philosopher Pierre Hadot has shown in his history of the Nature idea, “Nature” signifies a predominantly epistemological desire, to unveil, to understand. In visual art, “Nature was represented as a naked woman in order to symbolize her simplicity and her transcendent character, but also perhaps to suggest that Nature unveils herself to the person who contemplates it” (Hadot 2006, 64). Hadot sees Nature, in classical myth, as a figure complementary to, and demanding of, a specific practice

of reading: “It is only by allegorical exegesis, which reveals myth’s hidden meanings, that Nature’s incorporeal essence can be discovered” (Hadot 2006, 57). Nature has been recognized in multiple ways as about the practice of inquiry, observation, interpretation, and experiment – difficult efforts of knowing. It is a tickling we presume just beyond the capacities of the brain. We cannot *not* want Nature. But we may never get there.

Empty/Full

How can a single word signify such emptiness and such fullness, such high concepts and so many thingy things? The dichotomy of empty-to-full offers a first framework through which to recognize how N/nature performs both the fundamental notion of abstraction – the Platonic idea of the thing – and an equally fundamental notion of specificity, of things-in-themselves. What I call empty Nature evacuates specific natures as it attempts to make them knowable in language or, more broadly, to open them to capture as conceptual resource. Empty Natures frame an idea space for a diverse array of bodies. Such Natures have come under fire from philosophers of science and cultural theorists for, in Timothy Morton’s words, “getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art” (2007, 1). Morton, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and others recognize the reproduction or purification of an abstract Nature as disabling to politics and to the knowledge projects of science.

For Morton, following Jacques Derrida, Nature manifests itself as a mistaken precept through language, where Nature functions as “a transcendental term in a material mask,” an encompassing metaphor standing “at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it: fish, grass, mountain air, chimpanzees, love, soda water, freedom of choice, heterosexuality, free markets ... Nature” (2007, 14). As a metaphor standing for, and obliterating, a metonymic series premised upon relationships within a system of difference, Nature acts as normativity, the law, and the fantasy of a pure presence accessible (without negotiation and friction) to the human self, particularly to the self-inaugurated “beautiful soul.” It is the god-concept bending to and colonizing earthly things that are in fact never purely themselves. Morton calls for an ecology without Nature, making “ecology” a fundamental principle of difference akin to Derrida’s transcendental signifier. His ecology defies the idea of a godlike force or presence within things and points, again, to the unknowability of specific natures beyond their relationship to each other. Morton’s emphases upon ecology *as* relationality derive from the work of Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway.

With a perspective developing out of the cultural study of science, Latour calls for the death of Nature in order to recognize the deep interrelation of the social and material worlds, the hybridity he calls *natureculture*. Latour begins his disassembly of Nature with a critique of the “matters of fact” which once spoke for the natural in the laboratory and in industrial settings (Latour 2004, 24). These matters of fact were presented as “risk-free objects” originating from beyond the realm of human action, giving “the impression of falling like [meteors] to bombard from outside the social world that served as [their] target” and thereby obscuring the social contexts and actors who produced them (Latour 2004, 26, 7). In other words, it was as if Nature fell into the laboratory from the great beyond. The laboratory thus could be seen as a place where Nature’s

facts and laws are revealed to scientists, with little thought given to the role of culture in the making of scientific knowledge and of Nature itself. If the laboratory is a site of revelation rather than making, then the “facts” that emerge from it appear to do so inevitably. Therefore it becomes difficult to identify who or what is responsible for the production of incalculable risks, for example the public health risks identified with vaccines or, more dramatically, the risks to all life on earth that proceed from the splitting of atoms.

Latour makes Nature an explicit political problem within global risk society, and Ecology its ostensible solution. Under the sign of Ecology rather than Nature, the “risk free object” gives way to “risky attachments,” and “matters of fact” become “matters of concern.” For Latour, the term “matters of concern” undoes the inevitability of the so-called facts of Nature in order to point to socio-material relationships where “producers are no longer invisible” and can be held accountable for “unexpected consequences” (Latour 2004, 7, 24). Scientific knowledges are “mortal, situated” and “relentlessly relational” – to borrow the terms of Donna Haraway, another giant in the cultural study of science (Haraway and Gane 2006, 143). When the matter of fact is reimagined as a matter of concern, Latour writes, “we do not have the social and political world on one side and the world of objectivity and profitability on the other” (Latour 2004, 24). Latour’s affirmation of an entangled *natureculture* does much more than offer a conceptual corrective to a purified and empty Nature. It has pragmatic implications for political practice.

In a manner distinct from Latour’s politics of ecology, ecology as a scientific field and orientation contributed to the politics of environmentalism in North America. The historian Donald Worster has noted that, from the World War II era, ecology stood for morally responsible science in contrast to the military–industrial complex that produced the atomic bomb (Worster 1994). In Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), the ecologists are those who will address agricultural pests through bioremediation rather than the repurposing of toxic, weaponized chemicals (Carson 2002). For Carson and other mid-twentieth-century environmentalists, ecology need not be entirely separated from an abstract Nature and functioned more, I would argue, as a way of speaking up for the specific natures that constitute modernity’s “standing-reserve.” At roughly the same mid-twentieth-century moment when “ecology” began to develop as a political and scientific project, the philosopher Martin Heidegger described Nature as the “chief storehouse” of “standing-reserve,” and standing-reserve as that which “is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be called upon for further ordering” (2013, 10, 7). Standing-reserve describes how specific natures (coal, forests) are transformed into capital, although Heidegger used the word “energy” rather than capital to indicate this process of abstraction. Since “whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object,” the world gets lonelier for humans when we capture specific natures as resources (Heidegger 2013, 14). Early environmentalists like Carson oppose the view of nature(s) as standing-reserve, foregrounding the labor and interaction of life forms, for example soils, insects, and birds. Yet Carson, like proto-environmentalists such as John Muir, is also interested in restoring the godlike idea of an inherent Nature to bodies reduced to capital. Abstract Nature can function as a foil to abstract Capital in the environmental movements of the global North, peaceably coexisting with a celebration of specific natures and their interrelationship.

In an explicit critique of the capitalization of life, John Berger notes a diminishment of the human through the privatization of animal bodies in the essay “Why Look at Animals?” (1977) Berger claims that the animal has become either a member of the heteronormative family (the “pet”) or a mere spectacle to be gaped at in the zoo. His description of “the animal” as the fundamental source of human meaning because of its proximity to and yet difference from the human is itself a gesture of abstraction – the specific natures of actual animals are hard to come by in Berger, and his ultimate concern seems to be the alienation of humans from their own productive agency (Berger 1992). On the verge of Thatcherism in the UK and in the midst of the neoliberal turn toward privatization and deregulation that would complement economic globalization, Berger’s disappearing animal indicates a broader diminishment of the value of human lives, even in the global North. Recall that Heidegger’s primary example of standing-reserve is coal, which implies a deep association of Nature with human labor. Standing-reserve connotes concern for the devaluation of work performed by persons and things. Karl Marx’s assertion that “industry is the actual historical relation of nature ... to man” (quoted in Bottomore et al. 1983) offers an inadvertent genealogy for a form of environmentalism in North America, environmental justice, that emerged alongside neoliberal “reform.” Advocates of environmental justice address workplace safety, the effects of corporate polluters on their neighbors, and the multiple ways in which the externalities of production are off-loaded onto poor and marginal communities.

Placed beside the subject of labor, the Nature concept begins to move from empty to full, because labor involves particular bodies pressing up against each other in close and exhausting relationship. Work comes about through the interaction of specific natures. The materialist account of Nature that we can excavate from the writings of Marx and Heidegger can imply an abstract (empty) rubric like “standing-reserve” – which Heidegger essentially uses to criticize capitalist abstraction – or it can imply a specific (full) set of historical relations. The relationship of the reindeer populations of Sámpí and the indigenous Sami peoples who rely upon them for food and the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl provides an example of laboring bodies – human, non-human, engineered – interacting and transforming each other in a process that defies abstraction by a transcendent metaphor. Such relationships expressive of toxic poisoning might go by the name of *naturecultures*, after Latour, or, more emphatically, they might be conceived as “mutant ecologies” (Masco 2004).

The title of cultural theorist Stacy Alaimo’s book *Bodily Natures* (2010) points to the reconceptualization of nature(s) as specific, embodied relations that I am describing. Alaimo’s project, closely aligned with feminist science studies after Haraway and material feminism as elaborated by theorists such as Karen Barad, offers yet another perspective upon that entangled *natureculture* explored by Latour. “Potent ethical and political possibilities emerge from the literal contact zone between human corporeality and more-than-human nature,” Alaimo writes: “Imagining human corporeality as transcorporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’” (2010, 2). Alaimo performs for “human nature” the imaginative category work that Haraway has called for in rethinking “the temporalities, scales, materialities, relationalities between people and our constitutive partners” (Haraway and Gane 2006, 143). After Alaimo, human nature(s) must be conceived as trans-, e.g., moving among or across bodies. Alaimo’s primary example of the interpenetrative,

embodied natures of humans and others is Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, a controversial illness that eloquently expresses the toxicity of modernity itself in relation to our porous bodies.

Political theorist Jane Bennett, on a similar track, cites “edible matter,” e.g., food, as an interface of so-called natural and human bodies that makes clear the impossibility of maintaining a nature versus culture distinction (2007, 45). Our immunity and even mood are determined by substances in plant and animal life that we take into ourselves as food, such as the omega-3 fatty acids in fish. Food is a primary media channel for human health. On a slightly different track, Haraway writes of the “gene-culture co-evolution” of humans and dogs, who share viral histories and immunities, not to mention cultural manners, through long centuries of domestic cohabitation as companion species (Haraway 2003). In such embodied philosophy, nature as metonymic series, in Timothy Morton’s argument, prevails. We are confronted with specific bodily natures, their histories, and their resistance to both metaphor and co-optation for the purpose of naturalizing political agendas. Full nature(s) are recalcitrant.

The fullness of nature(s) as opposed to Nature gets expressed with fewer philosophical niceties but no less eloquence in visual and literary images of death and putrefaction. These once again return Nature to explicit bodies, their interactions – as that of maggots and corpses – and to mortality, which is perhaps the most recalcitrant fact lurking within ideas of both abstract Nature and of specific natures. The flamboyant artist Damien Hirst’s presentation of taxidermy and rot in works such as “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living” (1991) and “A Thousand Years” (1990) riff upon art’s pretention to preserve bodies from their organic intentionality and also explore the temporality of individual bodies, their endings and their aftermath in new figures of life, e.g., their persistence through parasitism. The elision of abstract Nature with Death marks Nature’s deepest descent into the material mask that Morton finds deceptive – a descent so precipitous that Nature may well lose all of its transcendent luster in going *so* far down, to the fetid stench of a horse’s corpse in the Walden woods, for instance, as described by Henry David Thoreau in a perverse turn upon the aesthetic overkill of the sublime. However grandiose its conception, Death invariably points to explicit images and specific bodies. In *Midway: Message from the Gyre* (2009), photographer Chris Jordan’s images of albatross and other pelagic birds whose corpses decay alongside bright, resilient plastics of the North Pacific garbage gyre – plastics that are, no doubt, also responsible for the birds’ deaths – offer another sort of commentary on embodied natures. In Jordan’s work, we witness the dark comedy of a *natureculture* where incongruous objects such as petroleum-based plastic ducks interrupt biological flourishing.

The albatross persists as a figure of environmental melancholy, the white mark of humans’ hubristic interference and resultant incurable grief since Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798). Recently the graphic artist and poet Nick Hayes recast Coleridge’s poem in *The Rime of the Modern Mariner* (2011), where an identically errant seafarer attempts to explain the human stain upon Nature to a narcissistic divorcé. The failure of the story’s transmission from mariner to divorcé results in what appears an incurable grieving, as the mariner listens to the London breeze sing “of Adam’s kin/Who rose from mud/To touch the sky/and vanished/...In the wind” (Hayes 2011). That sense of our own misdeeds, again based in a failure of knowledge or at least a failure of the transmission of appropriate knowledge, affects popular

treatments of global climate change, such as Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* (1989). As the environmental critic Catriona Sandilands has argued, environmental melancholy bears a kind of protest, a grief that persists because what has been lost (in this case, non-human lives) isn't recognized as culturally valuable (Mortimer-Sandilands 2010, 333). I mention the melancholic feeling-state of the ancient mariner and the many environmentalists who have come after him because this feeling-state is, to some degree, the most common affective complement, at least in the West, to Nature. Capital "N" Nature typically incites melancholic feeling – a sense of lost worlds, lost relationships, and lost life. Even where Nature is empty, in other words, a conceptual placeholder for varied objects and agendas, it may give rise to fullness, to specific bodily states.

Time/Space

Nature and nature(s) oscillate between temporal and spatial definitions in the history of ideas. There is the Greek *phusis* or *physis*, suggesting things that come forward out of themselves, a temporal process of the becoming-nature of self or thing. The "unveiling" metaphors that Hadot recognizes throughout classical literature gloss this sort of self-propelled movement of the thing toward its fulfillment – whence it stands unveiled. The British artist Andy Goldsworthy's time-bound and site-specific installations, like stone cairns built only to be worn away by incoming tides or chains of autumn leaves borne by rivers toward snags and dissolution, speak to *phusis* and its relation to *poiesis*, to art that becomes itself as specific natures are fulfilled through time and, finally, through diminishment, weathering. Opposing a temporal conception of nature as *phusis* or "unveiling," there is N/nature as spatial entity. When nature is conceived in terms of time it is often specific, whereas it tends toward abstraction when considered spatially. Consider, again, Heidegger's standing-reserve. Here, Nature is a storehouse of stuff, often under ground, that appears beyond time, awaiting human discovery. It might, specifically, be coal deposits veining the mountains of West Virginia, or shale oil off the coast of Venezuela. As standing-reserve, spatialized N/nature "becomes" in time through human use. The Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden represents another version of the a-historic and spatial Nature, the disruption of which offers a foundational account of how an abstract idea gets pulled into history by human (mis)use. The garden can perform Nature as timeless place or as specific natures becoming. For example, contrast the classical European palace gardens of the eighteenth century to the contemporary Food Forest in Seattle, which is defined by seasonal change and cyclical, communal harvest.

The historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's claim that the findings of climate scientists have dramatic consequences for historiography and historical knowledge points to another temporal/spatial problem relating to Nature. As the environmental impact of human development reaches a scale where humans acquire "geological agency," Chakrabarty suggests "the distinction between human and natural histories – much of which had been preserved even in environmental histories that saw the two entities in interaction – [begins] to collapse" (2009, 207). Whereas natural history was once a deep history outside of "recorded time," a "timeless backdrop of human actions," now, in the era of anthropogenic climate change, natural history is also social history, the history of humans (Chakrabarty 2009, 206). Chakrabarty's questioning of whether human-induced

climate change *changes* History points to the importance of N/nature as a temporal horizon of human thought, a conceptual “place” outside of human time yet also delimiting human time and rendering it susceptible to analysis. If Nature has enabled History, the concern then becomes how to narrate human experience without it. Of course before anthropogenic climate change became a topic of overwhelming concern, thinkers such as Latour and Haraway had unseated the abstract Nature concept in favor of situated, specific naturecultures.

The name that has been given to the epoch in which Nature and History supposedly collapse into one another – providing the broader context for Chakrabarty’s controversial argument – is the Anthropocene. Paul J. Crutzen, the atmospheric chemist who popularized the term, defines it simply as “the present, in many ways human dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene – the warm period of the past 10–12 millennia” (Crutzen 2002, 23). Whether the Anthropocene deserves recognition as a geological period, and whether its inception can be traced to the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution or even more explicitly to James Watt’s (1763) invention of the steam engine, are questions open to debate. What is more clear is that the Anthropocene disrupts a fairly longstanding association of geology with Nature’s time, traceable perhaps to Charles Lyell, the British lawyer and geologist whose field studies supported James Hutton’s theory of uniformitarianism, that the planet was shaped by slow-moving forces acting over a period longer than the 300 million years once believed to be the age of Earth (Gould 1987). Lyell’s influential work indicated that Earth was much older than commonly believed and that its development could not be gauged to Biblical events such as Noah’s Flood, as it had been by so-called catastrophists, the intellectual enemies of the uniformitarians. Though Lyell was slow to adopt Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, he was a friend of Darwin’s and in some respects paved the way for Darwin’s alliance of biological nature with a time-scheme deeper than that of the Judeo-Christian Bible.

In the nineteenth-century preservationism of early western environmentalists like John Muir, we see the development of Lyell’s conception of Nature’s geological time. For Muir, large matter like the Sierra Nevada Mountains provides a scalar complement in space to equally large concepts of a-historical, deep time. (Although Muir’s own fieldwork in Yosemite made him witness to evidence of sudden geological changes that supported a catastrophist, rather than uniformitarian, view.) Before the publication of *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson’s reflections upon the cultural meaning of oceans in books such as *The Sea Around Us* (1950) contributed to the normative idea of oceans as emblematic of a timeless, Big Nature: “For the sea lies all about us ... In its mysterious past it encompasses all the dim origins of life and receives in the end, after, it may be, many transmutations, the dead husks of that same life” (Carson 1989, 212).

The sublime associated with Big Nature implies a gratitude that something larger than the human experience persists. A similar gratitude for humanity’s relative smallness in the scheme of life contributes to the charisma of Big Animals, like Bear and Moose, the so-called charismatic megafauna. It is these animals, as opposed to brine shrimp, whose threatened extinction can be used to garner support for conservationism. Consider the bears from whom activist Timothy Treadwell seeks wisdom in Werner Herzog’s *Grizzly Man* (2005), or the tiger who speaks to the power of belief in Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2001), or Elizabeth Bishop’s eponymous figure in “The Moose.” “Grand, otherworldly,” Bishop’s moose walks out of the New Brunswick forest to stand

“high as a church,/homely as a house/(or, safe as houses)” (Bishop 1989, 173). “Why, why do we feel (we all feel) this sweet sensation of joy?” (1989, 173), the poet apostrophizes. “The Moose” offers up an Eternity more consoling than the void of the night-time bus into which her travelers sputter their gossip and their paltry histories of drink, abuse, and disease. It is life larger than querulous humanity, a species-time without the embarrassment of human misdeeds. In short, the Moose stands for an abstract Nature, the indwelling force of all things. Yet the scale of a Big Nature that implies the sort of sacred time also sought at church is complemented in the same poem by microscale representatives of the cyclic diurnal round: “sweet peas” that “cling/to their wet white string/on the whitewashed fences” and “bumblebees” that “creep/inside the foxgloves” as “evening commences” (Bishop 1989, 170). These sweet peas are specific natures, becoming-in-time throughout an ordinary day.

The idea of Nature as both a macro- and microscale phenomenon, and especially of the microscale as revelatory of the macro, finds multiple exempla in Romantic poetry and prose – arguably the repository of the most vehement large and small N/natures bespeaking Eternity and mortality, N/natures imagined in part as consolation for the early human deaths so common in an age of tuberculosis. For instance, consider Wordsworth’s “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” (1800):

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The crude materiality of the rocks, stones, and trees that are spun through earth’s cyclical course serves as consolation to the poet for the death of his sister.

It would be remiss to consider microcosmos and macrocosmos, the complementary scales of Nature, without taking a short detour through the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Seeking copies of seeds from seed banks worldwide, some of which are in politically volatile and thus insecure regions of the “surface” world, Svalbard, in Norway’s Arctic Svalbard archipelago, has been operating since 1984. At that time the Nordic Gene Bank (NGB) began storing a backup of Nordic plant germplasm as frozen seeds in an abandoned coal mine. In 2006 the seed bank proper went into construction, stretching 120 meters inside a sandstone mountain at Svalbard on Spitsbergen Island. Spitsbergen is said to be the ideal location for the seed archive due to its lack of tectonic activity and its permafrost, which aids in preservation. The construction of the Vault at one hundred and thirty meters above sea level means that the site should remain dry even if the icecaps melt. It is hoped that climate upheaval or a similar macroscale disaster can be remedied by this high-tech seed saving. The aspirations of Svalbard speak to standing-reserve, *phusis*, and Eternity. Are the seeds *phusis*, in motion toward becoming, or are they standing-reserve, basically static until challenged forth? Do they represent an abstract idea of Nature forgetful of the dense ecological relationship of bodies within soils, without which the seeds cannot become *life*?

In a symmetrical fashion, the underground nuclear storage facility at Onkalo, Finland, featured in Michael Madsen’s documentary *Into Eternity: A Film for the Future* (2010), suggests how specific natures might persist forever as a problem of time and space. As one of the film’s speakers confides, it is our garbage, particularly

our most toxic, radioactive wastes, which will bear witness into Eternity as “testimony of our time” (Madsen 2010). Hewing the facility out of solid rock, deep in earth, promises that surface events such as tsunamis which plague aboveground spent nuclear fuel facilities will not disturb Onkalo, whose location is imagined as secure from all except intrusion by explorers of some distant future. Though toxic to the point of threatening regional extinctions across species for up to 100,000 years, the material stored and the facility itself, which contains large amounts of copper, could become valuable on a resource-starved planet. “*Does your way of life also depend upon unlimited energy?*” (Madsen 2010), the film’s narrator asks future humans, in an apostrophe directed toward some unthinkably distant, perhaps post-human, community. If we bury our most dangerous legacy deep underground, how do we keep it from being interpreted as standing-reserve?

Beginning/End

Is nature an end or a beginning? Environmentalism has been in large part a lament for nature’s death, but that idea, and the conservationist impulse that often accompanies it (geared toward saving bits of nature in parks and preserves), doesn’t move criticism forward. Ramachandra Guha, an Indian historian, recognizes environmentalist calls to preserve a dying Nature – and “to preserve biotic integrity” rather than to attend to social injustices such as “overconsumption by the industrialized world” – as a form of elitism, indicative of a “conservation elite” at odds with the modes of use of tribal or ecosystem peoples in the global South (Guha 1989, 74). The American historian William Cronon views “wilderness” and “frontier,” western iterations of a threatened, close-to-disappearing Nature, as destructive to genuine ecological values (Cronon 1995, 69–90). More interesting for criticism than the “end of nature” rhetoric of environmental imagination are theories of nature as that which performs endings, as in the end of politics ascribed to abstract Nature by Latour. “Nature is a means to shortcut politics before peace is authentically available,” Latour writes, considering the possibility of a cosmopolitics, or composing a planetary peace. “A common world is not something we come to recognize, as though it had always been here ... A common world, if there is going to be one, is something we will have to build, tooth and nail, together” (Latour 2010, 474). In Latour’s “Compositionist Manifesto” (2010), the Nature concept preempts the tense collaboration that necessarily precedes international agreements on, say, capping carbon emissions. But are there other scenarios that Nature forecloses, and other practices – besides politics – that it ends?

As I began to discuss above, one of the most interesting challenges that Nature may pose is to Humanity, an equally unstable, multi-centered, and frustratingly abstract idea. From the interstice of Nature/Human arise other terms, such as animal and cyborg, which carry nature and humanity toward materiality and specificity. Nature’s end, as in its coming out of itself into its distinctive ... *nature* ... may well be the proliferation of (anti-)foundational ideas, practices, and material possibilities. Nature’s endings, then, are tied to what it starts, to the epistemological sputtering prompted by it, to beginnings. The Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro offers Amazonian indigenous philosophy as a seedbed for thinking “nature” anew. He begins his upending

of the western nature/culture hierarchy with the distinction between animality and humanity:

For Amazonian peoples, *the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but, rather, humanity*. The great separation reveals not so much culture distinguishing itself from nature as nature distancing itself from culture: the myths tell how animals lost the qualities inherent or retained by humans. Humans are those who continue as they have always been. Animals are ex-humans.... (2004, 465)

If “animals have a human, sociocultural inner aspect that is ‘disguised’ by an ostensibly bestial bodily form,” Castro continues, then “for [the Amerindians], culture or the subject is the form of the universal, while nature or the object is the form of the particular” (466). Castro coins the term “perspectival multinaturalism” (464) as a means of reframing western notions of nature to include within “nature” a diversity of subjectivities distinguishable by the bodies they inhabit and shape.

If we follow this Amerindian philosophy toward an understanding that point of view emerges in the body and its particular morphology, then it’s possible to recognize that animals see the same way as we do but see “different things because their bodies differ from ours” (474). What is nature to us – the beaver dam that biologist Richard Dawkins, for instance, might refer to as an “extended phenotype” – may well be “culture” to the beaver, given its bundle of affects and capacities, its body, and its point of view (Dawkins 1982). Beginning with the assumption that animals are ex-humans, with an inner socio-cultural aspect, means that Castro avoids placing the heavy burden of seeing nature as sentient and mindful on the human capacity for empathy. In so doing, Castro offers a philosophy of nature that radically displaces the human, without the appeal to human empathy or imagination that has so consistently been the undoing of the western tradition of ecological thought.

In Jacques Derrida’s account of himself as the naked philosopher returning the stare of his cat, the effect of “being seen” by the animal, and of a mutual ability on the part of man and cat to recognize each other, isn’t a matter of empathy, exactly, but it implicates the philosopher *in* and *as* the question of the animal: “The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it” (Derrida 2002, 397). We are naked and the animal, in its appraisal from a philosophical position beyond nakedness, has, for a moment, a stronger claim to realism – we are *naked*, while the cat is itself, the cat. Perhaps the difference between human and animal, culture and nature, is as thin as a dressing robe. To ourselves, and by way of the cat, we are exposed.

Where Derrida considers mutual recognition as a claim that nature imposes upon us through its particular bodies, e.g., the cat, other writers lament the difficulty of mutual recognition – the invisibility, for instance, that underwrites how we kill and eat animals, as described by Jonathan Safran Foer in *Eating Animals* (2009). Foer’s insightful argument for vegetarianism pivots around shame, which he equates with “the work of memory against forgetting” (2009, 37). Referring to fish as “the very flesh of forgetting” (37) – consider the sameness in English of “fish” the animal and “fish” the food – Foer brings the killing and eating of fish to visibility by juxtaposing it with imaginary scenarios of the killing and eating of dogs. While the knowledge that dogs can be legally eaten in forty-four U.S. states might spark shame in North

American readers, Foer notes that most North Americans do not blush with shame before fish, though the techniques of industrial fishing have initiated an almost total war against them. And the fish, no less than the dog, is like us. “We can recognize parts of ourselves in fish,” Foer writes, “spines, nociceptors (pain receptors), endorphins (that relieve pain), all of the familiar pain responses” (2009, 37). Humans’ forgetfulness of animals, for Foer as for the character Elizabeth Costello in J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999), leads to forgetfulness of the self, and to an abandonment of the social expectations that might render unacceptable the cruelties of industrial meat.

Rethinking “the animal” in order to challenge western humanism and its fulfillment in modern capitalism has fed another extension of the nature idea – that which comes from science and technology studies and new media arts, where communication machines and information networks have been conceived as contiguous with life itself. Haraway’s now classic *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) includes the ebullient and complex text known by the nickname “Cyborg Manifesto” (1985), a progenitor of Latour’s “Compositionist Manifesto.” In both, the origin story of Nature as original unity must be overthrown for the sake of progressive politics. For Haraway, an ironic reimagining of the cyborg – originally thought as a prosthetic man-suit which would allow for human habitation in space in the instance of nuclear holocaust – allows an end to Nature and other “myths of origin of Western culture” which have colonized global thinking “with their longing for fulfillment in apocalypse” (Haraway 1991, 175). Instead of heralding an end to the world, cyborgism signals for Haraway a set of chimeric possibilities unleashed by developments in technoscience.

“The cyborg is our ontology,” she writes, of herself and other late twentieth-century westerners, “it gives us our politics” (Haraway 1991, 150). Cyborg politics begin in the “discredited breach of nature and culture” (176) as well as the breach of the animal and human binary. They insist “on noise and ... pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine” (176). Haraway continues, “these are the couplings which make Man and Woman so problematic, subverting the structure of desire, the force imagined to generate language and gender, and so subverting the structure and modes of reproduction of ‘Western’ identity” (176) – structures which include “nature and culture,” “master and slave,” “body and mind.” Rather than imagining technology as a system of total domination, Haraway emphasizes the pleasures afforded by creative connection with our tools. She points to the ways in which technological prostheses interrupt ideas of organic holism which have been utilized to damage persons not conceived under the sign of Nature, for instance feminists and queers. The reinvention of nature as an explicit project of forging new affinities rather than as a given and originary identity, Nature, means freedom to create a future beyond the apocalyptic trajectories of western militarism and resource-intensive super-capitalism.

Of course Haraway’s post-natural politics might give rise to a new set of nightmares, too. She cautions readers not to mistake her interest in “the worlding operations” of technoscience for “some kind of blissed-out techno-bunny joy” (Haraway and Gane 2006, 139). Margaret Atwood’s novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first book of her MaddAdam trilogy, offers a speculative fiction in which an angry techno-bunny, Crake, assembles a band of “splice geniuses” to reengineer a world that seems eerily familiar to our own. This first world hosts a culture of corporatist militarism centered in suburban-lab “compounds” that produce synthetic life – for instance the “pigoon,” a pig-like

creature endowed with multiple and continuously regrowing organs for transplant. The implementation of Crake's progressive techno-topia, based on principles of sustainability and non-proprietary human attachment, requires a brutal end to the first (corporatist) world – a devastating plague. Crake's post-Nature cannot, finally, be *for* humans. The novel's human protagonist, Jimmy, contemplates it with resentment, while also noting that the genetically engineered humanoid species Crake created, called Crakers, seem poised to redo many of the mistakes human beings made in the last, ruined world. Their insistent desire to deify Crake and his lover Oryx suggest the presence of nascent God and Nature concepts. "Nature is to zoos as God is to churches," Crake quips, explaining that "those walls and bars are there for a reason. Not to keep us out, but to keep them [Nature and God] in" (Atwood 2003, 206). Yet the repressed desire for an inherent force and meaning, for Nature, resurfaces in the naïve Crakers.

In lieu of a conclusion, I ask the reader to consider the French artist Vincent Fournier's *Post-Natural History* (2013), a gallery of digitally altered photographs of animals of the future, made to better fit the environments of global climate change and to serve explicit human needs. Consider, for example, the *Aurelia exiens*, a jellyfish adapted for the transmission of data across the ocean floor; or *Orbus chirurgia*, a scorpion that can be used to perform semi-automated, remote surgeries. "I met a specialist in evolutionary genetics," Fournier explains, "and we discussed the possibilities of how living species could evolve according to technologies and the changing environment. And so I became interested in the idea of exaggerating the present in order to create speculative fiction" (quoted in Stromberg 2013). Fournier sees his projection of post-natural bodies as enabled by two emergent scientific fields: synthetic biology and genetic engineering. The first involves the creation of entirely artificial biological systems and the second allows for the manipulation of an existing organism's DNA. The ability to produce speculative fiction in a visual media like the photographic specimen book, the primary exhibit space for *Post-Natural History*, depends upon a 3D imaging laboratory in Brussels. There, with the help of specialists, Fournier added fictional adaptations to photographs he had made of taxidermy specimens. In Fournier's project, the collaborative potentialities of the sciences, digital media, and arts come together to produce a more durable and clever nature. Even without the superfluous prefix "post," nature might reinstate itself as a valuable assemblage of ideas, imagined in irreverence and in humble aspiration for robust, entangled futures.

- see CHAPTER 24 (DIGITAL AND NEW MEDIA); CHAPTER 25 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY); CHAPTER 30 (HUMANISM)

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32

Scale*Justin Sully*

There is no unified field devoted to the study of scale. Despite this, it is neither difficult nor controversial to propose that the question of scale lies at the crux of some of the most generative theoretical projects of the past forty years. Theories of the postmodern and globalization offer the most widely recognized cases. Yet, as I will suggest, the question of scale may be even more profoundly at work in a range of recent theoretical accounts of the political, aesthetic, and meta-theoretical problems provoked by ecological crisis. In order to grasp how and why this might be the case, it is necessary to begin with broader view and a longer historical account of the debates and contexts out of which the concept of scale emerges.

In English, the noun “scale,” meaning an instrument of measurement (most commonly of weight), comes to us from a Germanic word meaning bowl, dish, or shell (*Schale*). The other common sense of the word, denoting a succession of degrees, is derived from the Latin word *scala*, meaning ladder. While these two senses of the word are derived from etymologically distinct lineages, they combine in many common uses of the term in English, mixing the sense of scale as a tool, instrument or container and the sense of scale as a graduated series of “steps” or intervals. That one can be said to actively “scale” an incline also inflects the meaning of the noun “scale” in English with the property of relative proportionality: something located on a scale can be “scaled up” or “scaled down.” To these etymological roots of the word, the philosophical history from which critical and cultural theories of scale tend to draw further imbues the concept with a strong association with vision, visuality, and, as we shall momentarily see, with space. Thus, in fields such as urban studies and geography, where the question of scale has arguably experienced its most intensive theoretical elaboration, the concept of scale is one which consistently passes through visual and graphical figures – of, for instance, maps, territories, nested levels, horizontal zones, and vertical layers.

Like many of the keywords in critical and cultural theory, part of the utility of the concept of scale is derived in part from this obvious polysemy. For all its linguistic and conceptual overdetermination, we can nevertheless identify some initial consistencies across its many inflections and applications. Its lasting use in critical theory grows perhaps above all from its capacity to describe the way in which situations and phenomena tend to cohere at distinct segments of magnitude. Scale has thus allowed theorists to

critically address the way that a process or event often manifests differently when it is located in, or *scaled to*, larger or smaller frames of space, time or complexity. An oil spill appears and, in an important sense, *exists* quite differently depending on whether it is described or encountered at the scale of the blood chemistry of an exposed micro-organism, the reproduction of a particular species indigenous to a site proximate from the spill, or at the scale of the larger ecosystem(s) that the spill touches. The same spill might similarly be described at different temporal scales: an oil spill is a very different thing when considered in terms of years or decades than it is on a geological scale of millennia or gigaannum. If this tendency of phenomena to “stick,” or become fixed at certain scales is common to most theories of scale, the slippage between the ontological and epistemological character of this fixity that is already apparent in my description of a hypothetical oil spill – between scale as a thing existing independently of human cognition or experience, and scale as a cognitive construct we collectively “map” onto the world around us – represents the most persistent conceptual distinction organizing theories of scale. The force of this well-worn distinction will inevitably exert itself in what follows. Yet, the account of scale that I wish to offer will aim as much as possible to avoid the blind alleys toward which this distinction often leads and instead privilege the strong dialectical and materialist tradition of thinking scale.

An Epoch of Space: From the Urban Question to the Modern World-System

There is perhaps no period as rich in origin stories for contemporary critical and cultural theory as the tumultuous years of 1967 to 1974. This is certainly the moment to look to in order to see the entrance of scale into the lexicon of theoretical discourse, an entrance that is entangled with a preoccupation with theories of “space” that first take shape during this period. Henri Lefebvre, considered today the first to formulate “the question of scale” (Lefebvre 1976, 276), published *The Production of Space* (*La production de l'espace*) in 1974. From today’s perspective, this work marked the high-point in a series of seminal empirical and theoretical studies published in the preceding years, all of which sought, in different ways, to respond to a new set of perceived challenges relating to “space” in radical thought and political practice. With characteristic foresight, Michel Foucault diagnosed this intellectual spirit of his age in a 1967 lecture, long before it would become widely recognizable:

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less of a long life developing through time than of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space. (Foucault 1986, 22)

Foucault’s characterization of the emergent attention to space over a prior dominance of time is clearly located in the philosophical register of this problem and has echoes in

subsequent philosophies of space. Foucault is too much a social historian, however, not to note the broader historical forces at work in the emergence of space as an urgent problem. This is, after all, a period that was defined by new forms of imperial aggression (Vietnam, Algeria) as well as many more novel forms of resistance and revolution (e.g., the Chinese “cultural revolution,” focoism, environmentalism, the global revolt of May 1968). This is the era of First, Second, and Third Worlds, of Eastern Bloc and Western Bloc, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC), “Black Power” and “white flight,” the Iron Curtain, and the Bamboo Curtain. In short, this was a period of overlapping zones and intersecting lines of affiliation, distinction, and antagonism that rendered “space” powerfully present (cf. Jameson 1984).

Emerging from this context, Manuel Castells’s *The Urban Question* (1972) stands as one crucial theoretical catalyst that shifted the concerns associated with the “spatial turn” that Foucault anticipated toward the more specific problem of scale. *The Urban Question* is a book deeply embedded in the specific intellectual context of France during late 1960s; as such, it is in many respects a very dated, if still historically important text today. In *The Urban Question*, Castells assembles a critique of then-dominant academic approaches to the city, approaches which he reads as productive of a false, or at least simplistic view of the city and urbanization in their relation to political-economic pressures. For Castells, existing accounts of the city either ignored or fundamentally misunderstood the historically dynamic and reciprocal determination of the city within the system of spatial divisions and units characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. The alternative, functionalist, and materialist theory of the city proposed by Castells had enormous impact on urban studies at the time, redefining the city as a dynamic system (“the urban system”) that cannot be understood outside of historically specific circuits of economic production, consumption, and reproduction – circuits the city not merely *contains*, but actively *enables*. This led Castells to argue for a definition of the city in terms of its defining role in the reproduction of labor power; or, in other words, the urban under late capitalism names the scale of collective consumption (1977, 235–237, 445–446, 450–451).

For our purposes, what is consequential here is less the particular claims Castells makes vis-à-vis the city, but rather the theory of spatial scale that is implied in these claims. For Castells, the city becomes a “spatial unit” nested among others – for example, the regional, the national. Far from being an organic, accidental or necessary agglomeration of people and architecture, for Castells, the city is legible only in relation to a totality of social relations, functions, and competing interests apprehended within a specific historical conjuncture. From this it follows that space and, more specifically, its demarcation into separate “units” or scales *is itself a historical process* and far from arbitrary. Indeed, what finally distinguishes the urban and marks its particular importance for Castells – as well as for an influential line of Marxist urban geographers that we will revisit later in this chapter – is its decisive historical role as a structural mediator between the territorial expansiveness of capitalism, on one hand, and capitalism’s inherent dependence on territorially fixed production and consumption on the other (Brenner 1998, 2000). Not only did this analysis dramatically shift the orientation of urban studies, it also raised questions about the nature of this mediating function itself and the distinctively spatial contradictions of capitalist growth that it implied. What are the spatial “units” through which our social and economic relations are structured? What is the nature of the relationship between these various units? How is this

distribution of space formed and reproduced, and how might it be altered? These broader questions resonated in particularly powerful ways in the 1970s and 1980s as the spatial organization of capitalism on the global scale passed through a period of intense reorganization.

If Castells's aim was to distinguish the specificity of the urban scale, a second theoretical project that overlaps with the renewal of urban studies in the 1970s aimed to produce a framework for understanding the global unit or scale to which Castells's advanced industrial city appeared intrinsically linked. Proceeding under a number of different names and disciplinary inflections, including most notably "dependency theory" and "world-systems theory," this broadly aligned critical project sought to understand the political and economic structures and processes constituting what would eventually be called globalization. As with *The Urban Question*, these theories of the capitalist world-system enlarged preexisting conversations within Marxist political economy. While Marx and Engels famously anticipated the expansionist tendency of the capitalist system, wherein "the need for a constantly expanding outlet for their products pursues the bourgeoisie over the whole world" (Marx 1996, 4), it would take more than a century for this vision of a fully globalized capitalist economy to begin to be truly realized. For many economists and political scientists working within a broadly Marxist framework, the decolonization movements of the mid-twentieth century and the logistics of "economic development" in these newly independent nation-states were at once a confirmation and a challenge to Marx's thesis of capital's impulsion to ever greater expansion of its command over labor and production.

For theorists like Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank, and Giovanni Arrighi, the penetration of capitalist social relations ever deeper into "post-colonial" societies was giving shape to a world-system that was not adequately explained by the analytic tools that had been developed by Marx and others to explain earlier industrial economies.¹ Rather than reflecting the narrative of a linear progress through common stages of modernization – in which the Third World was imagined to be either succeeding or failing to "catch up" to the First World – theorists like Samir Amin saw a system of inherent inequality between the economic "core" and "periphery" as structured into the world economy (Amin 1976). In this view, the formal independence of newly "post-colonial" nation-states masked what was in fact a deepening unequal relation of neocolonial economic dependency between the technologically advanced, industrialized, and capital-rich national economies of Europe and North America, on one hand, and a Third World whose national economies had been shaped through debt and political destabilization into reserves of cheap labor and unregulated sources for the raw materials of production. While the global spread of capitalist social relations that Marx had predicted was evident, the characteristic class antagonism between capital and labor essential to the Marxist analysis of capitalism was distributed in unfamiliar ways, around a fundamentally new arrangement of the scales of production and consumption. The exploitation of cheap Third World labor and resources not only benefited an emergent Third World comprador class and the class of capitalist "investors" of the First World, but also *the workers* of the First World, who realized the surplus value extracted from Third World labor in the form of cheap commodities. As Immanuel Wallerstein explains, "at a certain level of expansion of income and 'rights,' the 'proletarian' becomes in reality a 'bourgeois,' *living off the surplus-value of others*" (2002, 291).

For cultural critics, efforts to grasp these emergent contradictions of the capitalist world system offered a framework within which the aesthetic and symbolic realm appeared everywhere dependent on an elsewhere, an “other space,” and the production of culture seemed less and less a local affair. This disruption was perhaps most powerfully registered as a historiographical problem, centering on previously secure notions of periodicity and of modernization in particular. Under pressure from the increasingly conspicuous dependence of First World “quality of life” on Third World underdevelopment, periodizing schemes founded in the linear succession of “modes of production” appeared less and less explanatory, or at least in need of a supplementary spatial analytic of unequal and competing scales of production. Moreover, as with the crisis-riven moments of transition between *historical* modes of production, the points of movement and relation between *spatial* units – including the interstices between the body, the home, the city, the nation, the region, and the globe – as well as social consciousness thereof, were proposed by theorists as sites charged with revolutionary potential.

Henri Lefebvre and the Dialectic of Scale

As space seemed to impose itself on thought with increasing political urgency throughout the 1960s and 1970s, there was a matching awareness that space was itself poorly represented in the human sciences. From at least René Descartes and onward, the western philosophical tradition had treated space as a homogeneous and self-enclosed absolute, a static substance or category that is in one sense or another “outside” of human thought and practice. Descartes’s conception of space as *res extensa*, or corporeal substance, remains an exemplary and profoundly influential instance of this. In the Cartesian universe, the thinking subject encounters space as so many particular divisions, variations or “extensions” of an absolute space as such. Space appears as more or less great, small, long, short, near, far, etc.; yet, space *as such* is unchanged. This classical distinction – deepened and formalized by Isaac Newton – between “relative” or “relational space” and “absolute space” exerts an axiomatic force in western thought that is difficult to over-estimate and that remains apparent to this day. Immanuel Kant proposed perhaps the most influential remodeling of Cartesian-Newtonian space, arguing that space in fact precedes and conditions both perception and thought itself. For Kant, space is an a priori category that enables but also limits cognition rather than, as it was for Descartes and Newton, an objective substance perceived. What is consistent in both the Cartesian-Newtonian and the Kantian cases is the initial separation of mental and physical, and abstract and concrete space. What results is a general impoverishment of space as a subject of philosophical inquiry. The lack of a substantial account of space is rendered even more conspicuous when compared with the privileged place of philosophies of time and temporality in modern philosophy, from Henri Bergson to Martin Heidegger.

Though philosophy’s rarified conceptions of space and time might seem to, and often do, operate in a realm quite divorced from the messiness of social and cultural practice, several theorists beginning at the end of the 1960s began to argue that the relative absence of substantial philosophies of space was reflected in the way that space was almost entirely ignored in more applied fields of inquiry. It was not that the social and human sciences didn’t speak about “space”; it just wasn’t clear what they meant when they used the word. While a sociologist or literary historian might dedicate significant

discussion to, for example, “domestic space,” the term (“space”) was employed figuratively to refer to a vaguely demarcated set of abstract relations, interchangeable with spatial metaphors such as “field” or “sphere.” Such use of the term left unaddressed both the materiality of space and the concrete particularities of the “space” under investigation. Such a figural notion of a “domestic space” elides the way real, material space shapes domesticity. How, for instance, do assumed divisions of work/home, public/private, etc. disturb the ostensibly neutral homogeneity of “domestic space”? And how do these divisions, in turn, relate to a specific history of built architectural spaces and larger or smaller divisions of social space (the town, the city, residential zoning, neighborhood, the house, the master bedroom, the nursery, etc.)? Lurking behind such previously ignored questions were more fundamental ones that critically returned to deeply engrained philosophical assumptions and categorical distinctions concerning space. What is the relationship between our ideas about space and concrete, built space? Or, as Neil Smith asks, “what are the translation rules between material and metaphorical meanings of space” (Smith 2010, 169)? Is there anything physically or logically necessary in the distinction between the spaces of a city, a home, a state, or a body, or are these purely ideological conventions? What relationship does the definition and demarcation of these spatial units have with the currents of wealth, power, and feeling that circulate through them?

It is out of the pressure to resolve, or at least reckon with these questions of space that the problem of scale comes fully into being. While this was a process that stretched over a number of decades and with a particular intensity among theorists focused on urban studies and geography, its initial formalization is often associated with the philosophical investigations of Lefebvre. While Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* was barely noticed at the time of its publication in France in 1974, this book (together with his multivolume and largely untranslated *De l’état*) would become a key point of reference for a subsequent focus on the problems of space through the concept of scale during the 1980s and 1990s. Addressing precisely the lacuna of space in western thought identified above, Lefebvre set out to correct two fundamental misapprehensions within philosophy’s treatment of space. The first centers on the understanding, which I’ve noted above, of space as an abstract absolute, a stable and homogeneous category or substance within which human cognition and action unfolds, i.e., the space we would associate with mathematics and philosophy. The second is perhaps less concept than it is an experience of space, legible in both empirical social science and in our everyday lives, that treats physical, or concrete space – of our homes, cities, nations, regions, and worlds – as either an inert backdrop of history and social life, or as a mere effect of these, i.e., the “passive locus of social relations, the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures of their removal” (Lefebvre 1991, 11). In order to put a philosophy of space on solid ground, Lefebvre claims, both of these habits of thinking or relating to space must be rethought dialectically.

To this end and following Hegel and Marx, Lefebvre posits space as a concrete abstraction: an abstract or universal category that “becomes true in practice” (Marx 1993, 105). By theorizing space as a concept that becomes true as social practice, Lefebvre aims to undo the separation of space into abstract space – the absolute, universal space of mathematics and philosophy – and concrete space – space in its practico-sensory particularity, its locality, *this* distance or *that* city. For Lefebvre, our “mental” and representational spaces are fundamentally indissociable from the particularity of concrete spaces we

encounter in our everyday life: both are realized in tandem, as *social practice*. While there is little of surprise in the notion that our cognitive and aesthetic experience of space is shaped and limited by the physics of space (as in Kant), the proposition that our thinking and representation of space *also* shapes the physical world was more controversial. The “unified theory” of space that Lefebvre proposes moves space firmly within the field of social and cultural analysis, encompassing “logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias” (1991, 12). In Lefebvre’s dialectical philosophy of space, we discover the core insights out of which a wide range of critical theories of scale subsequently developed. For theorists coming out of the social sciences, and geography in particular, such as David Harvey, Neil Brenner, Neil Smith, and Erik Swyngedouw, Lefebvre’s dialectical approach to space offers a language through which to grasp social space as, at once, both fixed and fluid: on one hand, social space is segmented, or territorialized by historically sedimented juridical, economic, and cultural *habitus*, or what Doreen Massey eloquently refers to as “geometries of power” (Massey 1999, 2005); on the other hand, these structures, or scales of social space, are subject to reorganization, subversion, and contestation, whether in the form of dissident modes of address or alliance within or across scales, or as an effect of capitalist crises (what David Harvey calls a “spatial fix”).² The particularly intense interest in scale among economic and political geographers tends to emphasize the empirical description of these processes, and privileges a conceptualization of scale as a series of hierarchically “nested” territorial units – body, local, regional, national, supranational or global. For this reason, the study of scale that emerged out of geography and urban studies in the 1990s and early 2000s tended to stress the fixity of scale in order to advance what became, more often than not, an analytic project of clarifying the substance and relationship of given scales – neighborhood, city, nation, region, global. At the same time, the extent to which this dialectical theory of space and scale was just as much a cognitive, imaginative, and aesthetic process and practice remained, provoking and aligning with a range of concerns in cultural theory.

Scale and the Sublime

While there are numerous ways in which this story of scale impacts critical theories of symbolic and artistic production, perhaps no single concept or problematic is as durable, generative, or consonant with the contexts described above as that of the sublime. Originally an intellectual product of a historical conjuncture that long precedes the problems of globalization and the dynamically networked scales of post-modern culture, the idea of the sublime, particularly as it develops after the aesthetic philosophy of Immanuel Kant, may represent the most convincing aesthetic precursor to the contemporary kind of scalar thinking I have been describing. The sublime assumes its modern formulation in aesthetic philosophy during the mid-eighteenth century, most notably in the writing of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Both Burke and Kant sought to account for a mode of aesthetic experience distinct from the beautiful, a form of experience provoked instead by feelings of dread, terror, and awe. Kant’s approach to this problem has remained the most lasting and does most to anticipate later notions of the scalar aesthetic. In keeping with his conception of space

described above, Kant's sublime has less to do with the terrifying object, image or experience itself, than with a specific sensible and cognitive operation that takes place within the spectator or subject. For Kant, the sublime "is at once a feeling of displeasure arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneous awakening pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of sense being in accord with ideas of reason" (Kant 2007, 88). In other words, the sublime is a two-part experience: first, a feeling provoked by a sensible encounter with something which exceeds the capacity of the subject to imagine or represent and, second, the pleasure generated in the subject able to generate a concept of, not the terrifying magnitude itself, but the limits of their own sense experience.

Fredric Jameson's analysis of postmodernism in terms of a pervasive incapacity of subjects to locate or "map" themselves in the globalized and networked space-time of late capitalist production offers an obvious conceptual affinity with Kant's sublime – a fact registered explicitly in Jameson's own writing, as well as other major theories of postmodernism during the 1990s (Jameson 1992; Lyotard 1984). However, the analogy is importantly incomplete. The Kantian rationalization or sublimation of the subject's initial terror is precisely what is so conspicuously lacking in the contemporary moment for Jameson. Postmodern art and culture, in Jameson's reading, responds to the disorienting magnitude of a new scale of society and production, but it disables or at least withholds the secondary, cognitive rationalization of this fear. Why should this be the case? If Kant's aesthetic of the sublime offered a means to master the terrifying magnitude of his day, why would the same not occur for the social and infrastructural scale of late capitalism?

For Jameson, writing in the 1990s and 2000s, these questions can only be answered by historicizing the concept of the sublime. In Kant's historical moment (Western Europe's eighteenth century), the terrifyingly inhuman scale was Nature. It is no accident that works of art identified most closely with the aesthetics of the Kantian and romantic sublime were those which sought to capture the terrible power of natural environment – art which provoked the feeling of standing before Niagara Falls, or Mont Blanc. In Jameson's analysis, however, what provokes terror is not Nature, but rather the scale of social relations, human population, transnational informational networks, and global circuits of production. The sublime is no longer evoked in images of lonely wanderers before nature's expanse, but rather in the at once depthless and infinitely regressing mirrored surfaces of sky-scraping architecture captured in the large-scale photographs of Andreas Gursky. Addressing precisely this inadequacy of earlier ideas of the sublime to account for this new situation, Jameson explains that

[For Kant] the object of the sublime becomes not only a matter of sheer power and of the physical incommensurability of the human organism with Nature but also of the limits of figuration and the incapacity of the human mind to give representation to such enormous forces ... Today, however, it may be possible to think all this in a different way, at the moment of a radical eclipse of Nature itself. [Nature] is, after all, irredeemably and irrevocably destroyed by late capital, by the green revolution, by neocolonialism and the megalopolis which runs its superhighways over the older fields and vacant lots and turns Heidegger's "house of being" into condominiums, if not the most miserable unheated, rat infested

tenement buildings. The other of our society is in that sense no longer Nature, but something else which we must now identify. (Jameson 1992, 34–35)

In this synthesis, the unresolved representational and cognitive operation of the sublime points us directly back to the problematic of geographical scale – of the urban, the global, of core and periphery. Yet in its implicit call to identify that “something else” that becomes the other of our society after Nature, Jameson’s postmodern sublime pushes us toward another route along which the concept of scale is moving today.

This new direction for the problem of scale emerges as the challenges of climate change, resource scarcity, and environmental limits begin to impact and reform theoretical accounts of postmodernism, globalization, and the scalar sublime of late capitalism. In what might initially appear like a return of a repressed specter of Nature that provoked eighteenth-century aesthetics of the sublime, the first decades of the twenty-first century finds critical and cultural theorists struggling to find ways of thinking at the scale of the planetary, ecology, and environment. Writing in 2002, the French philosopher of science Bruno Latour describes the new parameters for thinking scale in the face of rapid, human-produced ecological transformations taking place on a planetary scale:

One of the reasons why we feel so powerless when asked to be concerned by ecological crisis, the reason why I, to begin with, feel so powerless, is because of the total *disconnect* between the range, nature, and scale of the phenomena and the set of emotions, habits of thoughts, and feelings that would be necessary to handle those crises – not even to act in response to them, but simply to give them more than a passing ear. Is there a way to bridge the distance between the scale of the phenomena we hear about and the tiny *Umwelt* inside which we witness, as if we were a fish inside its bowl, an ocean of catastrophes that are supposed to unfold? (Latour 2011, 2)

Being faced with this apparent – familiarly Kantian – disconnect between the phenomenal scale of these problems and our capacities to represent them to ourselves provokes a further and possibly terminal synthesis of the Romantic object of sublime terror – of Nature – with the more secular object of the postmodern sublime in which it is the scale of both the technology and social relations of human productivity that frustrate representation and imagination. At the core of this synthesis is a new nature, a denatured or post-natural nature, in which the distinction between nature and human or “culture” is no longer tenable.³ To invert this, we can also say that this state of affairs simultaneously threatens the category of the human subject, which all theories of scale and sublimity that I have discussed tend to simply assume, implying an inhuman, or post-human humanity to match a post-natural nature. Latour draws a similar conclusion, wondering whether the sublime itself “evaporate[s] as soon as we are no longer taken as those puny humans overpowered by ‘nature’ but, on the contrary, as a collective *giant* that, in terms of terrawatts, has scaled up so much that it has become the main geological force shaping the Earth” (2011, 2–3). Clearly, within such a framework, scale itself demands a significant rethinking.

Scale without Humans

At the very least, scale is no longer, if it ever really was, reducible to a matter of space. The political and ethical imperative to think at the scale of the planetary is certainly frustrated by the stubborn fixities of spatial scale – as the proceedings of every supranational climate treaty agreement attests – but a concept of the planetary, in terms of both the urgency, and our apparent incapacity to think it, is more pronounced today as a scalar problem of *time*. The notion of the Anthropocene – a proposed designation that nominates the current epoch of the Earth’s history in terms of the moment that human activity and industry emerges as the primary *geological* force shaping the planet (Crutzen 2002) – efficiently names this eruption of planetary time into theories of global scale. Just as Foucault’s “epoch of space” rises out of the shattered remains of the temporal axiom of progress – the “homogeneous empty time” of modernization – the Anthropocene appears as a diagnostic signal of the sublimation of globalization’s spatial politics of scales into a new temporal problematic of scale. It would be mistaken, however, to ignore the overlap between the space of the global and the time of the planetary. There is doubtless something of a Copernican decentering of the human subject in the radical reorientation of critical inquiry named by the Anthropocene, particularly in humanistic fields, however ambivalent or negative their relationship to the category of the human may have already grown. Yet, one of the chief challenges of the scalar problem named by the Anthropocene lies in the fact that its introduction of a radically non-human temporal scale decenters and subsumes, just as it also sharpens and intensifies the critical consequence of the all too human politics of social and economic scale. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues,

Analytic frameworks engaging questions of freedom by way of critiques of capitalist globalization have *not*, in anyway, become obsolete in the age of climate change ... The problematic of globalization allows us to read climate change only as a crisis of capitalist management. While there is no denying that climate change has profoundly to do with the history of capital, a critique that is only a critique of capital is not sufficient for addressing questions relating to human history once the crisis of climate change has been acknowledged and the Anthropocene has begun to loom on the horizon of our present. The geologic now of the Anthropocene has become entangled with the now of human history. (2009, 212; emphasis in original)

The entanglement of these two historical presents is also an entanglement of two planes or imaginaries of scale. Indeed, articulating the daunting conceptual encounter described in Chakrabarty’s essay through the dialectic of scale puts into focus the depth of the challenge that confronts critical theory (as well as political practice) as it grapples with the paradoxical sense of our own limits and finitude as a species, just as our collective capacities and impacts exceed anything reconcilable with our traditional self-understanding of what it means to be “human.”

To review theoretical discourses that take seriously this paradoxical formation is to discover one of the more potent and influential challenges to the concept of scale. The fact that many of the most sweeping critiques of scale have emerged out of

fields – geography, urban studies, and sociology – in which scale has had the most conspicuous impact is not incidental; indeed, one starting point for many of these challenges is the suggestion that it is precisely the axiomatic character that scale has assumed in these fields that undermines its critical capacity and explanatory power. As one influential formulation of this criticism puts it, “scalar approaches provide exemplary cases of form determining content; ... such cases reveal themselves as axiomatic strategies where researchers ‘solve for scale,’ allowing scalar thinking to predetermine the fields of its own solvability” (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005, 426). What is at stake here is less the positive insights generated by theoretical and empirical inquiry into scale than the truths that scalar thinking might conceal in the process. The limits of scale, in this sense, are symptomatically expressed in apparently scalar problems – such as those convoked in the idea of the Anthropocene – that at the same time seem fundamentally incompatible with the way that scale, for all the reasons described above, has been theorized and studied. So what is scale missing?

Over the first decade or so of the twentieth-first century, this feeling that something crucial might be missed or even obscured by scalar thinking has come to focus insistently on the question of what composes the matter, “objects” or “things” that scale – as well as any other systematic theory of the present – is imagined to organize and shape. At the base of this essentially ontological “turn” is a realization of the degree to which our study of culture and society has been woefully inattentive to the place, role, and agency of the non-human. Aiming to shed the insistent centrality of and reduction to the human subject in our epistemologies and ontologies, these approaches propose a “flattening” of the world, in which the individual singularity of the human is but one object among many – a table, an atom, a garage door remote, a galaxy, a river, and for some, a feeling or an idea – composing any given situation. The challenge such a view poses for theories of scale is not in a denial of magnitude *per se* (that some things are larger or smaller, longer or shorter than others), or even the way in which degrees of magnitude, or duration becomes fixed, stratified, or “territorialized,” as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari influentially put it (Deleuze and Guattari 1987); what is put under pressure is rather the logics of identity, relation, and causality – of the particular versus the whole, micro versus macro, global versus local, etc. – in which theories of scale seem to almost inevitably become trapped. Building on Deleuze’s concept of an assemblage, the work of Manuel DeLanda models the radical reorientation of thought that a “flat” ontology entails:

The identity of any assemblage at any level of scale is always the product of a process (territorialization and, in some cases, coding) and it is always precarious, since other processes (deterritorialization and decoding) can destabilize it. For this reason, the ontological status of assemblages, large or small, is always that of unique, singular individuals. In other words, unlike taxonomic essentialism in which genus, species and individual are separate ontological categories, the ontology of assemblages is flat since it contains nothing but differently scaled individual singularities (or *hacceities*). As far as social ontology is concerned, this implies that persons are not the only individual entities involved in social processes, but also individual communities, individual organizations, individual cities and individual nation-states. (DeLanda 2006, 28)

Such a leveling entails a view in which the relationship between, for example, a continent, a family, and an individual is not one of containment or “nesting,” but rather a contingent and thus emergent composition and recomposition of matter, ideas, utterances, and so on, into complex, heterogeneous, and temporary assemblages. The assemblages that form out of this process are themselves decomposable into their components, such that they are perfectly capable of reordering and recombination. The ontological “flatness” of such a view thus refers to the way in which it refuses to limit, or privilege the capability or potential of one entity or component in a given order on the basis of its current place in that order. Not only is such a flattening antagonistic to an understanding of scale as container – that there are entities and processes that *belong* to the scale of, for example, the urban, or the national – it also poses a fundamental challenge to the stubborn humanism or anthropocentrism that undergird more aesthetic or representational approaches to scale.

The impact of these ideas in cultural criticism and the humanities more generally has been gradual but unmistakable over the past two decades. Most conspicuous, perhaps, has been a new attention to the materiality of culture, an old theme that has taken on new parameters in the wake of philosophies, such as assemblage theory, that ascribe an agency, vitality, and intentionality to non-human matter that were previously associated only with the human subject. The resurgence of interest in matter, materialism, and material culture apparent in literary, cinematic, and artistic production finds corresponding theoretical articulation in the “thing theory” developed by Bill Brown and others as well as the diverse array of approaches associated with a “new materialism.”⁴ The absence of substantial considerations of scale in these emergent theoretical formations – whether in the sense of spatial and temporal demarcations and stratification, or in terms of the aesthetic problematic of representation and the sublime – underlines the degree to which the established theories of scale outlined in this chapter remain rooted in axiomatic distinctions of the human–non-human, culture–nature and, despite the efforts of Lefebvre and others, in subject–object relations that are at odds with the project of these post-human and post-natural materialisms. This is not to say, however, that the problem of scale and particularly the cultural and ideological mediation of relative magnitude, distance and stratification, has been relegated to the past. While the turn away from scalar thinking responds to the inadequacy of existing theories of scale for problems such as that of climate change, or – to cite another major site for contemporary challenges to scalar thinking excluded from this chapter – networked societies, the contemporary urgency of these problems is also indissociable from their unprecedented magnitude and complexity.

The story I’ve offered here, of the development of theory of scale, is one which runs across a number of discrete fields from within which my own account might seem to draw too vague a definition of the problematic of scale. Yet, as I hope has been made clear, the wide ambit of concerns in this account of scale aims to underline a dynamism of the concept that is indispensable if scale is to retain the conceptual vitality and critical relevance that it has maintained over the past half-century. What is clear today is that the shifting parameters and privileged objects that have driven and structured the theoretical discourse of scale to date require yet further redefinition against a new set of material conditions for thinking culture, society, and, indeed, the human itself. The intellectual history of scale that I have rehearsed above affirms a consistently dialectical thought that is at every step sensitive to its own historicity. In this sense, any general anxiety about the continued relevance of scale *per se* seems misplaced. While recent

critiques of the formalism and residual humanism of scalar thinking warrant serious reflection, they should not obscure the continued need to grasp the stubborn reassertion and reproduction of the segmentation, stratification, and territorialization of our worlds and social imaginaries. So, if the history of scale renders the current moment as one of a conceptual reorientation and recomposition, there seems little doubt that scale itself will remain a key critical lens for the theorization of culture and society.

- see CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 25 (SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY); CHAPTER 31 (NATURE)

Notes

- 1 A sample of texts that were seminal for this collective intellectual project would include Amin (1976), Frank (1979), Arrighi (1994), Wallerstein (2002), and Wallerstein, multivolume *The Modern World-System* (1974, 1980, 1989, 2011).
- 2 For a succinct account of Harvey's argument, its theoretical antecedents and implications, see Harvey (2001).
- 3 A complex genealogy applies here. For a recent sample of major texts, see Hayles (1990), Haraway (1996), Latour (2004), Chakrabarty (2009), Morton (2009). See also "Nature," Chapter 31 in the present volume.
- 4 Given its still-emergent character, this constellation of ideas and approaches is difficult to capture in a representative way. For attempts to do precisely this, see Brown (2004); Bennett (2010); Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012); Braidotti (2013); Grusin (2015).

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33

Narrative*Marie-Laure Ryan*

In a widely quoted statement that can be regarded as foundational for the study of narrative, Roland Barthes writes:

The narratives of the world are numberless ... Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society ... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: *it is simply there, like life itself*. (1977, 79; my italics)

When Barthes writes that narrative is “like life itself,” does he simply mean that life, like narrative, is everywhere and its existence is taken for granted; or is he inspired, perhaps unconsciously, by another relation: narrative is like life, because it is an image of life, because life is the proper subject matter of narrative? Here life is not to be taken in its biological, scientific meaning, but rather in its phenomenological, existential dimension. Life is human life, or the life of anthropomorphic creatures, which means, the sum of the experiences that accumulate for a subject between birth and death. It is through narrative that individual lives receive a representation that can be communicated.

The ubiquity and multiple manifestations of stories in human societies mean that the relevance of the theoretical concept of narrative extends to all the disciplines concerned with human experience, including cultural studies. Yet there is one discipline, narratology, that regards narrative as its exclusive territory, and that views with suspicion the use of the term in the discourses of other fields. In this chapter I propose to contrast the narratological and the cultural studies approach, in the hope that the narratological section will help cultural studies to tighten its concept of narrative, and that the cultural studies section will broaden the concept beyond its technical dimension by outlining its implications for our sense of who we are.

Narratological Approaches to Narrative

In its broadest conception, narrative is a use of signs – language, image, perhaps music, and their various combinations – that evoke in the mind of the receiver a certain type of representation known as “story.” While it takes both a text made of material signs (a discourse) and a certain meaning (a story) to make a narrative, it is in the story that the text’s narrativity is invested, since there are types of texts whose purpose is not to tell stories but to present other forms of discourse, such as philosophy, law, or science. If story is a mental representation, it can be detached from the signs that evoke it, and it can be re-encoded into other signs, as the phenomena of retelling, translation or adaptation demonstrate.

This conception of narrative as a text that conveys a story (by text I mean not only language-based acts of communication but any deliberate and structured use of signs) situates the essence of narrativity on the level of story. Defining narrative means defining the conditions under which the content of a text can be regarded as a story. The extent to which content fulfills these conditions determines the degree of narrativity of the text that transmits it.

If a narrative is a text that brings a story to mind, a story, conversely, is a mental representation formed in response to the clues provided by a text. Is this connection between text and story necessary, or can stories exist as purely mental images? Whether or not there are “untold stories” is one of the many controversies that surround narrativity. I will argue that “untold stories” exist. The child who ponders how he will explain to his teacher why he cannot turn in his assignment, and comes up with the explanation “the dog ate my homework,” has a story in his mind even before he textualizes it. And while many authors claim that they discover the plot of their novel through the process of writing, some of them do not start writing until the plot is reasonably complete in their mind. In both of these cases, the story is conceived as the object of a future act of communication, and its textualization will shape and solidify a still tentative, malleable content. Yet imagining stories for their own sake, without any intent to turn them into texts, plays an important role in the life of the mind. Sexual fantasies, the stories that children tell themselves before falling asleep, the activity of revisiting memories, or the scenarios that some of us imagine when a loved one is late coming home are all examples of purely mental constructs that fulfill the requirements of narrativity. Regarding these constructs as stories presupposes a definition that links them to the same semantic structure as the texts that most people recognize as narrative, such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” *The Great Gatsby*, or the story of how they met their spouse.

Defining Narrative

Narratologists generally agree that stories consists of characters, setting, and events – in other words, that they feature intelligent agents located in a world who participate in, or are concerned by, events that change the state of this world. This last condition, which corresponds to what is known as a “narrative arc,” makes narrativity into a scalar property, since the number and the importance of the transformations that affect the story-world is a matter of judgment rather than an objective property of stories. Some people want narrative to describe a complete arc, with a well-defined beginning, middle, and end, while others are satisfied with any kind of change of state. The advantage of a scalar

conception of narrativity is its ability to explain why people's opinion may diverge when asked: is this text a narrative? If the set of all narratives is a fuzzy set, there is a lot to learn about the nature of narrative from the texts of questionable narrativity. The texts whose narrativity has been debated, and which occupy at best the margins of the set include:

Historical chronicles. As lists of events happening during a more global event (such as a military campaign or an expedition), this type of history writing lacks the teleological selectivity of true narratives. As Hayden White has argued, the chronicle "does not so much conclude as simply terminate" (1981, 16). There is no global narrative arc that brings closure and retrospective meaning. Beginning and end are determined by external factors rather than by a significant process of transformation. But chronicles may contain stories on the micro-level.

Annals and diaries. These genres are even more lacking in teleological selectivity than chronicles, since the author adds to them at intervals of variable regularity, not knowing what the future will bring, and what the consequences of the recorded events will be. Like chronicles, however, annals and diaries may contain stories in their individual entries.

Recipes. While they concern the transformation of multiple raw ingredients into a palatable dish, a process that can be regarded as a narrative arc, recipes propose an endlessly repeatable algorithm, rather than representations of unique events. They also lack individuated characters, since anybody can execute the directions.

Lyric poetry. Poems may represent subjective experience, but they rarely involve identifiable events leading to determinate changes of state. Moreover, they do not feature individuated characters: the "I" and "you" of a love poem can stand for any lover and love object.

Dreams (as lived experience, rather than as report of dreams). Dreams may consist of events that, when reported, may present the characteristics of a story, but the actual experience of dreaming is not a "text" that tells or shows events. It is rather the dreamer's unmediated perception of and participation in these events. Just like everyday life, dreams are not representations of experience, but experience itself, although in a different state of consciousness and taking place in a different world than everyday life.

The marginalization of these cases suggests several conditions of narrativity:

- Stories are representations of life, not life itself (transgressed by dreams).
- Stories are about singular, not endlessly repeatable events (transgressed by recipes).
- Stories must involve individuated characters (transgressed by lyric poetry and recipes).
- Stories are not automatic recordings of "everything that happens" in an arbitrarily determined time span, they focus on events that cause significant changes in the state of a world, and they involve selection and organization of materials, a process which may be called emplotting (transgressed by diaries, annals, and chronicles).
- Stories are told from a retrospective stance that provides a comprehensive view of the reported events and of their consequences (transgressed by diaries).

If narrativity is a scalar concept that tolerates various degrees of realization (Ryan 2007), there will be prototypical as well as marginal forms of narrative. Several narrative genres have been regarded as prototypes by different schools in narratology: simple folklore forms such as fairy tales or fables; narratives with a specific dynamic contour,

such as tragedy, thrillers, and mystery stories; conversational narratives of personal experience; and literary fiction (i.e., the novel). A look at each of these prototype candidates provides us with an idea of the hidden complexity of the concept of narrative, and of the variety of approaches that it has inspired.

Folklore Tales as Prototype

It is a safe bet that the narrativity of a tale like “Little Red Riding Hood” will be universally acknowledged. The origin of narratology, for those who regard the “simple forms” of folklore as prototypical, can be traced to Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928). In this study, Propp dissected a corpus of Russian folktales into thirty-two possible functions, i.e., actions of characters bearing strategic significance for the action as a whole (for example: an interdiction is addressed to the hero; the interdiction is violated; the villain receives information about his victim; the hero and the villain join in direct combat; a difficult task is proposed to the hero; the task is resolved, etc.), and seven roles for the characters: villain, donor, helper, dispatcher, the princess as sought after object, hero, and false hero. Individual tales consist of a subset of the thirty-two functions, but the functions are always presented in the same order, because many of them are linked to others by relations of logical entailment. If we read the list of functions as a story, we get an archetypal pattern that appears worldwide and is commonly used in computer games: the adventures of a hero who is sent on a quest, solves a number of problems, and is rewarded in the end. Reduced to its logical bare bones, the pattern can be described as: “problem–action taken to solve it,” a sequence of events that can result in either success or failure. (Failure is not represented in Propp’s corpus, but its mere possibility is what creates interest to the story. Even though the reader knows how things will turn out, he will experience uncertainty if he adopts the perspective of the hero.) Another minimalist conception of narrativity is Jurij Lotman’s model of narrative action as the transgression by a character of forbidden boundaries, a model which singles out from Propp’s list of functions the pair “an interdiction is given to the hero” – “the interdiction is violated” as embodying the essence of narrative.

To regard folktales as narrative prototypes amounts to locating narrativity in the plot. By plot (a seemingly intuitive notion about whose definition narratologists seem unable to agree) I understand the scheming (i.e., plotting) of characters, and the physical actions they undertake to fulfill their goals. Plot is a slightly more abstract concept than story, since different stories – let’s say Cinderella and a Chinese folktale, or *Romeo and Juliet* and the musical *West Side Story* – can have the same plot. If narrativity is a matter of plot, its prototypical manifestations are not just folktales, but all the genres that give high priority to conflicts between the goals of different characters, or between the goals of a character and the state of the world: tragedy, epic poetry, myth, legend, superhero comics, action films, and many, but not all novels.

A shortcoming of a plot-centered conception of narrative is exemplified by the case of summaries. The summary of a novel is pure plot, bones stripped of any descriptive fat, but its flat recording of events does not generate narrative interest, because it lacks vivid evocations of characters and setting, and the power to create effects that are central to the prototypes discussed in the next section. Under a “plot” approach to narrativity, a summary would be more narrative than the novel it represents, and E. M. Forster’s minimal example of plot (1990, 87), “the king died then the queen died of grief,” more narrative than *Anna Karenina*.

Tragedy, Mystery Stories, and Thrillers as Prototypes

Plot may be conceived not only in terms of its semantic substance or content (characters, setting, events, changes of state, etc.) but also in terms of the form that this substance must take. Tragedy, mystery stories, and thrillers are not only genres in which plot is dominant, their plots are characterized by a certain dynamic form, an intentional design that exercises a strict control over the audience's cognitive and emotional experience. We may call this form, or rather its effect on the audience, "narrative tension." (The title of the French-language book that Raphaël Baroni [2007] devotes to this phenomenon leads to an interesting pun: *la tension narrative = l'attention narrative*, a narrative grabbing of attention.)

Tragedy plays a central role in a formal approach to plot, because of the very distinctive contour of its design. Though Aristotle does not describe the tragic plot in terms of exposition, complication, crisis, and resolution, this structure is widely regarded as "the Aristotelian plot." In the late nineteenth century, the German playwright and critic Gustav Freytag captured the cognitive and affective contour of a typical five-act tragedy by means of a triangle with three points: A (the left end of the base) is exposition, B (the apex) the climax, and C (the right end of the base) the catastrophe (Jahn 2005). The terms that label these points refer to what happens to the characters; yet the rising and falling contour of the triangle describes the affective state of the spectator. During exposition, characters, setting, and the initial state of the world are presented to the audience. The ascending edge of the triangle represents the protagonist's attempt to achieve her goals; this corresponds, in the audience, to a rise of tension, but complications arise, and a turning point takes place at the climax. The descending edge leads in tragedy to the downfall of the hero, but it can also be interpreted as conflict resolution and restoration of a stable state. The resolution brings in the spectator a relief of tension. This visual model not only describes tragedy, it is regarded as a basic guideline by Hollywood scriptwriters.

While Freytag's triangle conceives narrative dynamics in terms of a rise and fall in both the fortune of the hero and the emotional involvement of the audience, Meir Sternberg's theory of narrativity focuses on the manipulation of the expectations of the audience through a strategic disclosure of information. "I define narrativity as the play of suspense/curiosity/surprise between represented and communicative time (in whatever combination, whatever medium, whatever manifest or latent form). Along the same functional lines, I define narrative as a discourse where such play dominates" (Sternberg 1992, 531–532). Suspense arises when the audience can anticipate two (or more) possible future developments out of a given situation and is dying to know which one will be actualized. The heroine tied to the railroad tracks is a classical instance of suspense because the future can be reduced to an either/or choice: either she will die, or she will be rescued. Curiosity is awakened when the audience knows how things will turn out, but does not know through what route the story will get there. As for surprise, it presupposes an incomplete computing of possible outcomes by the audience and an unexpected fork taken by the plot. (These are my formulations; Sternberg's are different.) If we accept Sternberg's conception of narrativity as purposeful manipulation of expectations, then narrativity reaches its fullest manifestation in thrillers and mystery (i.e., detective) stories. But effects of suspense, curiosity, and surprise can be exploited to great efficiency in all narrative genres, especially in our next category.

An important difference between plot-as-type-of-content and plot-as-dynamic-design is the former's indifference to, and the latter's concern with efficient storytelling, in other words, with aesthetics. If narrativity lies in plot, and plot is a sequence of events, even the flattest report of events is a full member of the narrative set; but if plot is conceived as design meant to arouse the interest of the audience, only successful narrative performances will be regarded as prototypical. Yet even though this conception of narrativity stresses aesthetics, its critics may argue that it is unfit for "high" literature, since its best examples are the most stereotyped genres of popular culture.

Natural Narrative as Prototype

While narratology, a child of structuralism and semiotics, was developing in France as the study of folklore and literary texts, linguists on the other side of the Atlantic who were trying to expand their discipline from the sentence to the discourse level became interested in the analysis of "natural narratives," i.e., oral narratives spontaneously told in conversation, or produced in response to questions by an interviewer. William Labov's work on narratives of personal experience has remained foundational for this type of research. Collecting stories from African American informants on the theme "were you ever in a serious fight," Labov observed that the texts followed a dominant pattern of organization not significantly different from the structure described above as the Aristotelian plot. Labov defines this structure as: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda (Labov 1972, 363). The difference between this model and a plot model strictly centered on what happens in the story-world lies in its combination of actions performed by the characters and belonging therefore to the story world (complicating action and resolution) with rhetorical actions performed by the storyteller to attract the interest of the audience and stress the points that make the story tell-able: abstract, orientation, evaluation, and coda.

In 1977, Mary Louise Pratt's ground-breaking *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* argued for the applicability of Labov's model to some texts of "highbrow" literary fiction, thereby putting narratology and sociolinguistics on converging courses. Almost twenty years later, in *Towards a "Natural" Narratology* (1996), Monika Fludernik went even farther by declaring conversational (i.e., "natural") narrative to be the prototypical manifestation of narrativity. Viewing the representation of personal experience as the main function of natural narrative, she proposed to replace "plot" with what she calls "experientiality" as the essence of narrative. This emphasis on experientiality expels historical chronicles, thrillers, folktales, and all sorts of action-oriented stories from the center of the fuzzy set of all narratives, and replaces them with texts that develop in great detail, as David Herman puts it, "the lived, felt experience of humans or human-like agents interacting in an ongoing way with their cohorts and surrounding environment." For, as Herman adds, "unless a discourse encodes the pressure of events on an experiencing human or at least human-like consciousness, it will not be a central instance of the narrative text type" (2007, 11). Under this criterion, a text made solely of the cogitations of a narrator, such as Samuel Beckett's *The Unnameable*, is more narrative than a fairy tale that focuses almost exclusively on physical events.

The expression of human experience is certainly a compelling reason for telling stories, but whether "experientiality" can be elevated into the highest criterion of narrativity remains debatable. While storytelling is a very efficient way to represent one's

experience or the experience of others, a painting, like Edvard Munch's "The Scream," or a piece of music like Beethoven's Pastoral symphony would also seem capable of expressing intimately felt experience. So are some largely non-narrative texts such as lyric poetry. This suggests that "experientiality" is not a sufficient condition of narrativity. Nor is it a necessary condition. A text that develops in great detail how events affect characters is not *eo ipso* more narrative than a fairy tale that limits itself to the bare report of events. As Erich Auerbach (1953) observed, there are lengthy representations of felt experience in *The Odyssey* (think of Odysseus weeping for Ithaca and his family while held prisoner by Calypso), but none in the episode in Genesis where God orders Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Yet for most readers, Genesis is no less narrative than the *Odyssey*. Could it be that "experientiality" can be left implicit? But if this is the case, any story implies subjective experience, since stories concern anthropomorphic creatures dealing with changing circumstances or with the threat of change, and the distinction between plot-based and experientiality-based conceptions of narrative collapses.

Another feature of natural narrative that could be invoked in elevating it to the status of prototype is its pragmatic or communicative framework. James Phelan defines this framework as follows: "the act of somebody telling somebody else on a particular occasion for some purpose that something happened" (2005, 217). If this formula is constitutive of narrativity, there are two ways to deal with narrative fiction: either relegate it to the fuzzy outer reaches of the narrative set, a rather counterintuitive move, or try to force-fit it into the formula. But if we chose this second alternative, who will be the somebody who performs the act of narration in the case of a novel: the author or the narrator? Let's assume that "somebody" is the author; then what exactly is the "purpose"? While intention can be reasonably well defined for conversational narrative (satisfying the hearer's curiosity for a specific type of information), it is the object of endless speculation in the case of literary fiction. Who is the "somebody else" who functions as recipient: the particular reader (hearer, spectator) or the general public that any published narrative addresses? What is the occasion? Narration takes place in a cultural context, of which readers are broadly aware (for instance by knowing in which period the text was written, or to what genre it belongs), but this context is not a specific occasion, because the author cannot anticipate the exact circumstances in which the text will be received, and the user does not know the circumstances in which it was composed. Since Phelan's formula does not yield satisfactory results on the level of the authorial utterance, let's try to apply it to the imaginary transaction between the narrator and his audience. This transaction can sometimes be regarded as the imitation of a "natural" (= non-fictional) type of narrative (confession, biography, autobiography, letter-writing, or the gossip of a barber, as in Ring Lardner's "Haircut"), but for every fictional narrator who narrates in a specific situation and in a recognizable "natural" genre, there are countless others who operate in some kind of contextual vacuum. In most cases of third-person narration, we can't even regard the narrator as "somebody," i.e., as an individuated, embodied creature, since he (she? it?) not only lacks defining properties, but also possesses supernatural abilities, such as reading into people's minds, seeing through walls, and freely changing his/her/its spatial and temporal point of view. Moreover, even when narrative fiction *does* mimic a genre of non-fictional narrative, it hardly ever imitates this genre exactly, because the demands of the real act of communication between author and audience override the demands of the fictional transaction

between the narrator and his fictional audience. All this disqualifies “natural narrative” as a valid model of literary fiction.

Narrative Fiction as Prototype

An alternative to force-fitting narrative fiction into the framework of natural narrative is to regard narrative fiction itself as the prototype of narrativity. Since it creates its own world, rather than proposing a falsifiable image of the real world, fiction is free to report the most credibility- and probability-defying sequences of events, as well as to interleave or embed these sequences into the most complex patterns. And since its narrator need not be a possible human being (if it needs a narrator at all – a view made questionable by film and drama), narrative fiction is not limited to the kind of information that is available to natural narrators. The freedom to report, or rather to make up normally inaccessible information, such as the private thoughts of characters, gives fiction a power to capture the “what it is like,” the felt quality of experience that cannot be equaled by strictly truth-functional storytelling. On the level of discourse, fiction can rely on resources of unlimited diversity: telling out of sequence, unreliable narration, embedding stories within stories, telling from the point of view of multiple characters, alternating between plot lines, slowing down or accelerating the pace of narration, etc. Fiction, in short, affords much more immersive modes of storytelling, which lead to a much more powerful sense of being there than factual narratives. This explains why what David Herman (1999) calls “classical narratology” (by which he means French and structuralism-inspired narratology) has developed as the study of literary fiction. Gérard Genette’s *Figures III*, a monumental catalogue of the expressive resources of narrative discourse, was based on a close reading of Marcel Proust’s novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

There are, however, two caveats to elevating narrative fiction into the prototype of narrativity. The first is that not all narratives are fictional, *pace* those constructivists who argue that, because narratives are “made and not found,” they fulfill the etymological meaning of fiction: *ingere*, to fashion, to shape. While all narratives are “constructed in people’s heads,” as Jerome Bruner puts it (1987, 11), fictional and factual narratives are constructed from elements coming from different sources (the imagination versus real-world experience or documents); they fulfill different functions (entertainment versus information); and they are evaluated according to different criteria (pleasure versus truth). To argue for the fictionality of all narratives amounts to denying differences of major ethical importance, since the endorsement of what I have called “the doctrine of panfictionality” (Ryan 1996), if taken seriously, would relieve historians, journalists, and even natural storytellers of commitment to a fair and properly documented representation of reality.

The other, less evident caveat lies in the fact that not all fiction is narrative, or is not narrative to the same extent. While fully non-narrative fiction is rare (an example would be the synchronic, pseudo-ethnographic description of an imaginary world, as in Jorge Luis Borges’s “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” which lack the time dimension essential to narrativity), postmodern authors have found many ways to decouple fictionality from narrativity:

- The interior monologue of Beckett’s narrator in *The Unnameable*, a text that takes readers into the theater of a character’s mind but gives them no ideas of what happens

in the outside world. (Doesn't narrative need to establish facts for a world presented as an objectively existing reality?)

- The contradictions that pepper some of the novels of French New Novelists Alain Robbe-Grillet or Robert Pinget, creating a "Swiss cheese world" where violations of the principle of non-contradiction drill quantum tunnels into an otherwise coherent world.
- The fragmentation of Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" into multiple short paragraphs, suggesting different versions of events, but preventing the reconstruction of even one full version of what happened when a couple left for a party, leaving its three children in the care of an attractive teenager.
- Novels made of fragments that can be read in any order (*Composition no 1* by Marc Saporta, a novel printed on a deck of cards), so that no causal chain can be established.
- Remixes and cut ups: texts created by cutting fragments from other texts and gluing them together (a favorite technique of William Burroughs).
- The calligraphic arrangements of printed text in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, which invite the user to look rather than to read.

If fiction can subvert narrativity for aesthetic purposes, only *narrative* kinds of fiction can occupy the center of the fuzzy set of all narratives. But then we will have to define what makes these fictions narrative (plot as content? plot as form? experientiality?), and we will be right back to square one.

Mimesis, Worldness, and Narrativity

All the genres we have examined so far have shown some weaknesses if regarded as the sole standard of narrativity. Does it mean that we should abandon the idea that the fuzzy set of all narratives has a center, and that the narrativity of a given text can be assessed in its relation to this center? Or should we define the center more broadly, so that it can contain more than one prototype? Then the narrativity of a text T will depend on its resemblance to either A or B or C, but since some texts will resemble A and others will resemble B or C, it will not be possible (nor necessary) to rank the A-relatives with respect to the B- or C-relatives in terms of degree of narrativity. Under this system, a postmodern novel full of contradictions will be less narrative than a realistic novel, and so will a flat list of "everything that happened to somebody in a day" compared to a story whose plot follows a proper narrative arc, but the "lessness" or "moreness" relates to different criteria and presupposes different standards of comparison. But if different types of narrative can occupy the center, this means that they must have something in common; otherwise there would be no reason to exclude any type of text from this center. In other words, narrativity must be conceived in terms of something broader than "being about the plotting of characters" or "expressing experience" or "creating a certain type of interest."

This more general property, I would suggest, lies in a text's mimeticism. To be regarded as constitutive of narrativity, *mimesis* must be conceived not merely as the imitation of something that happens in our world (this is the ambition of non-fiction), nor as the imitation of something that *could* happen in our world (Aristotle's conception of poetic mimesis, which applies to realistic fiction), but more generally, as the ability to summon a world to the imagination, together with the individuals who populate it, and the events that make it evolve and that matter affectively to its inhabitants. By insisting on *worldness*, and by associating worldness with something that can be

imagined, i.e., pictured in the mind, this conception of mimesis does not restrict the concept to representations of the real world, nor to realistic ones. However distant from the world we live in, the more vividly a storyworld imprints itself in the reader's, hearer's or spectator's imagination, and the more all of its parts form a coherent whole, the greater the narrativity of the text that displays it.

Narrative, Culture, Identity

Once stories are decoupled from text, as I suggest early in this chapter, the door opens for all sorts of metaphorical expansions, since the label "narrative" can now apply to invisible, elusive representations that exist only in the mind. These expansions make narrative into a highly versatile tool that can be applied to many disciplines and problems, but they also run the risk of stretching the concept too thin. Here I will look at applications of the concept of narrative in two areas that test the limits of its usefulness: cultural studies and the discourse of identity.

Narrative may be difficult to define, but the object of cultural studies is even more elusive than the object of narratology. This may explain why anthropologist Clifford Geertz defines culture in terms of narrative: "Culture is the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves" (1973, 448). This formula can receive several interpretations, depending on whether we conceive the "we" in collective or individual terms, and "narrative" as concrete text, or as purely mental construct (i.e., as what I have called "story"). By cross-classifying the individual/collective and the mental/textual dichotomies, one obtains four categories, which I will survey below.

If we take "we" to represent the whole of the culture to which a person belongs, and "stories" to stand for oral or written texts, then Geertz's formula applies to the myths, legends, national epics, and, nowadays, bestselling novels, comic books, blockbuster films, and computer games through which a culture defines itself.

Alternatively, if we interpret "we" as meaning "each of us, individually," the stories "we" tell ourselves about ourselves are the oral testimonies, narratives of personal experience, diaries, memoirs, letters, photos, and other documents through which people capture their memories. In this perspective, culture becomes the sum of the personal histories produced by its members. This interpretation reflects the interest of cultural studies in the stories spontaneously told by ordinary people, as opposed to the artworks officially recognized as expressions of cultural identity. Though natural narratives are only a subset of all narratives, their study by sociologists, narratologists, and linguists provides invaluable tools for the analysis of this type of document.

The distinction between collective and individual narratives also applies when narrative is conceived independently of any physical text. On the collective level, narratives that float freely in the ideology of a culture are represented by the so-called "Grand Narratives" (*grands récits*) of Jean-François Lyotard and their many offspring. For Lyotard, *grands récits* are global explanatory schemes, or views of history that legitimize institutions by presenting them as necessary to the historical self-realization of an abstract or collective entity such as Reason, Freedom, the State, or the Human Spirit. *Grands récits* share with G. W. F. Hegel's and Karl Marx's philosophies of history, or with religious eschatology, a totalizing and teleological view of history as a narrative arc that reaches a definitive and identifiable end point; but, in contrast to

these philosophies, they cannot be associated with particular texts. Lyotard condemned *grands récits* as residues from positivism, and prophesized that in postmodernism they would be replaced by multiple “little stories” that represent subcultures or individuals. This rejection of *grands récits* has led to the association of narrative with prejudice and negative stereotypes concerning certain groups. When scholars speak of “the narratives of race, class, and gender,” for instance, they do not mean individual stories that develop a sequence of causally related events, leading to the ultimate victory or defeat of the protagonist, nor do they mean how people of a certain race, class or gender represent themselves through storytelling. These scholars rather have in mind particular constructions of race, class, and gender that enable systemic forms of oppression and discrimination and thus need to be deconstructed. “Narrative,” in this rather loose usage, connotes the idea of being a culturally specific and constructed representation of questionable veracity, rather than an expression of objective truths capturing the nature-given properties of a certain group. But the term “narrative” can also be used positively to represent how a given group conceives its identity. In contrast to Lyotard’s *grands récits*, narratives of group identity do not speak for culture as a whole; rather, their diversity represents culture as a network of competing stories that vie for recognition.

Our last type of narrative, stories told by people to themselves (i.e., silently) about themselves, has been at the center of a memorable controversy that involved most of the fields concerned with narrative: psychology, cultural studies, philosophy, and of course narratology. The root of the debate was in claims advanced by some scholars about the “narrative” nature of the mind and the importance of stories for the construction of identity. Particularly representative of this trend is the following claim by Jerome Bruner:

Eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and to purpose-build the very “events” of a life. In the end we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we “tell about” our lives. And given the cultural shaping to which I referred, we become variants of the culture’s canonical forms. (1987, 15)

Or this one, by Daniel Dennett:

We are all virtuoso novelists, who find ourselves engaged in all sorts of behavior, and we always try to put the best “faces” on if we can. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character at the centre of that autobiography is one’s self. (1988, 1029)

There are two ways to deal with such declarations about the narrative nature of identity: one is to treat them as metaphors, which means not taking them too seriously; the other is to hold the author responsible for a literal interpretation, by which identity *is* a narrative. In 2004 the philosopher Galen Strawson took the second route, by launching an attack on what he called the “narrative identity thesis.” In addition to rejecting the idea that “human beings typically see or live or experience their lives as a narrative or

story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories,” he objected even more forcefully to what he calls the ethical narrative thesis: “This states that experiencing or conceiving one’s life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood” (2004, 428). Strawson’s campaign against the narrative identity thesis is based much less on logical argumentation than on gut feeling. He distinguishes two possible types of persons, the Diachronics, who see the self as continuous over time and tend to conceive of it as a unified narrative, and the Episodics, who experience the self as discontinuous, so that their past selves may seem foreign to them, even though, thanks to memory, they remain aware of the persistence of their person. Strawson rejects the narrative identity thesis by declaring himself firmly to be an Episodic. (It is ironic that Strawson resorts to the narratological concept of episode to defend the idea of a non-narrative sense of self; here he is clearly betrayed by language, since English offers no better term.) While Strawson’s self-description does not exclude the possibility that some people may be not only Diachronics but Narratives, it establishes the possibility of a non-narrative sense of self. To sum up Strawson’s objections to the narrative identity thesis, what he is telling us with his Episodic/Diachronic dichotomy is that there are people not overly concerned with “who they are,” or who do not associate a sense of self with an overarching lifestory, and that these people are not morally inferior to those who conceive their life as an ongoing quest with a prewritten script. The Hitlers of this world, convinced of their historical mission, were certainly Narrative Diachronics.

A possibility that Strawson does not consider seriously, however, is that the narrative identity thesis does not necessarily presuppose a single, overarching, persistent life narrative. As Matti Hyvärinen (2012) has suggested, why couldn’t the evolution of a self into another be the subject matter of a story? Why couldn’t an Episodic constantly rewrite the narrative of his life? Narratives, after all, may consist of distinct episodes, and episodes are mini-narratives. In the passage quoted above, Bruner uses the plural to speak about the narratives by which we tell about our life. By allowing a plurality of narratives, this choice of grammatical form suggests an equally plural, fragmented, and always renegotiated sense of self. If, taking a clue from Judith Butler, we regard storytelling as a performance of identity, the self becomes something that we constantly create and recreate, not only through the stories we tell ourselves in the privacy of our minds, but also through the ones that we verbalize, since we present ourselves differently to every audience we face. But for these self-representations to construct our sense of identity, we must be aware of what image we project, which is not necessarily the case.

It would be easy to dismiss cultural theory and identity discourse for overextending the concept of narrative, since they use it to refer to phenomena that are not textually embodied, and cannot therefore be objectively observed, at least not in the current state of mind-imaging technology. But it would be equally easy to dismiss narratology as too obsessed with definition and description, and as not sufficiently concerned with the existentially crucial question of the role of narrative in social life and in the life of the mind. As a way to represent life, stories transcend texts, but if it weren’t for their textual manifestations, we would not have come up with the concept of narrative. In so far as the free-floating stories of cultural theory and identity discourse are abstractions from the concrete textual objects that form the concern of narratology, the two approaches

I have outlined in this chapter are not antagonistic, but complementary. A case in point is the legacy of Roland Barthes, who, through works as different as *Mythologies*, *S/Z*, and “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” has been equally inspiring for cultural studies and narratology.

- see CHAPTER 1 (FRANKFURT – NEW YORK – SAN DIEGO 1924–1968; OR, CRITICAL THEORY); CHAPTER 3 (PARIS 1955–1968; OR, STRUCTURALISM); CHAPTER 4 (BIRMINGHAM – URBANA-CHAMPAIGN 1964–1990; OR, CULTURAL STUDIES)

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