

Mediations

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Editors' Note

This issue commences with Fredric Jameson's "A New Reading of *Capital*." As Jameson is at pains to point out, this new reading is not precisely a literary reading, but nor is it overtly concerned with the propositional truth of the major discoveries of the first volume of *Capital* or their applicability to contemporary phenomena. Rather, it considers *Capital* as a representational project. Why is it necessary to represent capital as a totality? What strategies are entailed in this decision? Most importantly, what consequences follow from this very basic Marxian starting point? If Marxism is indeed Marxism, and not just another garden-variety socialism, then presumably this decision is fateful for Marxism as a whole and not just for Volume I of *Capital*. Jameson argues — startlingly, but in a way that will organize this issue of *Mediations* — that Marxism as such doesn't have a political theory; not only doesn't *think*, but must not think politics systematically. The implication seems to be that any attempt to think politics systematically will leave questions of the economic totality to one side; the attempt to think the economic totality systematically, on the other hand, will render politics a matter of opportunism, "in the good Macchiavellian sense of the word." And indeed, in the light of this assertion so many contemporary attempts to formulate a properly Left theory of politics dwindle into an array of better mousetraps — nationally standardized innovations, since the Americans have one, the Italians have another, the French are lucky enough to have three or perhaps four models to choose from. But in the end, they all leave the one thing intact — capital — that a genuine Left would have to confront.

The title of Anna Kornbluh's essay "On Marx's Victorian Novel" flirts with the appearance of just the kind of "literary" reading of *Capital* that Jameson rules out of bounds at the outset. Indeed, the logically initial move is the gathering up of tropes that run through the book — first personification, but later metalepsis assumes center stage — and one could be forgiven for imagining that one can guess the kind of textual unraveling that will follow. On the contrary, it soon becomes clear that something much more profound is at stake. For personification, to take the simpler example, is not only a feature of *Capital*, but of capitalism itself, and nowhere more so than when actual persons are involved. It would be a mistake to see the capitalist as the

conscious agent of capital; rather the capitalist is, as capitalist, capitalism personified. The trope does not isolate the text from its substance but rather provides a point of absolute identity with it. Metalepsis, the insertion of a substitutional figure within another substitutional figure, produces a species of trope whose governing logic is not uniform, where a logical inconsistency is constitutive of the meaning of the trope. But this logical inconsistency is not the sign of a Marxian catachresis; rather, the operation of capitalism itself involves a metalepsis, a fundamental inconsistency that must constantly be overleapt. The final lesson of Hegel's *Logic*, a lesson that has been by and large rejected by contemporary reason, is that the syllogistic figures produced in the *Logic* do not represent the world or model it, but rather are actually present in it. Kornbluh may rescue that thesis by radicalizing it; it is not only the logical figures, but the rhetorical ones whose being is as much material as linguistic: a thesis that could be as fateful for Jamesonian allegory as it is for Marxian metalepsis.

Roland Boer's "Marxism and Eschatology Reconsidered" recalls Meyer Shapiro's response to Heidegger's essay on the origin of the work of art, where Shapiro demonstrates through archival evidence that the Van Gogh "peasant shoes" Heidegger saw were not in fact peasant shoes, but the shoes of the painter's Parisian roommate. On one hand, both essays "miss," take place at a different level than, the objects of their critiques: surely Heidegger's theory of art doesn't hinge on who owned a pair of shoes; surely the idea of a Marxian eschatology (of which, as we all know but should still be astonished by, there are Left as well as Right versions) doesn't hinge on whom Marx studied Isaiah under at college. But of course both positions are deliberately ingenuous; by scouring the landscape and failing to find what others found so easily, they demonstrate, without thematizing it, the fantasy structure that infects the objects of their critiques. Boer reminds us that there is in fact no shortage of messianic socialisms, including the socialism Marx and Engels first came into contact with and opposed. No doubt Marxism contains multitudes; but a specific difference of Marxism among the possible socialisms is its indifference to eschatology.

At this point we turn away from a direct consideration of Marx, but the issue at the heart of the remaining articles — the politics of the emphasis on politics as opposed to the rethinking of economic systems — is very much the one initially articulated by Jameson. In Reiichi Miura's "What Kind of Revolution Do You Want," this distinction assumes the form of the distinction between a politics of singularity and an older politics it supplants, which goes unnamed but would presumably include both Marxism and traditional liberalism or redistributive social democracy. Miura's initial move is to identify the politics of singularity — which is at the same time precisely what Jameson identifies as the emergence of a new multiplicity — with the aesthetics of punk. The paradoxes of punk — an aesthetic identity based on the refusal of an aesthetic identity, or in other words, an identity based on singularity — when carried to their conclusions, turn out to imply the politics of singularity: which, Miura argues, is both a critique and a radicalization of the logic of the politics of identity. So

here, once again, the attempt to think a new politics leaves us thinking (or rather not thinking) the same old economic system. Biopolitical singularity, in its commitment to the desiring subject, subscribes to the same paradigm as neoliberalism. True, its named objective is opposed to the ends of neoliberalism. "So, probably, the true problem is whether or not our essential desire is for neoliberalism: an assertion hard to refute"; or at least, hard to refute at the level of a politics which has centered on the realization of singularities. Miura leaves it unsaid that at the level of the economic, that confusion is, for us, rather less plausible.

We conclude with an interview by Alexei Penzin, of the Russian collective Chto Delat / What Is To Be Done?, with Paolo Virno, intellectually close kin with the direct targets of Miura's critique. (The interview was originally commissioned for *Manifesta* Journal, Issue #8, "Collective Curating," which we take the opportunity here to thank for their permission to reprint). Of course, Virno's thinking is far more grounded in the economic and in Marx than his reception in the English-speaking world would sometimes suggest. Indeed — coming full circle — it hinges on the assumption of a sea change in the value produced by collective labor: what Marx described, as Jameson reminds us, as labor's "free gift to capital." Penzin presses Virno on several issues of direct relevance to the fissures opened up by Jameson and Miura, tending to center on the question of the relation between cooperation and virtuosity, the many and the one, the multitude and singularity. Penzin ends with the question — traditional, but more urgent every day — of organization: if what some have claimed to be missing from the theory of the multitude is a mode of organization adequate both to the notion of singularity and to the massive powers to be opposed, then, Penzin asks, where might we look for the soviets of the multitude?

▪

Particularly attentive readers may have noticed that the *Wertkritik* dossier, which was featured on our preview page for the previous issue, has been replaced by a forthcoming special issue, *Marx or Spinoza*. The *Wertkritik* translation project has not been abandoned; on the contrary, it has expanded into a double issue, and is expected to come out as *Mediations* 26.1-2, which should be available in Fall 2011. Even more attentive readers may notice subtle design improvements in both the print and online editions.

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Two of the essays in this issue were originally presented in early forms at the MLG's Institute on Culture and Society. This year's Institute will take place June 20-24 on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Details and a call for papers can be found on the MLG web site: mlg.eserver.org.

Nicholas Brown, for the *Mediations* editors.

A New Reading of *Capital*

Fredric Jameson

My title promises a preview of my forthcoming book, *Representing Capital*, a commentary on Volume I of Marx's *Capital*, which I read somewhat differently than many of the standard interpretations. So I will tell you something about that and then draw some practical conclusions about Marxism today and its political and intellectual mission.

I am anxious that this work of mine not be understood as a "literary" reading of *Capital*: not only have those few such attempts been either weak generic classifications or fairly obvious notes on style and metaphor: indeed, the very term literary in this context is bound to trivialize the effort and to suggest that those debating the technical details of Marx's economic analyses will have little interest in cultural epiphenomena like the textual status of the book as such. And it is true that I take little interest in Marx's facts as he presents them or in the relevance of the laws he is alleged to have deduced from them. What I have wished to emphasize is the representation of capitalism as a totality, as an infernal machine which can only be described dialectically. I regard the truth of the labor theory of value as a metaphysical issue; I find the extrapolation of Marx's model to the current third or globalized, postmodern, stage of capitalism to be of the greatest interest, but think that so far this can take many forms. And at the same time I consider that Marx's description of capital is fully vindicated by recent events and remains as valid today as it ever was. Meanwhile, in this reading I limit myself to the only completed work, namely Volume I of *Capital*, and I claim that it gives a complete picture of capitalist totality. I should add, to justify my formal approach (which as I have said I would not want to call literary exactly, but which some will certainly continue to characterize as formalist in that way) — I should add that for me the central formal problem of *Capital* Volume I is the problem of representation: namely how to construct a totality out of individual elements, historical processes, and perspectives of all kinds; and indeed how to do justice to a totality which is not only non-empirical as a system of relationships, but which is also in full movement, in expansion, in a movement of totalization which

is essential to its very existence and at the heart of its peculiar economic nature. Yet also essential to this structure is a process of perpetual breakdown: so we have here a machine which is necessarily and inevitably breaking down and which must therefore, to remain in existence, constantly repair itself by enlarging itself and its field of control. How such a peculiar and indeed such a unique phenomenon can be represented or made to appear in our mind's eye is I believe explained by the equally unique and peculiar powers of dialectical thought, which might almost be considered a new type of thinking invented specifically to overcome the dilemmas of representation posed by this unique and peculiar totality called capital: but I will not pursue any more extensive account and defense or apologia of the dialectic here.

So now we begin, and with a scandalous proposal, namely to bracket the whole of Part One: it is of course the most famous section of the whole work, the one everyone reads even if they get no further; nor is my proposal motivated by quite the same concerns as those of Althusser and Korsch, both of whom suggested that the neophyte or working class reader skip these chapters, at least in part because both these thinkers were for different reasons adamantly opposed to the dialectic as such.

My reasons are somewhat different, though I would agree to this extent, namely that readers can become so mesmerized by the commodity form, fetishism and the like that they cease to explore Marxism any further. I remind you that Part One is what the *Grundrisse*'s editors call "The Chapter on Money": it is not yet about capital, money has here not yet undergone its crucial metamorphosis into capital, and to that degree Part One stages something like capitalism's pre-history (as does, in a very different way, Part Eight, on primitive accumulation), so that strictly speaking Marx's description of capitalism as such can be limited to Parts Two through Seven. Certainly, in a society dominated by commodification, the analyses of Part One are politically more relevant today, just as the dimension of culture more generally is in our third stage of capitalism. Nonetheless in formal terms, I propose that Part One be considered a kind of complete work in its own right, a kind of overture to the main work, or better still a *Vorspiel* on the order of *Das Rheingold*, whose fundamental action will then come with the official *Ring* trilogy.

One of the reasons for doing so is that Part One has proven to be a *fausse piste* or as Heidegger calls it a *Holzweg*, a path leading nowhere. Part One is essentially an attack on the very notion of exchange, on the equation which suggests that there can be such a thing as an exchange of equals, or that the equation can be reversible. This means that there can be no such thing as a just price, and with this the whole project of social democracy or of the equitable reform of capitalism falls to the ground. But this result — politically productive — leaves us back at our starting point, with only one acquisition, namely a methodological one, which will now guide my reading of the rest of Volume I and which I will now briefly outline.

I want to understand plot in *Capital* as the solving of specific problems, the resolution of specific dilemmas. But as capitalism involves many problems and

paradoxes, these resolutions will involve a variety of tentative explorations, and they will take the form of overlapping waves. A problem — paradox, aporia, contradiction — will declare itself; then, gradually, its solution will become apparent, but not without raising another problem in its wake. So by the time one wave has subsided, by the time one momentum has run its course, a new wave is beginning, and a new momentum established: a new problem has raised its head, demanding a fresh set of inquiries and chapters and a whole new movement forward. So this reading of *Capital* will seek to identify the point at which a new conundrum arises and to indicate how it is resolved and at the same time gives way to a new one. There are five or six waves which basically structure *Capital* Volume I, or in other words, organize that suspense — now how is this question to be answered? — which constitutes the plot of the work. (I hope it will not complicate this view of the text to add that from a dialectical point of view many of these problems turn out to be the same problem, and to involve the same answer — but in a different register, in different terms, from a different perspective.)

Meanwhile I want to underscore a somewhat different aspect of the reading, according to which the structure I have just described is also punctuated by certain climactic moments or revelations. The latter are not necessarily the same as the solutions to the specific problems already mentioned: they can be, as it were, truths revealed in the course of those examinations but not necessarily identical with their resolutions. I also mean to mark a duality in Marx's investigations, which means that such climactic moments or revelations can sometimes come in two forms — positive and negative, say. In fact *Capital* Volume I has in this spirit two separate climactic endings, which I will characterize as heroic and comic respectively. Finally, on a surface level (rather than these deeper structural ones), I want to point out that there are several reading speeds that vary and succeed each other throughout the text, and which include three enormous chapters between the other, shorter ones and which also demand something of a shifting of gears and a modification of reading methods. Obviously it will be too long and complicated to do full justice to all these matters here, so I just resume the order of topics as simply and succinctly as I can.

The first problem begins with money, which was supposed to have solved the equation problem of Part One (on commodities): it is of course a false solution since money is not a solution but a mediation: it is a duality, a thing called upon to express a relationship but which in reality conceals relationship. This mysterious nature of money explains why so many Utopias, including More's first one, have been organized around the principle that getting rid of money will get rid of the problem altogether. Because if money is a genuine solution, then something like a "just price" for commodities and labor is possible, and therefore social democracy itself is possible: it is possible to tinker with capitalism in such a way as to transform it into a just society. On the other hand Proudhon's great slogan — "la propriété, c'est le vol" — is unsatisfactory as well, since it assumes that getting rid of money altogether

in an anarchist spirit will do away with the deeper problem of which money is only a symptom. Money, property, capitalism itself, rest on a deep structural contradiction or at least a structural paradox (whose answer we know, for it is given to us in the labor theory of value), which cannot be solved by fiat or by tinkering either.

So at the beginning of what I am calling the main body of *Capital* (Parts Two through Seven), we must go back to the beginning and repose the question anew. Money is not the solution since it raises the new and more fundamental question, How does money beget money? And the answer is not, of course, Proudhon's — namely, by cheating and by theft — nor does the answer reduce itself to the question of how we make a profit. Rather, the answer is more fundamental: money can only beget more money by being transformed into something very different, namely capital. This is then the reason for beginning with Part Two of *Capital*, because capital itself does not appear until Part Two.

We can rephrase all this methodologically: Marx is showing us that profit and new value cannot be derived from the process of circulation. So in order to solve the question, we are necessarily moved forward into the process of production — and this is alone where capital, and new capital at that, can be produced. So we have consumption on page one of the entire book: it is that quality which is quickly bracketed in favor of quantity, use value bracketed in favor of exchange value. We have circulation, whose dilemmas are rehearsed in Part One and end with the non-solution of money. And now finally we have production itself, which will quickly lead to the secret and the solution of the labor theory of value (something which also explains distribution as such). Now presumably our problems are solved: why does Marx not conclude his book here?

The problem is that suddenly time has been introduced, yet still in a merely quantitative and static, non-dialectical way. The labor theory of value leads to all kinds of calculations about rates of profit, on the number of hours of labor, on all those interesting combinations of variables which fed Marx's own hobby, his secondary interest in mathematics and in the calculus. But suddenly these explorations come up against a brick wall: the limits of the working day, the legal limits of the working day, factory legislation requiring such limits and thereby suddenly blocking capital in its necessary expansion.

We thereby come up against the first of the three enormous interpolated chapters I mentioned, the most famous, namely that on "The Working Day." It is a chapter which poses any number of problems, some of them ideological — how is it that government inspectors, bourgeois officials, have been able to force such legislation, and what is the effect now and in the future of working class organization? — and others practical, namely how the capitalists can get around these legislative limits. For they always do, or else social democracy would be possible.

So now the argument must enter a new register, a new level of intensity both in problem and in solution: and the answer (always provisional as we have seen)

now takes the form of two great revelations. The first of these two climaxes is the celebration of collectivity, or cooperation as the period language has it. “A free gift to capital,” Marx exults: cooperative labor at once dialectically multiplies value and production.¹ It was of course Adam Smith’s discovery, which here becomes, if I may put it that way, a Marxian metaphysic. Marxism is not a valorization of production, it is a valorization of collective production: and the chapter on cooperation is the beating heart of *Capital* Volume I itself.

But this jubilation is short-lived. The dialectic, as we know, is the union of opposites: and what is thus positive can at once also be revealed to be negative. The principle of cooperation thus celebrated for human beings becomes a veritable Frankenstein’s monster when translated into machinery. I omit these famous passages, but the new phenomenon fundamentally transforms the problem. It leads to a new and far more complex theory of temporality and of capitalism’s “extinction” of the past; but also to a whole new solution to the problem of the blockage or paralysis of absolute surplus value by the new legislation — a theory of increased productivity, of intensive rather than extensive production of value, which will be termed “relative surplus value.”

Dialectically, however, this solution — machinery, industrial technology — which might also have allowed Marx to conclude his book, makes for a whole new conceptual dilemma, which takes two forms: the first is this, how is it that a labor-saving device suddenly makes for a shocking increase in the number of hours worked by labor (a fact dramatized by child labor)?

Hence ... the economic paradox that the most powerful instrument for reducing labour-time suffers a dialectical inversion and becomes the most unfailing means for turning the whole lifetime of the worker and his family into labour-time at capital’s disposal for its own valorization.²

Labor-saving machinery ought to reduce the number of laborers: well, of course it does that too in the form of unemployment. But then in that case our dilemma takes a different form: why is it, if value comes from labor, that you (capitalists) strive so diligently to reduce the number of your laborers, when the more laborers you have the more value will presumably be produced? Quesnay put it this way (yet a third form of the dilemma): “why does the capitalist, whose sole concern is to produce exchange-value, continually strive to bring down the exchange-value of commodities?”³

As for the theory of temporality, it will have one astonishing and quite unexpected result, namely that here (at the opening of Part Seven), Marx suddenly pauses and gives us a whole new program for a three-volume plan of *Capital*, separating his presentation now into three different temporalities of production. But then at this point also the truth of the whole process becomes clear and Marx will definitively enunciate what he calls “The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation,” the “absolute” law as he calls it in the same context: “the greater the social wealth, the functioning

capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and therefore also the greater the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productivity of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army.”⁴ When we remember that this official-sounding term, “industrial reserve army,” simply means the unemployed, we have the dialectical paradox in a more dramatic and accessible form. It simply means that the absolute law of capitalism is the simultaneous increase in wealth and productivity on one hand and unemployment on the other.

Now we can step back and assess the meaning and import of *Capital* as a whole. This is a book about unemployment: its conceptual climax is reached with this proposition that industrial capitalism generates an overwhelming mass of potentially uninvestible capital on one hand, and an ever-increasing mass of unemployed people on the other: a situation we see fully corroborated today in the current crisis of third-stage or finance capital.

There follow some corollaries, which the orthodox are bound to find scandalous. For I would add that *Capital* is not about labor: it is about overwork, as exemplified by inhumanly long hours and, when those have been limited, by child labor. And it is about this famous “reserve army of labor,” that is to say, the unemployed. There is nothing here about labor proper, of the order of Harry Braverman’s classic book on Taylorization, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Yet it would be wrong to think that historical development has rendered this nineteenth-century representation of the capitalist totality obsolete or outmoded: on the contrary, what distinguishes our moment of capital from Marx’s is carefully sketched in for future development — and those spaces are credit and finance capital on one hand, and imperialism on the other (Marx’s own descriptions of imperialism touching essentially on settler colonies like Australia, as we shall see, although you can extrapolate the coda on primitive accumulation to what we call imperialism today).

I must conclude therefore that *Capital* is not a political book: its account of capital has no political consequences, except for a recommendation that workers organize. It has no descriptions of socialism, save for the hypothetical example of a society of associated workers in Part One. But let me explain myself more fully here: Marx was a truly political animal, no one has ever been more profoundly political in his instincts and thinking except for Lenin himself. He was extraordinarily opportunist, in the good Machiavellian sense of the word, and open to any and every possible path towards the transformation and abolition of capitalism: by unionization, by violence, by parliamentary victory, by a return to the peasant commune, or even by the self-destruction of capital in its own crisis, and so on and so forth. Every variety of political Marxist movement today, from social democracy to Leninism, Maoism, and even anarchism, is a viable candidate for Marx’s agenda, which changed as the historical situation and the development of capitalism itself changed and evolved. But there are no political programs or strategies advocated in *Capital* itself, which remains, in the Althusserian sense, scientific rather than ideological.

I have spoken of the twin textual climaxes of these texts, and this is the moment to bring them on as evidence for my claim: the first, the heroic one, comes in the historical coda to what I have called the main body of the text, and it summed up in the famous lines, like a hammerblow from Beethoven: “The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.”⁵ Nothing is said here about the way in which socialism replaces capitalism, all kinds of revolutionary possibilities remain conceivable at this stage. One would only wish to point out that at this point, in 1867, Marx foresees a far more immediate timetable than in the *Grundrisse* ten years earlier, where he asserts that socialist revolution cannot happen until the commodification of labor is universal, that is, until the world market reaches completion. But in Marx’s defense one would want to remind oneself that in 1867 we are on the eve of a virtual world war, the clash of the great national capitalisms in the Franco-Prussian war, and also on the eve of the Paris Commune: so Marx’s antennae were not altogether tone-deaf.

But now I need to add in the other alternative, the other textual climax, the comic one. In this second version of an outcome of *Capital* (like a book or film which posits two possible endings), capitalism simply dissolves. I give you this second, delicious climax in full:

A Mr Peel ... took with him from England to the Swan River district of Western Australia means of subsistence and of production to the amount of £50,000. This Mr Peel even had the foresight to bring, besides, 3,000 persons of the working class, men, women and children. Once he arrived at his destination, ‘Mr Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river.’ Unhappy Mr Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to the Swan River!⁶

This hilarious spectacle of the three thousand future laborers disappearing into the bush is the other possibility of the dissolution of the system, society’s agreement, as Kant puts it, to dissolve the social contract and disband. It is, no doubt, the anarchist solution. But I remind you that both possibilities — the triumph of socialism and the dissolution of society — were foretold already in the *Manifesto*: namely, that such momentous transitional moments consist in a class struggle that “each time end[s], either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”⁷

It has often been lamented that Marxism seems to be a purely economic theory, which makes little place for a properly Marxian political theory. I believe that this is the strength of Marxism, and that political theory and political philosophy are always epiphenomenal. Politics should be the affair of an ever-vigilant opportunism, but not of any theory or philosophy; and even the current efforts to redefine mass democracy

in this way or that are, to my mind, distractions from the central issue which is the nature and structure of capitalism itself. There can never be satisfactory political solutions or systems: but there can be better economic ones, and Marxists and leftists need to concentrate on those.

I conclude with a few words on the current intellectual and political situation, and what postmodernity and globalization both imply about it. Both globalization and postmodernity are the result, I believe, of universal decolonization, of an immense transformation of the world into a multitude of subjects equal at least in their capacity to speak if not to resist oppression and domination of new post-colonial types. This is a transformation of the Other and of otherness, in which paradoxically the recognition of the Other entails the waning or disappearance of otherness, and in which a politics of difference becomes a politics of identity. If the experience of the Other is a wound to the existence of the ego, then this universal multiplicity of others marks its utter transformation. I have elsewhere interpreted Kojève's (and Hegel's) vision of the end of history as a kind of universal plebeianization on the social and political level; and this word is meant in some strong and positive Brechtian sense as an abandonment of privilege and a new and universal equality.

This equality seems to me to spell the end of the liberal notion of parliamentary or representative democracy, of that social democratic ideal which the Left has always criticized and condemned. But I want to caution that the newer Left ideals and programs of a direct or a radical democracy are no less vulnerable. Those concepts are not the solution to the new world of multiplicity, they are rather its symptom: they express the emergence of this multiplicity, they are not useful or practical political solutions or strategies. As this apparent attack on democracy may seem scandalous or even reactionary, I feel I must go all the way with my thinking in this area.

It begins with the dawning conviction that Marxism is not a political philosophy but rather an economic one. It is not a political radicalism but an economic radicalism. It incites us, not to contest or transform political power, but rather to change and transform capitalism as such, to change our whole economic system — a more radical ambition, which obviously entails political tactics which can however take various different forms, depending on the historical moment.

Perhaps I can make all this clearer by returning to my own work on Utopias and adding a new set of conclusions to it. I there posited two kinds of oppositions: the first one was the opposition between Utopian models or projects and the Utopian impulse. The former included the various proposals of the classic Utopian texts as well as the various historical attempts to realize Utopia in revolutionary practice. The latter, the Utopian impulse, designated the ever-present often unconscious longing for radical change and transformation which is symbolically inscribed in everything from culture and daily life to the official activities of politics and goal-oriented action. I now want to reidentify these two rather different manifestations of Utopia in a new and clearer way: for I have come to realize that the Utopian texts (and also the revolutions) are

all essentially political in nature. They all embody so many tinkering with possible political schemes in the future, new conceptions of governance, new rules and laws (or their absence), in short an endless stream of inventions, sophisticated and naïve alike, calculated to solve problems that exist on the political level. Thus, to give but one example, I will now claim that Thomas More's inaugural Utopian gesture of the abolition of money (by no means original with him) was not an economic gesture but a political one, and expressly articulated as a means of solving any number of acute social problems.

In that case, I am led to affirm that the Utopian impulse, on the other hand, is profoundly economic, and that everything in it, from the transformation of personal relations to that of production, of possession, of life itself, constitutes the attempt to imagine the life of a different mode of production, that is to say, of a different economic system.

Now I turn to my other opposition which has to do with what can be imagined and what cannot, with the apparently outrageous proposition that Utopias do not embody the future but rather help us to grasp the limits of our images of the future, and indeed our impossibility of imagining a radically different future. Utopia, I claimed, is the radical disturbance of our sense of history and the disruption whereby we approach a thought of the radical or absolute break with our own present and our own system. But insofar as the Utopian project comes to seem more realizable and more practical, it turns into a practical political program in our world, in the here-and-now, and ceases to be Utopian in any meaningful sense.

I will now reidentify this thought with one of the premises of the Marxist tradition, namely the distinction between the two stages of social revolution or, if you prefer, the difference between the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat (which I will interpret as social democracy) and communism itself as such. You will now have understood that this distinction between politics and economics, between the achievable Utopia of the Utopian planners and the deep unconscious absolute Utopian impulse, is one between the social-democratic moment and the moment of communism. Communism can only be posited as a radical, even unimaginable break; socialism is an essentially political process within our present, within our system, which is to say within capitalism itself. Socialism is capitalism's dream of a perfected system. Communism is that unimaginable fulfillment of a radical alternative that cannot even be dreamt.

If then Utopia is what allows us to become aware of the absolute limits of our current thinking, then such are the limits and such is the contradiction we have become able to confront. I have elsewhere described it as a contradiction between Utopia and Cynical Reason. If so, then it virtually produces its own slogan: Cynicism of the Intellect, Utopianism of the Will!

Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976) 451.
2. *Capital* 532.
3. Marx's paraphrase. *Capital* 437.
4. *Capital* 798.
5. *Capital* 929.
6. *Capital* 932-33.
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm (London: Verso, 1998) 35.

On Marx's Victorian Novel

Anna Kornbluh

Of course we have all read, and all do read, *Capital*...But some day it is essential to read *Capital* to the letter, to read the text itself.¹

In case the twentieth century had not coughed up calumny enough for Karl Marx, the twenty-first opened with new invective: his first post-Soviet biography, written by the acclaimed British intellectual Francis Wheen, triumphantly dismissed *Capital*, Marx's insuperable work of critical political economy, as "a Victorian melodrama or a gothic novel...a picaresque odyssey through the realms of higher nonsense...a shaggy-dog story."² As an attack on the truth-status of *Capital* — it is fiction and therefore false — Wheen's contempt for Marx and for Victorian novelists alike unwittingly opens the question of *Capital*'s truth-procedure. If *Capital* is "best understood" as a Victorian novel, then a different register of its meaning-making must emerge from reading it that way.

To be sure, our distance from Wheen already indicates that there are multiple ways of motivating such a reading, and indeed, multiple methods of "reading." For a too-quick schema: I will address two strategies, the "contextual" and the "paratextual," before generally utilizing a third, the "textual." While a contextual strategy links the Marx of *Capital* to his discursive context in Victorian London, a paratextual strategy takes stock of those literary excesses that complicate reading *Capital*. The former tells us much about Marx the author; the latter has told us some about the heterogeneity and opacity of *Capital*; the third method I hope tells us more about how *Capital* thinks, how as a textual whole it engages its object. Reading *Capital* as a Victorian novel, I will suggest, should foremost mean reading for the ways that its insights materialize narratively, figuratively, and aesthetically, in addition to referentially or instantiatively.³ It should mean posing that Dickensian question, "What connexion can there be?" between the multiple plots, multi-linked chains of

images, and multiplications of perspective that all, by virtue of their boundedness within one textual whole, engage the same underlying object.⁴ Such a reading is therefore repelled by contemptuous analogies between *Capital* and Victorian novels, compelled by the Victorian novel's exemplary aesthetic thinking, and impelled by the essential imperative to read again what has already been read, to defamiliarize the Marxian oeuvre.

To welcome Marx the Minor Victorian, to read him among his novelist neighbors, casts new light on his unassimilable life, and may therefore honor the unassimilable in his thought. Jew among Catholics, German in exile, invalid in Algeria, philosopher in poverty, renter in arrears, the perennially dislocated Marx was unhomey at home in London for thirty-four years. Denied British naturalization late in life, he nonetheless rests for eternity in Highgate Cemetery. To throw his lot in with the Victorian novelists is to limn this unnatural fate, to highlight what must be recast in order to be reread. Reading *Capital* as a Victorian novel pursues those insights which were themselves (and perhaps remain) unassimilable within the discourse of critical political economy: insights that precisely pertain to that which remains unassimilable in capitalism, what remains resistant to accounting. Neither flippant eulogy nor idealist elegy, such a reading might rather index Marx's command of manifold strategies for thinking — historically *and* transcendently, scientifically *and* aesthetically, politically *and* poetically.

At home nowhere, at home everywhere, Marx took refuge in London in 1849. The first order of business was attaining a Reader's Ticket to the British Library Reading Room. On a daily basis thereafter, he joined Thomas Carlyle, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin, furiously at work reading, reading, reading, and writing. Having devoted his first three months to osmoting all extant back issues of *The Economist* (which began printing in 1843), he quickly absorbed the local literary talent, voraciously consuming volumes of Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe, and Dickens.⁵ Like Dickens and Ruskin, he was also up to his elbows in Blue Books, drawing information, references, stories, and ideas from these governmental reports on everything from sanitation to factory conditions to prostitution.⁶

As their rapture with the bluebooks suggests, for Marx as for his companion intellectuals, the context of London constituted the core of his work. Just as there could be no Dickens without London, there could be no Marx without the advanced bustling commerce of The City. As he put it in *Capital*:

No period of modern society is so favourable for the study of capitalist accumulation as the period of the last 20 years. It is as if Fortunatus's purse had been discovered. But of all countries England again provides the classical examples, because it holds the foremost place in the world market, because capitalist production is fully developed only in England.⁷

Appraising their development, inhabiting their milieu, drawing upon their sources, partaking of their canon, Marx also explicitly aligned himself with Victorian novelists by identifying his work as fundamentally aesthetic, and, at that, whole: "whatever shortcomings they may have, the advantage of my writings is that they are an artistic whole, and this can only be achieved through my practice of never having things printed until I have them in front of me *in their entirety*" (emphasis original).⁸ Along with the carbuncles and pressing debtors, these convictions about creative integrity help explain his infinite difficulty in finalizing *Capital* for publication. In point of fact, just before finally surrendering the manuscript in February 1867, Marx gave Engels a copy of Honoré de Balzac's story "The Unknown Masterpiece."⁹ In the story, a painter obsessively and painstakingly reworks a single canvas for over a decade, daubing and shading and blending in pursuit of "such depth" that it fathoms reality, an "atmosphere so true that you can not distinguish it from the air that surrounds us." In the tragic denouement, the artist proclaims his stylistic triumph: "Where is Art? Art has vanished, it is invisible!" But an outside perspective reveals the state of the canvas: "I see nothing...I can see nothing there but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines that make a dead wall of paint."¹⁰ The burning ambition for vanishing mediation, for Art so real it is invisible, melts its medium, pooling in an inscrutable, proto-Impressionistic muddle. As a preface to the "artistic whole" of *Capital*, "The Unknown Masterpiece" bespeaks Marx's methodological predicament. While constructing a whole was imperative, cultivating an adequate aesthetic felt nigh impossible. Indeed, it was to this predicament, and remarkably *not* to ideological antagonism, that Marx appealed in explaining the negative reviews of *Capital*. "The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economics grumbled about the style of my book," he wrote, proceeding to note that the grumbles were incomplete: "No one can feel the literary shortcomings of *Capital* more strongly than I myself."¹¹ Conversely, Marx took great pride in the aesthetic appreciation from the London press, which celebrated his "unusual liveliness," and found that "the presentation of the subject invests the driest economic questions with a certain peculiar charm."

"Peculiar charm" and "unusual liveliness" perfectly capture the product of Marx's early career. Long before he aspired to the critique of political economy, the young Marx fluently pursued charming stylizations, conducting numerous "Early Literary Experiments," including love poems, "Wild Songs," and a "Book of Verse." And indeed, rather like enacting a kind of phylogeny of that ontogenetic generic experimentation which culminates in the novel as such, his experiments ultimately amounted to *Scorpion and Felix, A Humorous Novel* (1837). Marx's novel is a *Tristram Shandy*-ish pursuit of deferred origins, told self-reflexively in the present tense by a first-person narrator. There are three principal characters, Felix, Scorpion, and Merten, and the plot encompasses their attempts to trace their own genealogical, philological, biological, and literary origins. The novel's bellowed fireside chat clearly ironizes the hot air of philosophy, and it seems at times to juxtapose ideas purely for the ring

of cacophonous non-sense. Yet its strategy of provocative contrast and inversion enables rather than defuses its critical philosophical themes. Here, for instance, is the reported remonstrance of the character Merten, that he, and not Scorpion, is indeed the hero of the story: “He had a sh-sh-shadow as good as anybody else’s and even better...and besides he loved the right of primogeniture and possessed a wash closet.”¹² What do shadows, primogeniture, and indoor plumbing have in common, and how do they amount to a hero’s qualifications? In the next chapter, the first-person narrator devotes himself to this conundrum of associations:

I sat deep in thought, laid aside Locke, Fichte, and Kant, and gave myself up to profound reflection to discover what a wash closet would have to do with the right of primogeniture, and suddenly it came to me like a flash [*Blitz*], and in a melodious succession of thought upon thought my vision [*Blick*] was illuminated [*verklärt*] and a radiant form [*Lichtsgestaltung*] appeared before my eyes. The right of primogeniture is the wash-closet of the aristocracy, for a wash-closet only exists for the purpose of washing. But washing bleaches, and thus lends [*leiht*] a pale sheen to that which is washed. So also does the right of primogeniture silver [*versilbert*] the eldest son of the house, it thus lends him a pale silvery sheen, while on the other members it stamps the pale romantic sheen of penury.¹³

Laying “aside Locke, Fichte, and Kant” (though not, it seems worth noting, Hegel), this text that insists on its status as something other than philosophy arrives at a historical-materialist insight into the connection between inheritance rights and indoor plumbing. The wash closet is a spring of polishing ablution; primogeniture polishes the first-born with silver, stamps the other brothers with poverty, launders the money of the aristocracy. They shadow one another; the site of sanitation provides a concrete material instance of the opaque and diffuse process of arbitrary resource distribution. Primogeniture and the wash closet are two different forms of appearance of the socio-material matrix in the shadows. As an ur-text in his oeuvre, then, *Scorpion and Felix: A Humoristic Novel* reveals not how far Marx eventually came, but how consistently he pursued logico-formal connections behind the veil of the visible, how thoroughly he tracked different forms of appearance of the real within ontologically positive reality.

After finishing *Scorpion and Felix*, Marx sustained a traumatic realization that it failed the bar of his aesthetic ideals. In a letter to his father, he confided: “Suddenly, as if by a magic touch — oh, the touch was at first a shattering blow — I caught sight of the distant realm of true poetry like a distant fairy palace, and all my creations crumbled into nothing.”¹⁴ Palpable here in the melodramatic excesses of the letter that preserve the creations the letter ostensibly negates, the distant realm of true poetry persists as an alluring destination.

■

One way to map the circuitous journey onward toward that distant realm, to excavate Marx's ruined literary ambitions, would be to enumerate those features of the late work *Capital* which demand literary reading. This is the path most taken, the way trod alike by artists (the communist lithographer Hugo Gellert produced a book-length illustration of *Capital*; the director Sergei Eisenstein planned a film version) and by critics tackling the oddity of talking commodities, the sensationalism of dripping vampires, or the density of literary allusions.¹⁵ To this extant catalogue of features we might add several more. The author of *Capital* continuously crafts that surplus of detail which Roland Barthes deemed "the reality effect," for instance:

Bread adulterated with alum, soap, pearl-ash, chalk, Derbyshire stone-dust, and other similar agreeable, nourishing, and wholesome ingredients...man, unless by elective grace a capitalist, or a landlord, or the holder of a sinecure, is destined...to eat daily in his bread a certain quantity of human perspiration mixed with the discharge of abscesses, cobwebs, dead black-beetles, and putrid German yeast, without counting alum, sand, and other agreeable mineral ingredients.¹⁶

We could additionally remark a comparable ambition between the realist novel's social inclusiveness and *Capital*'s organizing principle of social difference as the *sine qua non* for exchange:

The exchange of products springs up at the points where different families, tribes, or communities come into contact; for at the dawn of civilization it is not private individuals but families, tribes, etc. that meet on an independent footing. Different communities find different means of production and different means of subsistence in their natural environment. Hence their modes of production and living, as well as their products, are different. It is this spontaneously developed difference which, when different communities come into contact, calls forth the mutual exchange of products and the consequent gradual conversion of those products into commodities. Exchange does not create the differences between spheres of production but it does bring the different spheres into a relation, thus converting them into more or less interdependent branches of the collective production of a whole society.¹⁷

Like the Victorian realist novel, *Capital* balances this social expansiveness with psychological interiority. This is a discourse of *both* history and individuality, *both* materiality and consciousness, seeking "the fundamental cause of the misery of the

people in modern times.”¹⁸ For instance:

In proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker... must grow worse...the law...makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole.¹⁹

Similarly, we could continue to extend this list of similarities: like *Middlemarch* or *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, *Capital* subtly weaves its themes, deftly integrates its multiple plots, tightly regulates its symbols, masterfully conducts its voices, and continuously calls attention to the shifts in perspective that structure its narration. Like the Victorian melodramas with which it is derisively classed, *Capital* is animated by abyssal questions of origin. Like the triple-deckers of English realism, it endeavors to describe the world in order to change it.²⁰ For *Capital* as for the novel genre, disjunctures in perspective and a plurality of voices are constitutive. Characters are spoken of, but also speak for themselves, with clunky self-consciousness attending these shifts in speaking:

The capitalist therefore takes his stand....Suddenly, however, there arises the voice of the worker, which had previously been stifled in the sound and fury of the production process: “The commodity I have sold you differs from the ordinary crowd of commodities in that its use creates value, a greater value than it costs. That is why you bought it...you and I know on the market only one law.”²¹

Still yet, we could observe that the tension between particular commodity and universal equivalent that spurs capitalism is formalized in the tension between particular character and universal type that rouses realism.²² All these features could be more comprehensively audited, confirming and advertising the book’s “unusual liveliness.” Yet such a catalogue remains within the argumentative horizon defined by those early reviews, at one pole, and Wheen, at the other: an anatomical survey of Marx’s strange corpus, of equal use to admirers and detractors.

Archiving authorial intent, auditing literary elements — such would be the contextual and paratextual collages of evidence for reading *Capital* novelistically. But just as strong literary criticism confronts texts in excess of their authors, it also eschews the presumed opposition between literature and critique, between fiction and truth. It ought, in other words, be possible to begin our reading elsewhere — to begin from the literary critical premise that there is such a thing as aesthetic thinking, a conceptual agency of literary form — and to attend in turn to the truth-procedure,

rather than truth-status, of a given text.²³ For this reading, then, an alternate analytic method is of paramount importance — a method which commences from the premise that *Capital* thinks aesthetically. *Capital* constellates its ideas rhythmically, in the tempo of the narrative, and poetically, in the circulation of tropes. The ultimate argument for reading *Capital* as a novel is neither contextual (Marx the Londoner, Marx the erstwhile novelist) nor paratextual (some taxonomy of anomaly in Marx's language and/or of political economic iteration in Victorian novels). It is textual: as a whole, some of the text's most pressing insights find their most intense formulation performatively. *Capital* means what it means not simply through denotative reference, but through the connotative, associative, artful ways the language works.

■

To begin, again. Let us zero in on the striking prevalence of two tropes in *Capital*: personification, the representation of an abstraction as a person; and metalepsis, the substitution of one figure for another with which it is closely related, such as effect for cause. As we shall see, these tropes and the concert between them intone the concept of drive, a cornerstone whose singular importance to the Marxian edifice has lately been registered by Kojin Karatani and Slavoj Žižek.²⁴ Reading *Capital* novelistically — figuratively — allows us to encounter “drive” on its own circuitous and elusive terms.

In the Preface to the First Edition, Marx fastidiously calls attention to his trope of personification, instructing that awareness of this trope should govern reading of the text:

To prevent possible misunderstandings, let me say this. I do not by any means depict the capitalist and the landowner in rosy colors. But individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class relations and interests. My standpoint, from which the development of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he remains, socially speaking, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.²⁵

To prevent possible misunderstandings, it must be understood that personification operates in a textual register because it operates in a social one: within the text of *Capital* individuals are dealt with as personifications because within the historical reality of capital individuals are personifications of social relations, even though they mistake personhood as their exemption from social determination. It is easy to see that misunderstandings might be quick to arise from these multifaceted personifications textual, social, and ideological. Marx's prefatory self-consciousness about these facets sounds a warning that the use of personification within the text must be carefully

scrutinized. A trope, a way of dealing with individuals, personification figuratively highlights the deals of the social world. Personification is one of the objects of analysis, but it is simultaneously a tool of analysis.

The tool is employed from the middle of the first chapter of *Capital*. Having declared from the outset the necessity to commence with the commodity form, the narrative has inductively traced the form from its “simple, isolated” status to its complex and relational status, the “relative form of value.” To illuminate the relationship at the core of the relative form, the simple isolated commodity becomes personified, summoned through a speech act (“let us take Coat and Linen.”)²⁶ Coat and Linen, brought into relation with one another, are brought into personification by the text. Commodity exchange presumes that both commodities are expressions of value, but the text takes pains to mark that these expressions are heterogeneous to each other, that “these qualitatively equated commodities do not play the same part [*spielen nicht dieselbe Rolle*].”²⁷ Playing these differing roles, the commodities begin to stand as the agents of active verbs and become self-conscious:

In the production of the coat, human labour-power, in the shape of tailoring, has in actual fact been expended. Human labour has therefore been accumulated in the coat. From this point of view the coat is a ‘bearer of value’, although this property never shows through, even when the coat is at its most threadbare. In its value-relation with the linen, the coat counts only under this aspect, counts therefore as embodied value [*verkörperter Wert*], as the body of value [*Wertkörper*]. Despite its buttoned-up [*zugeknöpften*] appearance, the linen recognizes [*erkennt*] in it a splendid kindred soul, the soul of value [*die stammverwandte schöne Wertseele*].²⁸

In one stroke, as the result of the relation of commodities and as the result of relaying the relation of commodities, Coat and Linen have attained souls to go with their bodies. Even more striking, within that stroke, sexual innuendo animates the body and the soul. The linen [*die Leinwand*], a feminine subject in German, comports herself coquettishly, both “buttoned up” and “reserved” (literal denotation and figurative connotation of *zugeknöpften*), even as she is also buttoned into, incorporating the body of, the coat [*der Rock*], masculine subject in German. Her cognitive agency of “recognition” is carnal knowledge; and in general lustiness and promiscuity define the commodity: “a born leveler and cynic, it is always ready to exchange not only soul, but body, with each and every other commodity, be it more repulsive than Maritornes herself.”²⁹ Here, personification endows the mysterious relationship between commodities with intellectual, physical, and sexual complexity, alluding to the transformative power of valorization: when valorization is the goal of relation, transformations of body and soul, mind and matter ensue. Furthering the innuendo,

Marx names this transformation “go(ing) the way of all flesh,” a “metamorphosis” of engaging with other bodies in bodily transformation, corporeal intercourse, value incorporation.³⁰ Personification as a conspicuously brandished endowment of the commodity body with a soul here figuratively records and performs the phenomenological and corporeal transformations precipitated by exchange. When value is conjured as spiritual abstraction that authorizes exchange, the spirit transforms material bodies; personification discloses this spiritualization of the commodity body.

It is this oddity of transformation, this mystery of metamorphosis, that constitutes these persons with bodies and souls as “very strange thing(s), abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”³¹ Indeed, already before the chapter on fetishism, in which commodities notoriously think for themselves (the table “evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will”),³² the figure of personification has entailed that commodities speak for themselves:

We see then, that everything our analysis of the value of commodities previously told us is repeated by the linen itself, as soon as it enters into association with another commodity, the coat. Only it reveals its thoughts in a language with which it alone is familiar, the language of commodities [*in der ihr allein geläufigen Sprache, der Warensprache*].³³

Wonderful to say, commodities speak their own language. And indeed, many of the most careful readers of *Capital* wonder at this oddity.³⁴ For our purposes let us simply remark that the strangeness is less *that* the commodities speak (after all, we have been prepared by the trope of personification to expect nothing less) than *what* they speak: a language with which they are alone are familiar, a language to all others unfamiliar. The strangeness of commodity language thwarts any easy mapping of the language of commodities onto language in general, just as elsewhere Marx has indicated that money must not be analogized to language in general, but to unfamiliar language, strange language:

To compare money with language is not less erroneous. Language does not transform ideas, so that the peculiarity of ideas is dissolved and their social character runs alongside them as separate entity, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign tongue in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; the analogy is then not with language, but with its foreignness [*fremdheit*].³⁵

With his emphasis on estrangement, Marx demonstrates that the introduction of

a monetary economy does more than enhance or facilitate human intercourse; it works to transubstantiate goods and defamiliarize the means of that intercourse, to precipitate its becoming-foreign. The language of commodities is the name of this strange language. Within *Capital*, the trope of personification puts strange language into the mouths of strange subjects, performing that very defamiliarization of who speaks, who counts as a who, and what is spoken which is primary in capitalism. The strangeness of personified objects recapitulates the strangeness that the regime of value wreaks upon the human world.

The text's strongest formulation of the radically defamiliarizing agency of capitalism is its proliferation of unfamiliar agents. Personification of things within the discourse of *Capital* presents the personification of things within capitalism, that is, the fetishism of commodities. But in addition to these two registers of personification, there remain another two, to which Marx's Preface calls attention: the personification of persons, both textually and systematically. Capital personifies persons, so *Capital* personifies persons; the individuals whom bourgeois economics would take as economic agents are treated in the text as personifications of the "social relations whose creature (they) remain." First and foremost of these categories is capital itself, and thus seldom is there a reference to "the capitalist" without the qualifying clause "i.e., capital personified."³⁶

When persons are personified, they are made in the image and likeness of the ur-person, Capital. Capital is the subject in this world; all other actors are figures, masks, faces, prosopopoeic personifications of the subject. This is the primacy of Capital already emblazoned in the title *Capital*, the place nineteenth-century novels most often reserve for the subject: Capital is the subject of *Capital*, as *David Copperfield* or *Jane Eyre* or *Daniel Deronda* are the subjects of *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Daniel Deronda*. The analytic importance of this subject position, an idea advanced by the trope of personification more than by exposition, is not only that Capital is the protagonist of modernity, but that the workings of capitalism are described by this subjectification and embodiment of an abstraction. *Capital* is the story of Capital's becoming-subject, of the relentless self-constitution, the "valorization of value" that propels this mode of production.³⁷ The artifice of the trope of personification calls attention to the artifice and instability of this subject, to the fissures and crises in its course of becoming, in its adventure of *Bildung*.

The strange animation, the endowment with soul, the making of a self effected by the trope of personification, all represent within the language of analysis the maneuvers of self-making which comprise the object of analysis. Those maneuvers are charged with uncanny frisson by the corollary images of Capital as a self-making monster, a fiendish autochthon. This cluster of figures includes of course the notorious vampire images, and the climactic conclusion on primitive accumulation and illicit origins: "capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt."³⁸ The apex of this imagery is the monster-qua-autochthon, the self-generating

value which can perform its own valorization process, an “animated monster which begins to work,” Marx quotes Goethe, ““as if its body were by love possessed.””³⁹ Though it is unclear what love’s got to do with it, Goethe’s poetry clarifies something else. “As if its body were by love possessed [*als hätt’ es Lieb’ im Leibe*]”: the interior transposition of vowels (*Liebe* into *Leibe*) and the double elision of vowels (“*hätte es* into *hätt’ es* and *Liebe im* into *Lieb’ im*) syllabically perform the autochthonous self-generation of monstrous subjectification.⁴⁰ Faustian allusions reverberate as the relentless process of becoming-subject begets self-scission, when persons beget persons bipolarly divided from themselves:

But original sin is at work everywhere. With the development of the capitalist mode of production, with the growth of accumulation and wealth, the capitalist ceases to be merely the incarnation of capital. He begins to feel a human warmth towards his own Adam, and his education gradually enables him to smile at his former enthusiasm for asceticism, as an old fashioned miser’s prejudice. While the capitalist of the classical type brands individual consumption as a sin against function, as abstinence from accumulating, the modernized capitalist is capable of viewing accumulation as ‘renunciation’ of pleasure. ‘Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast; The one is ever parting from the other’...There develops in the breast of the capitalist a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment.⁴¹

The person of Capital is here divided against himself in a devilish fashion, torn between competing imperatives of accumulation and enjoyment. Presenting these two souls in one breast uses the trope of personification to capture a dissociation that, precisely as a threat to discompose Capital, gives it its indispensable charisma. Capital’s subjectivity exceeds the subjectivity of the capitalists who personify it.

This excessive dimension of the subject of capital is called “drive,” a notion introduced as the culmination of personification: “As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself.”⁴² The innermost soul of Capital is drive, the force of self-infinetizing, subjectifying, repetitive motion. The imagery of personification is repeatedly conjoined to the image of drive, and through this imagery *Capital* represents the core of capital even as it does not present this core in linear analysis. This centrality is not instantiated by a referential presentation of its importance; it is rather performed by the imagistic and representational importance of personification.

Such is a fitting effect for the dynamic of drive: the text grazes it, glances it, grasps it in its very elusiveness. Drive’s eruptive recurrence enacts the propulsive structure it names. The “soul” of the person, the “animation” of Capital, the most elemental structure of the subject, drive figures the momentum of capital, its autotelic

“circulation [that] is an end in itself, for the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore limitless.”⁴³ Half a century later, Freud’s psychoanalysis would come to theorize drive as a universal circuitous motion ultimately external to the object-loss around which the particular subject circulates; here already, Marx’s image of drive points to the same topos, the objective “end in itself” that is “limitless” “constantly renewed movement.” “Drive” is woven into the text of *Capital*, threaded through important compound nouns like *Triebwerk* (engine) or *Betrieb* (operation). And when it appears as an uncompounded noun, when it stands simply as *Trieb*, it is always accompanied by distinctive attributes: it is absolute (*absolute*), blind (*blinden*), immanent (*immanente*), and measureless (*maßlos*). Again and again these adjectives recur, their very repetition underscoring the repetitive, immutable, immeasurable propulsion of Capital’s drive. Drive in its blindness, in its immanence, in its absoluteness, in its infinity, bespeaks a force terrifyingly indifferent to the subjects it animates.

Drive is the inner nature of those who are themselves personifications, the soulless soul of the automaton, the essential structure of the artificial person. Without grasping drive, the text has failed, for “a scientific analysis...is possible only if we can grasp the inner nature [*innere Natur*] of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are intelligible only to someone who is acquainted with their real motions, which are not perceptible to the senses [*wirkliche, aber sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbare Bewegung*].”⁴⁴ Through the trope of personification we grasp this “real motion” of “inner nature,” where a discourse without such tropes could only present “apparent motions.” Imperceptible to the naked eye, unrepresentable in instantiative language, the essential matter can be registered only figuratively.

The essential import of “drive” is indexed by the fact that it is precisely apropos “drive” that the vexed concept of “accumulation” first appears in the text. Accumulation, this entwining hints, is unthinkable without the paradoxes of drive. “Drive” names the eerie consanguinity between the advanced capitalist and his primitive antagonist, the miser. The sentence reads: “the hoarding drive is boundless in nature [*Der Trieb der Schatzbildung ist von Natur maßlos*],” and it comes in the first subsection of the chapter on money, itself entitled “Hoarding [*Schatzbildung*].”⁴⁵ Now, this is a strange word, not at all the most obvious signifier of “hoarding” (i.e. *horten*, *häufen*, or *anhäufen*). It does not appear in the Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Marx’s contemporary dictionary. As a compound noun, it evidently signifies “the development and creation of treasure,” but as an obscure compound it calls attention to the union of *Schatz* and *Bildung*, of treasure and growth, education, maturation — and further, to the substantification of *Bildung* from *Bild*, images, figures. We are dealing with here no unified process of accumulation, but a strangely changeable, affectively charged, loving of imaging — of treasuring development, creation, shaping, and, indeed, aestheticization. Engaging an obscure compound to figure the love of figuration, Marx doubly codes his concept of drive with aesthetic consequence. His image performatively condenses

measureless motion and the motion of measurelessness, motion without end and the movement of exceeding measure, of growing, becoming, taking on new forms. With this condensation, the measurelessness of drive is compounded by its proliferation of images. What attracts the image lover to money is money's aesthetic capacity, twice over: "that it is the universal representative [*allgemeiner Repräsentant*]" and that it is "made out of gold and silver [*von Gold und Silberwaren*]." ⁴⁶ Each of these two capacities ignites different dimensions of the love of imaging; the first case Marx calls "the unmediated form of treasure [*unmittelbaren Form des Schatzes*]" and the second case "the aesthetic form [*ästhetische Form*]." ⁴⁷ Here, between the general, unmediated, potential imaging and the aesthetic, mediated, actual imaging, we find again the "two souls in one breast," the tension that galvanizes Capital: "this contradiction between the quantitative limitation and the qualitative lack of limitation of money keeps driving (*triebt*) the hoarder back to his Sisyphean task: accumulation." ⁴⁸ Accumulation is the object of drive, which must be distinguished from its aim: the object around which drive circulates is distinct from the circulation itself that is drive's aim. ⁴⁹ Aim is irreducible to object; circulation is irreducible to accumulation, just as, in another register, capital is irreducible to capitalists. The drive of capital is the drive to accumulate, but as drive it is finally indifferent to accumulation. It is, rather, maximally affixed to circulation. Drive has no object, no telos; it has only its own momentum, blind, immanent, absolute, infinite.

■

Just as the notion of drive consummates the succession of images generated by personification, the dynamism of this imagery finds its narrative analogue in the rhythmic shifts of the narrative that perform metalepsis, the suspension of one figure by another, the succession of figurative substitutions. *Capital* effects this metaleptic rhythm in its narrative through its succession of paradoxes and what it calls "double results" and dual forms of appearance, and through its perpetual motion of lifting the veil, starting anew the analysis from a different point of view. ⁵⁰ It is, in other words, in the texture of the textual movement that we find a stunning engagement with the text's subject, a galvanized model of the metaleptic movement of capital itself.

In commencing his analysis with the commodity form, Marx takes as his point of departure the world of appearances, and approaches with a precisely levied gaze: his interest is in form, and in the elemental formal unit. Within the first two sentences, therefore, he has affected a movement from general to particular, from appearance to form of appearance. But his story does not proceed in a strictly particularizing, miniaturizing, or interiorizing way, and it is the pattern by which this motion is arrested to which we should attend. Rather than illuminating everything, the investigative perspective engenders new mysteries: at the end of section 1, the commodity is revealed to have a dual character as use-value and exchange value; at the end of section 2, labor is revealed to have a dual character, as concrete and abstract;

at the beginning of section 3, having identified these dualities, the perspective shifts back to the form of appearance, wherein the dualities “lay hidden.”⁵¹ Within this form lays hidden the vertigo of equivalence, the way in which the act of making an equivalence sublates opposites, at once uniting across difference and preserving their differences: “use value becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, value” and likewise “concrete human labor becomes the form of manifestation of its opposite, abstract human labor.”⁵² The narrative momentum of advances and retreats, assertions and digressions, itself performs this fishtailing reversibility of equivalence.

Thinking equivalence commands such a performance of oscillation because equivalence is logically non-grounded. Marx encounters this “real impossibility” of exchange by introducing another voice, that of Aristotle, the “first” analyst of the “value form.”⁵³ “There can be no exchange,” Marx quotes Book 1 of the *Ethics*, “without equality, and no equality without commensurability.” Commensurability “is, however, in reality, impossible” (Aristotle), “foreign to the true nature of things” (Marx), but this does not gainsay its becoming “a makeshift for practical purposes.” The “intercourse” that is the essence of human existence can performatively overcome the lack of rational ground for exchange, leaping into the realm of the practical by acting as if exchange were not ungrounded. Though Aristotle discovers real impossibility and therefore implicitly discovers the necessary disavowal of it, he falls short of discovering that the fetishism which overcomes this impossibility is proper to aesthetics — aesthetic form itself sublimates this impossibility; the value that is relationality is purely formal. Marx offers a very specific cause for this oversight: Aristotle’s social context made the analysis of form unrealizable: because of legitimized slave labor, Greek society remained in the realm of explicit “inequality” — whereas “only in a society...where the concept of human equality had acquired permanence” — where the notion of abstract equality had become hegemonic — could it become possible for the “form of value” to appear.⁵⁴ This means not only that capitalism is for Marx absolutely inextricable from the theoretical equality espoused in democracy, but also that the critique of political economy is a theory of the contingency of “the conditions of sensuous perception,” i.e., aesthetics.

And yet, no sooner has this incisive determination of historical specificity been asserted than it is retracted: in the very next sentence, Marx recurs — “This [hegemonic equality] however becomes possible only in society where the commodity form is the universal form of the product of labor.”⁵⁵ We have therefore a loop, an end that is its own beginning: the abstract equality of the commodity arrives only with the equality of humanity, which arrives only with abstract equality of the commodity. Undecidable formulations of retroactivity like this are the signature figure of the text, paradoxes that propel the narrative’s continuous leaps over the contradictions (real impossibilities) that are its object.⁵⁶ In this way, the narrative texture itself becomes the site of the critique’s engagement with the problem of the “makeshift for practical purposes.” The text comes to know its object not linearly but formally.

One arc of formal knowledge occurs in the reversing gesture of isolating the commodity as an elemental form only to discover that there is nothing elemental about it. The reversal is not coincidentally one of the most oft-quoted lines in the book: "a commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."⁵⁷ In the sway of this vertiginous passage from the elemental to the metaphysical, the narrative compulsively pursues the even more obscure region of theology: "we must take flight into the misty realm of religion [*müssen wir in die Nebelregion der religiösen Welt flüchten*]."⁵⁸ Tackling the commodities on their own terms, in the language with which they alone are familiar, on their own turf, in their own world, becomes still yet more marvelous and contradictory, and the only way to land this flight into religion, to conclude this foray into fetishism, is with the flourish of the most inscrutable literary allusion in the text. Arriving at "the peculiar circumstance that the use value of a thing is realized without exchange... while inversely value is realized within exchange," the narrative throws up its hands: "who would not call to mind at this point the advice given by the good Dogberry to the night-watchman Seacoal?"⁵⁹ With that rhetorical question highlighting its invocation, the text exits with a quote: "to be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature." In what possible sense does this amount to "advice" so indispensable that it is spontaneously called to mind? Shakespeare's speaker is plagued by terminal malapropism, and the purity of heart behind his errors of tongue functions as a kind of foil for the varieties of deception explored in the play: deceit as a means can yield good or bad ends. Dogberry, dogged by grandiloquence, speaks this befuddling apposition, erroneously naturalizing written language. Marx's elusive allusion to this chaos in the guise of solving the double result of value within and without exchange effects metalepsis at multiple levels: for double result, he substitutes confounded language; for contradiction he substitutes chaos; for innate value he substitutes innate writing; for misty realm of religion he substitutes the ironic realm of literature.

From the throes of this propulsive figurative machine, it is not surprising that again "we must take flight." And so we begin again: after the concluding Shakespearean allusion, the second chapter commences by redirecting the line of inquiry. "Commodities cannot themselves go to market and perform exchanges in their own right. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are the possessors of the commodities."⁶⁰ Having spent so much time in the commodity world, this recursive transition back to the world of guardians is belabored and confounded by imagery recollecting the vicissitudes of personification: "Commodities are things, and therefore lack the power to resist man. If they are unwilling, he can use force, in other words, he can take possession of them."⁶¹ Within these two sentences, the movement back and forth between commodities-qua-things and commodities-qua-persons ("unwilling") complicates and undermines the recourse to the world of the

guardians. Indeed, no sooner have guardians been established as forceful and agential possessors than we find that their world, too, is contrived by personification: “Here the persons exist for one another merely as representatives...of commodities...in general, the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other.”⁶² The priority of the person over the commodity is asserted, but almost instantly the commodity’s personhood resurfaces, and with it the thinghood of the person who is only a “representative” or “bearer,” who exists “merely” (repeated twice) as personification.

The movement from the elementary form to the metaphysical form, from the commodity to the guardian (and back again), cannot rest with the elementary form of the guardian, but must rather take as its point of departure the arena of relations, the forum of exchange. Thus proceeds the next propulsive gesture: “Let us now accompany the owner of some commodity, say our old friend the linen weaver, to the scene of action, the market.”⁶³ In the market, the arena arrived at by the metaleptic movement of the search for value within its varying forms of appearance, it becomes possible to observe the strange offspring of the commodity’s promiscuous exchanging of body and soul: the exchange of bodies changes the body; the commodity affects a “metamorphosis.” This “troublesome” “transubstantiation,” as it is elsewhere repeatedly called, is not a passive process undergone by the commodity, but an active one, requiring “the leap” “from the body of the commodity into the body of the gold.”⁶⁴ Marx is at pains to mark this leap sufficiently, to name it adequately: now it is “metamorphosis,” now it is “transubstantiation,” now it is the “*salto mortale*.” Implementing this image, he cannot help but remind his reader that is has been so named elsewhere: “*salto mortale*, as I have called it elsewhere” (it is used in the same context in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). The very proliferation of names for this process performs the metaleptic momentum it delineates, the suspension of one figure by another, the substitution of one figure (commodity, figure of value) for another (gold, figure of commodity, hence figure of abstract value).

Thus when the mystery of the commodity form is found to inhere in a leap, for which the text uses the striking image of “*salto mortale*,” the finding is most effectively disclosed by the recurrence of the same leap within the narrative structure itself. The *salto mortale* happens twice, on the part of the commodity, and on the part of the narrative: “Capital must have its origin both in circulation and not in circulation. We therefore have a double result. These are the conditions of the problem: *hic rhodus, hic salta!*”⁶⁵ A challenge to leap in the here and now, Marx’s evocation of Aesop recalls Hegel’s prescription for philosophy in the here and now.⁶⁶ Thus concludes the chapter on “Contradictions in the General Formula for Capital” — but these contradictions have not been solved so much as displaced; and so the next chapter commences on the other side of the abyss cleared in the leap. The duplicitous origin of value both within and without circulation is ostensibly addressed after the leap by the discovery of a

reiterated duplicity, “a commodity whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value.”⁶⁷ Labor is that commodity whose use-value is its embodiment in concrete ontological form of the otherwise ontologically inconsistent value. This ontological oscillation animates labor — *it is more than it has*. Its value is in it more than it, its use-value is this valorizing capacity of its value. It is this excessive potentiality of labor — this fact that labor is in excess of itself — that complicates any grounding of value in labor. And so, indeed, no sooner has labor been introduced as a figure for the “makeshift” grounding of exchange than it is supplanted by a metonymically linked notion: labor-time. Labor as such cannot ground value (ultimately there is no ground for the ungrounded); and so a related figure replaces it, “labor-time,” the abstract, universal, putatively comparable unit of expenditure of labor. But even then, labor-time is itself supplanted by the figure of “social labor-time” (as opposed to “abstract labor time”), for it is only *after* labor-time has been subject to “quantitative determination” and *after* it has been sold that it can precipitate the value it is purported to ground. This retroactive grounding means, as Karatani astutely underscores, that nothing is guaranteed:

A commodity cannot express its value — no matter how much labor time is expended to produce it — if it is not sold. Seen *ex post facto* the value of a commodity could be considered as existing in social labor time, while in *ex ante facto*, there is no such guarantee.⁶⁸

Value without guarantees. Value after the fact, but not before. This is the instability of the capitalist metaphysic, the retroactive traction of an abstraction. After the fact of selling it can be said that labor, nay labor-time, nay social labor-time, grounds value, but this ground can only be achieved by the leap — the leap of the sale, the leap of the commodity, the leap across the chasm of ungroundedness. In order to represent this leap, the text of *Capital* takes its own leap, *hic Rhodus, hic salta!* The narrative momentum of *Capital* is described by these propulsive leaps: the movement from labor to labor time to social labor time to the leap — a movement I have been calling *metalepsis* — here enfolds within the text of *Capital* a rhythmic performance of its own concept. With each contradiction, each double result, each fathoming of abyssal ungroundedness, the narrative leaps.

Across the books of *Capital* this leap rebounds, the text becoming, like *Scorpion and Felix* before it, an echo of *Tristram Shandy*'s frenetic digressive energy. The propulsion of the leap reverberates in numerous correlative images of throwing, flinging, and hurling (*werfen, einwerfen, schleudern*), the “incessant” but “alternating rhythm” of spurts and jumps, wages and waste, banishment and abandon.⁶⁹ It is by this motion of leaps that Marx depicts “the enormous power” of capitalist “expansion,” its “elasticity, a capacity for sudden extension by leaps.”⁷⁰ Active and passive, compulsive and controlled, these verbs effect the jerking (*stossweise*), unstable disequilibrium of the

leap, formalizing the automatic repetitive tick of drive.

No wonder then that the only conclusion possible for such a book is the union of the leap and of drive:

But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labor-power in the hands of commodity producers. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn around in a glitching circuit [*fehlerhaften Kreislauf*], which we can only get out of by assuming a primitive accumulation which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure.⁷¹

The glitching circuit distills the topos of drive as a lurching, incomplete circulation propelled forth by its own failure to approach its object. We arrive at the end of a lengthy journey only to find ourselves back at the beginning. Later Marxist reformulations of primitive accumulation as a constant feature of capitalism, rather than a stage, make explicit what unfurls implicitly in this image of the glitching circuit.⁷² The looping motion of the narrative whose end is its own beginning, that can only find its beginning at the end, mimes the metaphysic of capital, its positing its own preconditions:

Just as the heavenly bodies always repeat a certain movement, once they have been flung into it, so also does social production, once it has been flung into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects become causes in their turn, and...the whole process...always reproduces its own conditions.⁷³

All the metaleptic movement of the narrative strives at representing this worldly metalepsis, capital's own substitution of effect for cause.⁷⁴ If this ungroundedness is the key to Marx's grasp of capital's dynamism, it has been most dexterously formulated by the dynamic motion of the figurative texture of *Capital* itself.

Personification and metalepsis are but two of the many tropes that structure *Capital*, just as structuring tropes are but one of the many features *Capital* shares with the Victorian novel. Figurative reading, what I called the "textual" strategy for approaching *Capital* novelistically, accesses the conceptual agency of literary form, opening onto the many ways in which *Capital* realizes its insights not argumentatively but aesthetically. Reading Marx's Victorian novel is only one way to encounter his text, but it magnifies the verve of his critique — that we may more spiritedly, more materially, advance it.

Notes

1. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: Verso, 1997) 13.
2. Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx: A Life* (New York: Norton, 2001) 304.
3. My reading is limited to the first volume of *Capital*, as that is the only volume Marx saw to completion.
4. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Household Words, 1853) Chapter 16: "What connection can there be between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the wereabout of Jo, the outlaw with the broom, who had the distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connection can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!" In emphasizing the way in which the Dickensian narrator's question prompts synthesis of plots, settings, and characters as all of one "curious" whole, I mean in part to underscore that *Capital* is read here as a specifically Victorian novel, one which asserts its own wholeness.
5. Asa Briggs and John Callow, *Marx in London* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982) 53.
6. Quotes from such reports fill the pages of *Capital*. On their role for the fellow novelists, see Sheila Smith, "Blue Books and Victorian Novelists." *Review of English Studies* 21: 81 (Feb. 1970): 23-40.
7. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976) 802. Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue went one step further: "only in England could Marx become what he has become...in such an economically undeveloped country as Germany was until the middle of this century, Marx could not have arrived at his critique of bourgeois economy and at a knowledge of capitalist production any more than this economically undeveloped Germany could have had the political institutions of economically developed England." Paul Lafargue and Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Extracts from the Reminiscences of Karl Marx* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1942) 42.
8. Letter to Engels, 31 July 1865. In Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works Volume 42* (New York: International, 1975). See also fn 3.
9. Lafargue reported that the story left "a deep impression" on Marx. Lafargue and Liebknecht, 16.
10. Honore de Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece and Other Works* (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2008) 44. "Il y a tant de profondeur sur cette toile, l'air y est si vrai, que vous ne pouvez plus le distinguer de l'air qui nous environne. Où est l'art? Perdu, disparu!...Rien...J'en e vois là que des couleurs confusément amassées et contenues par une multitude de lignes bizarres qui forment une muraille de peinture." Honoré de Balzac, *Oeuvres Complètes de Honoré de Balzac*, Vol 14 (Paris: Bethune and Plon, 1845) 304 .
11. Afterword to the Second German Edition, 1873: "The mealy-mouthed babblers of German vulgar economy grumbled about the style of my book. No one can feel the literary shortcomings in *Das Kapital* more strongly than I myself. Yet I will quote in this connection one English and one Russian notice, for the benefit and the enjoyment of these gentlemen and their public. The Saturday Review, an entirely hostile journal, said in its notice of the first edition: The presentation of the subject invests the driest economic questions with a certain peculiar charm." The *St. Petersburg Journal* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*), in its issue of 20 April 1872, says: "The presentation of the subject, with the exception of one or two exceptionally special parts, is distinguished by its comprehensibility to the general reader, its clearness, and, in spite of the high scientific level of the questions discussed, by an unusual liveliness. In this respect the author in no way resembles...the majority of German scholars, who...write their books in a language so dry and obscure that the heads of ordinary mortals are cracked by it." Reprinted in *Capital*,

99 (ellipses original).

12. *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 1, trans. Richard Dixon et al (New York: International, 1975) 624.
13. *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 624.
14. Letter to his father, 10 November 1837. *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 10.
15. Hugo Gellert, *Karl Marx' Capital in Lithographs* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1934); Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947). On talking commodities, see Werner Hamacher's excellent "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*" in Michael Sprinker, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida's Specters of Marx*. (London: Verso, 1999). On sensationalism, see Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992). On literary allusions, see Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers* (New York: Atheneum, 1962). A passing reference likens *Capital* to a *bildungsroman* in Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1980) 182.
16. *Capital* 278, 359. Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect." *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 141-48. See also the stupendous list of specialized works involved in making a watch: "formerly the individual work of a Nuremberg artificer, the watch has been transformed into the social product of an immense number of detail labourers, such as mainspring makers, dial makers, spiral spring makers, jewelled hole makers, ruby lever makers, hand makers, case makers, screw makers, gilders, with numerous subdivisions, such as wheel makers (brass and steel separate), pin makers, movement makers, acheveur de pignon (fixes the wheels on the axles, polishes the facets, &c.), pivot makers, planteur de finissage (puts the wheels and springs in the works), finisseur de barillet (cuts teeth in the wheels, makes the holes of the right size, &c.), escapement makers, cylinder makers for cylinder escapements, escapement wheel makers, balance wheel makers, raquette makers (apparatus for regulating the watch), the planteur d'échappement (escapement maker proper); then the repasseur de barillet (finishes the box for the spring, &c.), steel polishers, wheel polishers, screw polishers, figure painters, dial enamellers (melt the enamel on the copper), fabricant de pendants (makes the ring by which the case is hung), finisseur de charnière (puts the brass hinge in the cover, &c.), faiseur de secret (puts in the springs that open the case), graveur, ciseleur, polisseur de boîte, &c., &c., and last of all the repasseur, who fits together the whole watch and hands it over in a going state. Only a few parts of the watch pass through several hands; and all these membra disjecta come together for the first time in the hand that binds them into one mechanical whole" (462).
17. *Capital* 471-472.
18. *Capital* 921.
19. *Capital* 799.
20. Such a perspective was of course openly advocated by Dickens, Eliot, and others, and is a critical commonplace, as in, for example, Caroline Levine's concise remark that "Nineteenth-century writers sought to represent reality accurately not simply for the sake of mimetic perfection, but because a secure knowledge of the real *mattered*. Realists wanted their readers to know the way the world worked so that they would understand how to act in that world." *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense* (Charlottesville: U Virginia P, 2003) 138. For an admirable book-length study shining bold new light on this question, see Mario Ortiz Robles, *The Novel as Event* (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2010).

21. *Capital* 342.
22. Georg Lukács, "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism." *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John Mander and Necke Mander (New York: Harper, 1971) 93-135. See also the exemplary, though not economically focused, discussion of typicality in Catherine Gallagher's "George Eliot: Immanent Victorian." *Representations* 90 (Spring 2005): 61-74.
23. I take the phrase "conceptual agency" from Susan Wolfson's discussion of literary form, though by it she intends "the way form shapes perceptions and critical thinking," while I am after the way form thinks. See "Reading for Form" *MLQ* 61 (March 2000): 16. In this endeavor I am indebted to Julia Reinhard Lupton's formidable models of "thinking with" literature, especially as developed in her forthcoming *Thinking with Shakespeare* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2011).
24. Kojin Karatani, "Capital's Drive," in *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2005) 200; and Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2006) 60-65. Žižek's work often refers to drive in discussing capitalism, but rarely explores the idea. It seems nonetheless possible to glean from his work that a properly thorough exploration of drive will be the final and urgent ground of psychoanalytic Marxism. For indications in this direction, see Kiarina Kordela, "Marx, Condensed and Displaced," Catherine Liu, ed. *The Dreams of Interpretation: A Century Down the Royal Road* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007) 306-308. Also salient here is Adrian Johnston's remarkable elucidation of a materialist account of drive, though this is only momentarily developed with respect to Marx. *Time-Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 2005) 329-30.
25. *Capital* 92. "Zur Vermeidung möglicher Missverständnisse ein Wort. Die Gestalten von Kapitalist and Grundeigentümer zeichne ich keineswegs in rosigem Licht. Aber es handelt sich hier um die Personen nur, soweit sie die Personifikation ökonomischer Kategorien sind, Träger von bestimmten Klassenverhältnissen und Interessen." *Marx Engels Werke*, Volume 23, 16 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962).
26. *Capital* 132.
27. *Capital* 141; *Werke*, Volume 23, 64.
28. *Capital* 143; *Werke*, Volume 23, 66.
29. *Capital* 179. Maritornes being a whorish servant girl in *Don Quixote*.
30. *Capital* 207.
31. *Capital* 163.
32. *Capital* 163-4
33. *Capital* 143; *Werke*, Volume 23, 66.
34. See Hamacher. Also noteworthy: J. Hillis Miller, "Promises, Promises: Speech Act Theory, Literary Theory, and Politico-Economic Theory in Marx and de Man." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 33:1 (Winter 2002):1-20. And the formidable "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?" in Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).
35. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1993) 162. Notebook 1, October 1857, "The Chapter on Money," Part 2: "To compare money with language is not less erroneous. Language does not transform ideas, so that the peculiarity of ideas is dissolved and their social character runs alongside them as separate entity, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas do not exist separately from language. Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign tongue in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy is

then not with language, but with its foreignness.” *Das Geld mit der Sprache zu vergleichen ist nicht minder falsch...bieten schon mehr Analogie; die Analogie liegt dann aber nicht in der Sprache, sondern in ihrer Fremdheit.* Werke, Volume 42. Prominent contemporary brokers of this analogy, not always with sufficient attention to Marx’s correction: Jacques Derrida, *Given-Time* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1994) and *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) and *The Coiners of Language* (Norman: U Oklahoma P, 1994); Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993); and Kojin Karatani, *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1994).

36. *Capital* 254, 265, 342, 423, 424, 739, 765, 991, 1003, 1015, 1020, 1025, and passim.
37. *Capital* 252, 254, 255, 259, 320, and passim. Eventually, about half-way through the text, the self-reflexivity of this expression, “the valorization of value” precipitates the substitute expression “self-valorization,” furthering the personifications (449, 486, 557, 644, 669, 756, and passim).
38. *Capital* 926.
39. *Capital* 302.
40. Ben Fowkes gives the German in his footnote to the quotation: Goethe, Faust, Part 1, Auerbach’s Cellar in Leipzig, line 2141 (‘als hätt’es Lieb’im Leibe’). 302.
41. *Capital* 740-41.
42. *Capital* 342.
43. *Capital* 253.
44. *Capital* 433. “Wissenschaftliche Analyse der Konkurrenz ist nur möglich, sobald die innere Natur des Kapitals begriffen ist, ganz wie die scheinbare Bewegung der Himmelskörper nur dem verständlich, der ihre wirkliche, aber sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbare Bewegung kennt.” Werke, Volume 23, 335.
45. *Capital* 230; Werke, Volume 23, 147.
46. *Capital* 230-31; Werke, Volume 23, 147.
47. *Capital* 230-31; Werke, Volume 23, 147.
48. *Capital* 231. “Dieser Widerspruch zwischen der quantitativen Schranke und der qualitativen Schrankenlosigkeit des Geldes treibt den Schatzbildner stets zurück zur Sisyphusarbeit der Akkumulation.” Werke, Volume 23, 147.
49. On this distinction in psychoanalysis, see Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1998) 168. See also Johnston, 191.
50. David Harvey’s recent companion constructs a graphic chart of these dualities, mapping the dual value of the commodity, the dual forms of exchange value, the dual positions in the market, and the dual function of money. *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*. (London: Verso, 2010) 109.
51. *Capital* 139.
52. *Capital* 150.
53. *Capital* 151.
54. *Capital* 152.
55. *Capital* 152.
56. On diverse logics of contradiction in capitalism, see Kiarina Kordela, “Political Metaphysics: God in Global Capitalism,” *Political Theory* 27 (1999): 769-88.
57. *Capital* 163
58. *Capital* 165; Werke, Volume 23, 86.

59. *Capital* 177.
60. *Capital* 178. "Wir müssen uns also nach ihren Hütern umsehen, den Warenbesitzern." *Werke*, Volume 23, 99.
61. *Capital* 178.
62. *Capital* 179.
63. *Capital* 199.
64. *Capital* 200.
65. *Capital* 269.
66. See Ben Fowkes's footnote, page 269.
67. *Capital* 270.
68. *Transcritique* 217.
69. The text of *Capital* is saturated with images of throwing: 208, 216, 223, 231, 249, 251, 262, 267, 299, 301, 445, 567, 617, 709, 723, 754, 936, and passim. "Alternating rhythm" 723.
70. *Capital* 579-580. "...ürhaupt die der grossen Industrie entsprechenden allgemeinen Produktionsbedingungen hergestellt sind, erwirbt diese Betriebsweise eine Elastizität, eine plötzliche sprungweise Ausdehnungsfähigkeit...Die ungeheure, stossweise Ausdehnbarkeit..." *Werke*, Volume 23, 476.
71. *Capital* 873. "Diese ganze Bewegung scheint sich also in einem fehlerhaften Kreislauf herumzudrehn, aus demn wir nur hinauskommen, in dem wir eine der kapitalistischen Akkumulation vorausgehende "ursprüngliche" Akkumulation ("previous accumulation" bei Adam Smith) unterstellen, eine Akkumulation, welche nicht das Resultat der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise ist, sondern ihr Ausgangspunkt." *Werke*, Volume 23, 741.
72. On primitive accumulation as a constant rather than a phase, see David Harvey's discussion of what he calls "accumulation by dispossession" in *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003) 137-83.
73. *Capital* 786.
74. Here, too, we might remark the Hegelianism of Marx's procedure: figural relations in the text are relations in the world itself.

Marxism and Eschatology Reconsidered

Roland Boer

Marxism is a secularized Jewish or Christian messianism — how often do we hear that claim? From the time of Nikolai Berdyaev (1937) and Karl Löwith (1949) at least, the claim has grown in authority from countless restatements.¹ It has become such a commonplace that as soon as one raises the question of Marxism and religion in a gathering, at least one person will jump at the bait and insist that Marxism is a form of secularized messianism. These proponents argue that Jewish and Christian thought has influenced the Marxist narrative of history, which is but a pale copy of its original: the evils of the present age with its alienation and exploitation (sin) will be overcome by the proletariat (collective redeemer), who will usher in a glorious new age when sin is overcome, the unjust are punished, and the righteous inherit the earth.

The argument has served a range of very different purposes since it was first proposed: ammunition in the hands of apostate Marxists like Berdyaev and especially Leszek Kolakowski with his widely influential three-volume work, *Main Currents of Marxism*;² a lever to move beyond the perceived inadequacies of Marxism in the hands of Christian theologians eager to assert that theological thought lies at the basis of secular movements like Marxism, however erroneous that theological basis might be;³ a means for a philosopher of the stature of Alasdair MacIntyre to seek rapprochement between Marxism and Christianity;⁴ or the basis of a creative reworking of Marxism through a "weak messianism" in the hands of Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida.⁵ Indeed, Fredric Jameson, Slavoj Žižek and lately John Roberts have argued that rather than the sparring partners they are so often represented as being, Marxism and Christianity both gain rather than lose from their affinities with each other, for "any comparison of Marxism with religion is a two-way street?"⁶

But is the basic charge correct? Do Marx as well as Engels really borrow from Christian eschatology, empty it of its theological content and provide a secularized narrative that looks all too much like its original? I shall argue that this charge is mistaken and I do so by considering two key elements in the development of their thought. The first deals with Marx's one-time teacher and close friend, Bruno Bauer,

who was not only one of Marx's teachers at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and close friend (at least initially), but also one of Germany's leading biblical scholars in the 1830s and 1840s. The second concerns Engels's continuing passion for the biblical book of Revelation, from his early days as a devout Reformed (Calvinist) Christian believer to his later re-engagement with that work from a very different perspective.

Before proceeding, I need to clear up the matter of the common distinction between what Marx and Engels themselves thought and the subsequent tradition of Marxism. Once this distinction is in place — encouraged by Marx's own comment when he encountered the French Marxists of the 1870s, "All I know is that I am not a Marxist" — it is easy to make a series of moves.⁷ Either Marxism is a distortion of Marx (and Engels) and therefore the charge that Marxism is a secularized eschatology misses the mark; or the critic in question has a distorted view of Marxism, seeing it as perhaps a type of belief or a prophecy of the end of capitalism. These moves are a little too ingenious, for they assume one can easily separate Marx and Engels from the subsequent tradition that continues to draw inspiration from their thought. On the contrary, it is impossible to speak of Marxism — which I understand here as both a mode of analysis often called historical materialism and as a political project — with recourse to the work of both Marx and Engels; hence the detailed examination of their thought in what follows.

Marx and Bruno Bauer

The first item that deserves close analysis is Marx's relation with Bruno Bauer, especially their early contact and close collaboration while both were at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. Bauer was a licentiate in theology and Marx a student, taking courses mostly in law. Their paths intersected when Marx took a course with Bauer in the summer of 1839 on nothing less than the prophetic biblical book of Isaiah.

Marx's Leaving Certificate from the university notes:

V. In the summer term 1839

1. Isaiah with Herr Licentiate Bauer, attended.⁸

For all its brevity, this entry threatens to explode with significance. Here we find Marx studying, with a controversial leader of the Young Hegelians, a major prophetic book of the Bible. Isaiah is one of the three great writing prophets (the other two are Jeremiah and Ezekiel).⁹ Even more, Isaiah has traditionally been read in Christian circles as one who foretold the birth of Christ.¹⁰ Add to this the fact that Isaiah is brimming full with eschatological themes, looking forward in poetic language to a restored Zion and renewed Jerusalem. Surely this is evidence that Marx was deeply influenced by biblical eschatology in his student days, evidence that he may well have been influenced by such eschatological language and ideas before his discovery of

historical materialism.

Not quite, for this approach to Isaiah was certainly not being taught to Marx by Bauer. However, in order to understand what Marx would have been taught, I need to work my way through some key ideas by Bauer and his context within German intellectual and public life at the time. Initially it may be surprising to find Bauer teaching the Hebrew Bible, for he was primarily a New Testament scholar and theologian and then later a political commentator. The works that got him into no end of trouble were those on the Gospel of John and the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).¹¹ Appearing during the first great wave of German critical work on the Bible that would launch German biblical scholars into a position of global leadership they would only relinquish with the Second World War, Bauer's work was at the edge of that work and beyond. For a time he was widely regarded as the leader of the Young Hegelians. Bauer's genius was to combine painstaking attention to biblical texts within their historical and cultural context with his own development of Hegel's philosophy. This combination led him to argue that Christianity only emerged in the second century C.E.; that the Gospels contain virtually no historical records, and indeed no record of an historical Jesus, being primarily the products of religious consciousness embodied in individual authors who composed them freely; that the Gospels are saturated with the spirit and thought of Hellenism (the key ideas may be traced to Stoic, Philonic, and neo-Platonic ideas); and that the crucial tension was between free self-consciousness and religious dogmatism. He took consistent aim at the ossified established church and the repressive state, especially in light of their dirty and corrupt hold on power — so much so that his book *Das Entdeckte Christenthum* (*Christianity Exposed*) was banned, hunted down, and destroyed until it was reprinted in 1927.¹²

So why was Bauer the radical New Testament scholar teaching Marx a course on Isaiah at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in 1839? It so happened that in the year before Bauer had published a two-volume work called *Kritik der Geschichte der Offenbarung: Die Religion des alten Testaments in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Prinzipien dargestellt* (*Critique of the History of Revelation: The Religion of the Old Testament Explained According to the Principles of Its Historical Development*).¹³ It was the only work he wrote on the Hebrew Bible, for the rest were concerned with the New Testament and politics. In the summer of 1839 Marx would have heard the full brunt of Bauer's theories on the Hebrew Bible and Isaiah in particular.¹⁴ In *Die Religion des alten Testaments* Bauer was developing his argument that religion, or rather, religious experience is the result of (a Hegelian) self-consciousness. Not only was such religious experience a transcendental affair, but one could also trace in a phenomenological fashion the development of the various forms of that experience. Following the assumption that the legalistic priestly material (designated by P) was the oldest literary source of the Hebrew Bible, he argued that this material lies at the earliest stage of such a development. Here we find an authoritarian deity who

demands a law-bound subordination. In contrast to this largely external relation, the later prophetic books mark a much higher stage: over against the crass and oppressive particularity of the earlier material, here the universal is immanent in community.

You may be forgiven for thinking that all this was a slightly odd interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, indeed that Bauer was a religious crackpot. Not at all, but some context never goes astray. Two features of this context are important for understanding what Marx was up against in Bauer's course: the rapid developments in biblical criticism at the time and the use of the Bible as the ground on which debates over religion, reason, secularism, democracy, and republicanism were fought.

As for biblical criticism itself, scholars had begun to undermine, often in the face of much resistance, many of the traditional assumptions concerning the Bible and its authors. They argued against traditional interpretations and appeals to divine authority by focusing on the literal and grammatical sense of the text (in opposition to allegory), the internal evidence of the text, and the desire to reconstruct historical situations in order to understand the Bible. Much of the early energy was focused on the five books of Moses — the Torah or Pentateuch. Characters such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, who published his three-volume introduction to the Old Testament in 1780-83, Wilhelm de Wette (1780-1849), Johann Vater (1771-1826), Heinrich Ewald (1803-75), and Hermann Hupfeld (1796-1866) had argued that the Pentateuch was really a compilation of different sources or fragments not written by Moses, if he existed at all. Amid much debate, they gradually came to agree, at least by the time Bauer was writing, that there were four sources that lay behind the Pentateuch — the Priestly (P), the Yahwistic (J), the Elohist (E) and the Deuteronomist (D). In what was called the documentary hypothesis, P was felt to be the earliest and responsible for most of the laws (613 of them), the Yahwistic and Elohist (based on two of the names of God) followed, with slightly higher views of religion, and D was responsible for Deuteronomy and the final editing of the first five books of the Bible. Only later, after Bauer's work, did Julius Wellhausen argue that P was the latest stage.¹⁵ In fact, it was in the second half of the nineteenth century that historical criticism (as it was eventually called) carried the day in German academic biblical criticism. Bauer came in at the earlier point, assuming that the Priestly material was the crassest and earliest. Religion struggles, they argued, to rise above this state until it reaches the prophets and then the New Testament. For these biblical critics, the prophets themselves comprise the high point of the Old Testament (Luther's great liking for the prophets as a model for Protestant ministers has an obvious influence here). Rather than predictors of the future, they spoke the will of God to their immediate context. They were, it would soon be argued, forth-tellers and not fore-tellers. And their message was nothing other than "ethical monotheism," of which Isaiah was one of the greatest exemplars. No longer were these texts of Isaiah concerned with foretelling the arrival of Christ or the age to come, but they told forth the great ideals of ethical life lived under monotheism. We couldn't be further from the idea that the

prophets were harbingers of the eschaton, that the end was nigh.

These concerns of biblical critics were not restricted to the rarified atmosphere of academic debate at far remove from public and political concerns. In fact, book after book — such as David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* and Bauer's books — on biblical criticism produced uproar and widespread debate.¹⁶ But why had theology and especially biblical criticism become so important in Germany at the time, so much so that it was a central feature of public debate? The reason may be found in the distinct nature of German political and cultural life in the first half of the nineteenth century. German philosophy and criticism were never as stridently anti-religious or anti-clerical as its Anglophone and Francophone cousins. In contrast to the radical anti-clericalism of the Enlightenment in France or the Deism of English intellectual culture, Germany fought its cultural battles on a different ground, namely that of theology.¹⁷ Or rather, theology was crucial to all three, but in very different ways. While the French radicals either rejected it and its institutions or developed a rather Christian form of communism, and while the radicals in England tended to slide from religious Dissent to Deism (with a good dose of anti-establishment polemic against the Church of England), in a Germany still saturated with the Pietistic revival of the 1810s and 1820s, the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*, the entrenched tensions between Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well as the well-known German backwardness in economics and politics, German intellectuals could hardly avoid fighting their battles with and through theology.¹⁸ Actually, it was more specific than that: they waged furious controversies over the Bible, especially the New Testament and its Gospels, but also the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). In short, the biblical stories were political gunpowder, precisely because political and ecclesiastical power hinged on theological claims made on the basis of these texts. To offer a critical and immanent analysis of these texts, one that made no reference to God as cause or agent was a fundamental challenge to the structures of power which relied on transcendent justification. So the Bible was the terrain of battle for the knot of political struggles in nineteenth-century Germany — over the state, politics, freedom of the press, secularism, immanence and transcendence, reason and religion. Instead of dismissing the Bible as a document of outmoded superstition, German critics worked out their theories with the Bible itself.

This is the volatile context within which Marx entered his university years. But let us return to the ever-active and fertile mind of Bauer. He gave these developments in biblical criticism and public debate his own spin. As far as the Hebrew Bible was concerned, he argued that even the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible had not yet arrived at the moment of overcoming the estrangement of externalized and legalistic religion. That, of course, would come with the New Testament, to which he was to direct all of his critical concerns from the beginning of the 1840s. At this point in his thought he argued that the difference between the Old and New Testaments was that Christianity managed to free the religious consciousness from its limited and particular form in the Old Testament. What his work on the Hebrew Bible enabled

him to do was define his key idea of religious consciousness, namely the unmediated identity of particularity and the abstract universal, which he translated in terms of the immediate identity of the universal with a particular subject or community.

Now, while this position — the immediate identity of particular and universal — may seem like a positive assessment of Christianity, Bauer was soon to argue that it is in fact the core of the problem. Already in *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg*, published in the year he taught in Berlin, he had come to argue that the oppressive and narrow-minded sectarianism of the Church — especially the German Lutheran Church — lay in this claim by the particular to the universal.¹⁹ The logical core of his argument, which developed over his various works on the Bible, was that Christianity was a “hubristic particularism” which made an unmediated identity between a specific subject (in this case Jesus Christ) or a community (the church) with the universal. What happens then is that the universal becomes completely other, divorced from communal and individual life. God and heaven become alienated and abstracted universals from human existence. This meant that any claim by a specific individual or group to be the exclusive representative of this universal inevitably produced a brutal, sectarian monopoly that excluded any other particular, whether religious or political. In short, Christian monotheism is an exclusive rather than an inclusive universal. This ultimate hubris of particularism, characteristic of the state Church at the time and of the reactionary Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1840-61), let alone of both Christianity and Judaism, is in fact the essence of religion as such. The Prussian state was only the latest manifestation of this brutal universal, for Bauer traced it all the way back to the polis of ancient Greece. Needless to say, Bauer’s radical biblical criticism and theology went hand in hand with a radical political republicanism.

The twenty one year old Marx, then, encountered Bauer at a highly charged time in his career. About to be sent off to Bonn for his polemic against Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg at Berlin, at the crest of a wave of prolific and original work after he had honed his idea of religion in the 1830s, about to become the intellectual leader of the Young Hegelians, we can get a fair idea of what Bauer taught Marx.²⁰ Apart from bringing Marx up to speed on the rapid developments in that first wave of German biblical criticism at the time, Bauer had already come to hold that all religion was problematic. By definition, religion was a hubristic effort by a certain particularism — be that individual, group, or institution — to lay claim to the abstract universal. As soon as it did so, it became a crass sectarian monopoly that brooked no opposition. One should not be surprised that the Church had become close-minded and authoritarian. Even Isaiah, who was far better than the Priestly material that lay (as scholarship held at the time) at the earliest layers of the Hebrew Bible, succumbed to this problem. Isaiah might have moved past the law-driven externality of the priests, he might even have expressed that ethical monotheism in which the universal was immanent in the community, but he still held to religion as such, and that was the problem.

In all this ferment and close work with Bauer (Marx and he would become

collaborators for a time afterwards), I can find little, if anything, of the supposed eschatology or messianism that Marx might have acquired in his university studies. Now it may well be argued that Marx picked up this eschatological interpretation of the Hebrew prophets from either his assimilated Jewish background, the general assumption within the churches, and indeed within the Christian culture of Germany at the time. This proposition simply cannot be proved. What can be proved is that the biblical criticism with which Marx came into contact was arguing against that assumption. Bauer certainly wasn't writing about it in his study of the Hebrew Bible, biblical scholarship at the time was busily negating the prophets as foretellers of a future, and theological critics worked overtime to offer an immanent analysis of the Bible that implicitly undermined the transcendent claims of the imperial Prussian throne and the churches. Bruno Bauer was not teaching Marx about prophetic eschatology in that summer of 1839 at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin.

Engels and the Book of Revelation

Did Engels then provide historical materialism with an eschatological dimension? On a superficial reading it may well be possible to argue that he did. After all, he was brought up as a believing Reformed (Calvinist) Protestant, was able to read the New Testament in the original (common) Greek and kept abreast of the latest developments in biblical criticism. In his early texts we find extensive discussions and treatments of the Bible, especially the letters to his close friends, the pastors Friedrich and Wilhelm Graeber, and the amusing and rather well-written poem, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible."²¹ Any reader of these works soon notices an abiding fascination with the biblical book of Revelation. Known to biblical scholars by its Greek title, the *Apocalypse*, this New Testament book, along with the book of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible, has been an eternal favorite of all manner of Christian movements for the last two millennia, many of them quite revolutionary. Full of the rich imagery of the final battle of good and evil, the beast and the whore of Babylon, the four horsemen and the seven scrolls, the lamb and the new Jerusalem, it remains a rich resource for those who expect an imminent end to the world, who are oppressed, or who are keen to proclaim themselves prophets and gain a follower or two.

Perhaps here lies the source, via Engels, of Marxism's own more apocalyptic tendencies. Unfortunately — at least for those keen to find in Marxism a secularized eschatology — a close reading of these texts reveals that Engels did not use the book of Revelation as an inspiration for apocalyptic speculation about the end of history and the coming of his Lord on the clouds. In other words, none of the reasons I listed above for interest in Revelation count for Engels. In fact, his solid Calvinist upbringing would not have emphasized this text so much. Suspicious of enthusiasm and millenarian frenzy, Calvinists prefer to focus on predestination, the task of the elect, the evils of the damned, and matters such as justification by faith through grace. Of course, God would eventually destroy the damned and Jesus would return. But they did not need

him to do so now in order to save them from an intolerable situation.

So what does Engels do with the text of Revelation? He uses it in a number of quite creative ways — playfully, as critical satire, and as the positive celebration of his own intellectual awakening. Let me examine these texts carefully to see how he does so. As for the first use, a sustained play with Revelation appears in two letters to Friedrich Graeber, one from the beginning of his correspondence on 19 February 1839, and the other from the last letter to Friedrich Graeber on 22 February 1841.²² In the first letter, Engels expresses mock horror at the news that his good friend the pastor actually plays cards. Engels throws a few biblical curses at him and then portrays a vision like that of John the Divine (or for that matter the old prophet Ezekiel).²³ What does he see? It is a great final battle between the King of the Orient, the Prince of the Occident, and the Prince of the Sea — a rather more homely version of the battle between the archangel Michael, the Devil, and the Beast of the Sea in Revelation 12-13. Seven spirits appear — modeled on the seven angels of Revelation 8-10 and 14 — but they turn out to be a little more earthly: Faust, Lear, Wallenstein, Hercules, Siegfried, Roland, and Mio Cid (with a turban). The whole parody becomes even more complex with the crisscrossing of Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) allusions — the children of Anak (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:10), letters on the door in Hebrew (Daniel 5:5, 24-28), and being struck dumb (Ezekiel 3:26). The point of it all: even though they may have brought the world to an end, nothing will stop the card-players in their evil pastime.

All this is good fun. The second letter is different, for its playfulness is a rather poor camouflage for a more serious tone.²⁴ Engels and his childhood friend from Wuppertal have become estranged since they began their epistolary debates two years earlier, since they had begun to take different theological directions. In a curious intersection where the apocalyptic battle at the end of the age wraps up a friendship, we return in this letter to the final battle between good and evil, between God and the devil. On one side stand evil Straussians and Hegelians (the side Engels had joined), while on the other are the less capable orthodox — names we hardly recognize now, such as Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Neander, Nitzsche, Bleek, and Erdmann (Friedrich Graeber's preferred theologians). And yet, despite portents of the great battle — such as the earth's eclipse and the storm raging through the forest — Friedrich has not yet stirred himself for battle with the "critical-speculative devil" and his enormous following.²⁵ The problem, it seems, is that Friedrich Graeber has already disengaged from their debates. Engels berates him for his "calm and detached" writing, as if nothing can stir the calm of his orthodoxy. Engels, on the other hand, wants a battle and Strauss is the super-weapon with which he will knock down Friedrich and any other orthodox champion. But Friedrich, it seems, has already declined the struggle.

I have already slipped from the playful use of the final apocalyptic battle to a more polemical use. The next one is more fully polemical, and the humor starts to have some bite. It is the long poem, *The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible*.²⁶ For one who decided to give away his aspirations to be a poet in favor of direct political

writing, it is not too bad. It is a narrative poem written with Edgar Bauer, brother of Bruno, and its satire owes much to the style of Young Hegelian polemic.

The poem sets a cracking pace and the reader is drawn into the story (or at least I was). And that story begins with a Job-like opening (although not without some influence from Goethe) in which Satan slinks his way into heaven, upsets the heavenly chorus and demands access to none other than Bruno Bauer. God asserts that for all Bauer's research into the Bible, for all his doubts, he still remains faithful and will come through to truth as he sees the flaws of philosophy. The devil is not so sure and secures a chance to test Bauer's faith. Unlike the prologue to the book of Job, Bauer does succumb to Satan, although it takes some persuasion. By the time Bauer begins lecturing again he is a servant of the devil and sets the pious and atheistic students against one another. All of which eventually leads to a final confrontation between Hegel (who is a confidant of the devil), the Young Hegelians, and some French *philosophes* such as Voltaire on one side and the pious defenders of the faith on the other. Steeped in terminology from the book of Revelation, this final apocalyptic battle sways back and forth. The Young Hegelians build a fortress out of the books they have written, using them as missiles against the attacks of the pious believers. Despite many heroics and pinpoint accuracy with their projectiles, the Young Hegelians fare badly until they dump the weak-kneed devil — he is all talk and no action — and call for reinforcements. Voltaire, Danton, Edelman, Napoleon, Marat, and Robespierre appear, Bauer takes charge, and they route the pious who now flee heavenward. Hegel urges them to attack heaven itself and he leads the charge. But just as they are about to succeed, a small piece of paper floats down, coming to rest at Bauer's feet. Its message: he is redundant, having been sacked from his teaching position. In dismay the forces of chaos flee and the host of heaven pursues them with glee.

Much more developed than the two letters to Friedrich Graeber, this last great battle of Armageddon is a send-up of the conservative reaction to the challenges of the Young Hegelians who called themselves "The Free." Now, while all of this lighthearted play with the Bible may seem relatively innocent, for someone with Engels's upbringing the very act of making fun of the Bible was potentially blasphemous. For Calvinists the Bible is serious business. There are — apparently — no jokes to be found within the Bible, and one should in no way joke about it. After all, it deals with matters of life, death, sin, salvation, and the future of the universe. So also for Engels: what seems like some harmless joking has a more significant undercurrent of protest.

There is still yet a third use of this biblical apocalyptic material that indicates the complexity of Engels's interactions with the Bible. I think in particular of the closing pages of one of his three pamphlets on Friedrich Schelling — *Schelling and Revelation*.²⁷ While most of the text is an effort to report on the content of Schelling's lectures in Berlin in 1841, interspersed with some critical commentary, the closing pages comprise a paean to the new directions of theological and philosophical ideas.²⁸ Engels had just read Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* and it obviously

set the adrenaline pumping.²⁹ The framework is, once again, the book of Revelation: heaven has come down to earth (Revelation 21:1); its treasures lie scattered for whoever wishes to pick them up (Revelation 21:18-21); the great final battle has been fought and won (Revelation 18-19; see also 1 Timothy 6:12); the thousand-year reign of freedom has begun (Revelation 20:6). Engels evokes the vast celebration in heaven after the victory of Armageddon: “And this crown, this bride, this holy thing is the *self-consciousness of mankind*, the new Grail round whose throne the nations gather in exultation and which makes kings of all who submit to it, so that all splendor and might, all dominion and power, all the beauty and fullness of this world lie at their feet and must yield themselves up for their glorification.”³⁰ As is his wont, Engels draws on other texts in building his picture, but the focus has shifted from his previous apocalyptic visions.³¹ Now we are in the millennium, after the great battle, and he looks forward to the unfolding of the new age on earth.

What are we to make of such a passage? It seems as though Engels’s eyes have been opened, that a way out of the stifling conservatism of his youth has now shown itself. The language of revelation gives voice to his own sense of intellectual and spiritual awakening — away from his devout religious convictions. It is the closest Engels would come to any form of apocalyptic sensibilities and he does so in a very personal register. We can write this enthusiasm off as youthful exuberance, or perhaps too much beer and fine tobacco (of which he was very fond), but I would like to put in a word for Engels. Over against the world-weary cynicism of age, is there not still room for that sparkle in one’s eye at a new discovery, a zeal and enthusiasm that really fires one up?

Engels obviously had a soft spot for the glorious apocalyptic language of the book of Revelation. The youthful Engels uses the book in various ways — to make fun of and attack those who would hold him back, to tease his friend Friedrich Graeber, and to celebrate his own awakening. Is this early fascination with the book of Revelation the origin of the infamous secular apocalypticism of Marxism? I have already argued that Marx did not pick it up from Bauer when he studied Isaiah with Bauer at the university in Berlin. What of Engels? For one thing, Engels’s use of that text is quite idiosyncratic. He uses it for humor, polemic, and to provide a language for his own self-discovery — not quite what one would expect in terms of historical expectations, especially as the glorious march of history to an eschatological moment. Further, the explicit use of the language of Revelation peters out by the time of *The German Ideology*, where Engels uses it in a satirical way to speak of Bauer and Stirner.³² Further, in later life, especially in light of the parliamentary success of the German Social Democrats, Engels became more wary of insurrection. It still has a valid role to play, but in his later letters there are more cautions against untimely acts that would provide the authorities with any excuse to crush all forms of the left. His own bitter experience in the revolutions of 1848-50 made him think deeply on these matters.

Above all, in the years that followed this early fascination with the book of

Revelation, there is a marked change in Engels's approach to the book of Revelation. Instead of manifesting itself in an apocalyptic Marxism, his interest in Revelation follows another line, one that would eventually contribute to his argument that early Christianity was a revolutionary movement that was co-opted by the Roman Empire. In order to see what Engels does with Revelation, I would like to consider what he makes of early Christianity.

Revelation and Early Christianity

Although he had been thinking about it for many years (since 1841!), *On the History of Early Christianity* appeared months before Engels died and may well be seen as the final coming to terms with his Christian past.³³ It has also had an abiding influence on New Testament scholarship, especially the argument that the early Church appealed to the lower classes of Roman society. It is really the mature form of an argument with which Engels had been toying for years, namely that Christianity began as a revolutionary force. However, what is significant for my purposes here is that the final pages deal with the book of Revelation. It may be exactly the same biblical text, but the way he uses it is vastly different from the writings of his youth. Basing his research on some contemporary biblical scholarship, especially that of Ferdinand Berner of the University of Berlin and Bruno Bauer, Engels argues that Revelation is the earliest Christian document. Now he can use it as a purely historical source, mining it for information about the beliefs and practices of the early Christians. Above all, he seeks to decode Revelation and show that all those who use it for speculation about the end of history are simply misguided. Yet these arguments are expanded from an essay Engels wrote and published eleven years earlier called simply "The Book of Revelation."³⁴ So let us have a look at this earlier text.

Published in 1883 in *Vorwärts*, Engels seeks to introduce the still relatively new German critical approach to the New Testament. Today it goes by the name of historical criticism, for its two main drives are to reconstruct the history of the literature of the Bible as well as the history behind it. And today it is a tired orthodoxy, zealously defended by a dwindling number of practitioners. In Engels's day it had a radical freshness, since it undermined many of the traditional positions regarding the Bible held by the churches. All the same, he is after the most critical work of the lot, bypassing those who sought to reconcile historical criticism with religious belief. So he settles on the work of none other than Bruno Bauer.³⁵

For some strange reason he does not mention Bauer in the essay on Revelation. Part of the reason was that the year before (1882) he had written a piece called "Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity."³⁶ Written on the occasion of Bauer's death, it is an appreciative essay that goes to great lengths to show how the form of Christianity that has come down to us has little, if anything, to do with its earliest forms. Of course, once you have taken such a position, the next step is to account for that well-known final form. Following Bauer, Engels argues that what we know as Christianity now is the result

of a combination of vulgar and popularized versions of the neo-Platonism of Philo of Alexandria, Seneca's stoicism, and Roman imperial beliefs about the emperor as son of God. But why did Christianity catch on? Here Engels moves beyond Bauer to offer a materialist analysis spiced with some Darwinian observations: the class structure of the Roman empire (the rich, including the last few patricians; propertyless freemen; and slaves), along with crumbling cultural and religious options, opened the way for a system of belief that answered one's despair by offering an other-worldly solution that was open to anyone and everyone. It was a case of survival of the fittest. By contrast, what lay behind all of this, back at the earliest moment, was very different.

Now all three essays converge, for Engels takes up Bauer's argument that Revelation is the best window into early Christianity. Assuming a date of composition between late 68 and early 69 C.E., it presents a group of Jews (not Christians) who believed the end would come soon. There is no Trinity, for Jesus is subordinate to God, and certainly no Holy Spirit. There is no doctrine of original sin, no baptism or sacrament of communion, no justification by faith, and no elaborate story of the death and resurrection of Christ. And there is no religion of love, for the author preaches "sound, honest revenge" on their persecutors.³⁷ The author is unknown (certainly not the legendary disciple by the name of John) and all of the "visions" find precursors in the Hebrew Bible and other apocalyptic documents that preceded it. To top it off, Engels recounts a theory by Ferdinand Berner that the infamous number 666 (or 616 in a textual variant) can easily be deciphered through some deft playing with numbers: given that Hebrew used letters of the alphabet for numbers, all we need do is add up the value of *Neron Kesar* (Greek *Neron Kaisar*) and we have 666. So Revelation predicts the end of the "beast," Nero, at the hand of God and ushers in the new age.

How has Engels's reconstruction stood the test of time? It is easy to dismiss it as reliant on out-of-date scholarship, that Bauer was too extreme in his scepticism and that Berner's numerical theory is implausible. We can hardly blame Engels for using the biblical scholarship available at the time. Nor can we accuse him of complete ignorance of biblical criticism, for he recounts at greater length in the early Christianity essay the positions of the dominant Tübingen School (Ferdinand Christian Bauer, Heinrich Ewald, Friedrich Lücke, et al.), where David Strauss also began, and the popularizing work of Ernst Renan.³⁸ I would be in a similar situation if someone a century from now were to read a position I take today in relation to contemporary biblical scholarship, especially if I was dependent on that scholarship rather than developing my own position. The strange thing is that the underlying assumptions of Bauer's work — and thereby that of Engels — are the same in the historical critical scholarship of the Bible today (which no longer has the hegemony it once had). The tides of some forms of scholarship may come and go, but the basic assumptions remain unchanged. One must be very careful with using the Bible for any historical reconstruction, since it is unreliable to some degree (Engels actually opts for a median position between Bauer's scepticism and the Tübingen School's

optimism regarding reliability); the overwhelming concern is with origins, whether that of early Christianity or early Israel; archaeology plays a crucial role, since it provides evidence external to the text; and one spends an inordinate amount of energy discussing authorship and dates, which, like the fashion in skirts, can go in only one of two directions — up or down. Engels, Bauer, the Tübingen School, and historical critical scholars today all share the same assumptions. Further, some of Bauer's concerns are still very much alive in biblical criticism, such as the influence of Stoicism and the relation with Philo.³⁹ His argument that the letters of Paul predate the Gospels, which come from the second century C.E., still holds water, although his theory on Revelation as the earliest document has little credibility. However, his radical scepticism has returned to biblical scholarship, especially through the so-called “minimalist school” which finds little that is historically reliable in the texts of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament concerning Jesus.⁴⁰

As for Engels's long interest in the book of Revelation, his later studies seem like a complete turnaround from his earlier interest in this biblical book. Once he took up and often mocked the speculation concerning the Last Judgment, but now the book is useful as a window into the earliest form of Christianity. As he puts it at the close of his essay on Revelation, “All this has now lost its interest, except for ignorant persons who may still try to calculate the day of the last judgment.”⁴¹ In fact, although Engels is still interested in this fascinating biblical text, he never tried to estimate the day of judgment. He may have interpreted the text playfully and polemically, or as a way of expressing his own growing self-awareness, or indeed as a historical window into early Christianity, but he did not use it to give historical materialism any apocalyptic framework.

Conclusion: Moses Hess and Eschatological Communism

In light of this exploration of the influences on Marx and Engels, it is difficult to maintain that they held to some form of secularized eschatological framework in developing historical materialism. While Marx found anything but an eschatological interpretation of the Hebrew prophets when he studied under Bruno Bauer, Engels effectively diffused the apocalyptic effect of the book of Revelation through his own extended engagement with that text. However, it may well be objected that even though Marx and Engels obviously do not appropriate an eschatological perception of history from Judaism or Christianity, they may have absorbed it through a process resembling osmosis, unaware that this was taking place. By way of conclusion, let me deal with this objection through three final points.

First, as I have argued above, Marx and Engels developed their position in a context where theology and especially the Bible provided the language of public debate. A whole range of topics — reason, republicanism, democracy, the state, and secularism — passed through this medium. Marx and Engels were fully aware of such debate, as their early journalistic pieces show so well. In response to this debate, which really

forms the crucible of their thought, they set out to develop a system of thought and action that was at odds with its deep theological assumptions.

Second, the form of socialism they first encountered, filtering over the border from France, was of a distinctly Christian type. These early socialists argued that the original form of Christianity was communist — as found in the legendary accounts of Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35 where the early communities had “all things in common” — and sought to transform Christianity’s teachings into codes of ethics without all the supernatural trappings. So we find Saint-Simon’s critique of capitalism tied in with an argument that both the Protestant Reformation and medieval Catholicism had distorted the nature of early Christianity, which was really a religion of brotherly love and not a dualistic one that elevated heaven and debased earth. The communities that formed after his death established themselves as a “church” replete with a priesthood that proclaimed Saint-Simon himself as the messiah. Despite the inevitable fractions in the movement, the defections to Fourier who had until then managed to attract only a small band of followers for his phalansteries, and even the much-ridiculed venture to the Middle East to find a female messiah, this type of early socialism washed over the border to affect some German radicals. It was the moral vision and sense of progress in human society towards brotherly love that inspired thinkers and activists like Heinrich Heine, August von Cieszkowski, and an early collaborator with Marx and Engels, Moses Hess.⁴² It also influenced some of the early leaders of the German communist movement, such as Wilhelm Weitling, Hermann Kriege, Karl Grün, and Gottfried Kinkel. It cannot be stressed enough that Marx and Engels worked overtime to denounce and excise this very Christian element from the communist movement.⁴³ Indeed, Marx could be scathing about this French socialism, which “sentimentally bewails the sufferings of mankind, or in Christian spirit prophesies the millennium and universal brotherly love, or in humanistic style drivels on about mind, education and freedom.”⁴⁴

The third point is the most telling of all, for Marx and Engels consciously opposed the apocalyptic flavor of this early communism, especially as it entered Germany through Moses Hess. In his *Die Heilige Geschichte der Menschheit* and *Europäische Trierarchie*, Hess both introduced communism to Germany and gave it a distinctly apocalyptic tone.⁴⁵ His widely read *Europäische Trierarchie* proposed that the fusion of the Young Hegelian criticism of theology, French socialist politics, and English industrial materialism would bring about the total collapse of the existing order and usher in a new age. For Marx and Engels this approach to communism was off with the pixies and had nothing to do with the realities of political organization. In fact, those who charge Marx and Engels with a secularized apocalyptic framework have the wrong target in their sights. The charge applies not to Marx and Engels, but to the likes of Moses Hess and other early communists to whom Marx and Engels were opposed.

Notes

1. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, trans. R. M. French (London: G. Bles, 1937); Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1949).
2. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. P.S. Falla, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981) 372-5. For a more Jewish angle, see Dennis Fischman, *Political Discourse in Exile: Karl Marx and the Jewish Question* (Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1991) 94-108. Perhaps the most dreadful version of this argument came in the context of a paper I once gave on Christian communism in the work of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky. Someone stood up and argued that because religious belief was so deeply ingrained at the time, Marx and Engels were hedging their bets in case Christianity proved to be right.
3. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 177-205.
4. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).
5. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," *Selected Writings: Volume 4: 1938-1940* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2003) 389-400; Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).
6. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 285; Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971a) 116-18; Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute, or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), *On Belief* (London: Routledge, 2001), *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT P, 2003); John Roberts, "The 'Returns to Religion': Messianism, Christianity and the Revolutionary Tradition. Part I: 'Wakefulness to the Future,'" *Historical Materialism* 16.2 (2008): 59-84, "The 'Returns to Religion': Messianism, Christianity and the Revolutionary Tradition. Part II: The Pauline Tradition," *Historical Materialism* 16.3 (2008): 77-103.
7. Quoted in Friedrich Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt, 5 August, 1890," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 49 (Moscow: Progress, 2001 [1890]) 7. The original text by Engels cites Marx in French: "Tout ce que sais, c'est que je ne suis pas Marxiste."
8. "Leaving Certificate from Berlin University," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1926]) 704. Marx's performance, it must be admitted, is not stellar. All he receives is "attended"; no "diligent" or even an "exceptionally" or "extremely diligent," the grades (if we may call them that) for nearly all his other subjects. These include a variety of law subjects, where we also find ecclesiastical law, some in philosophy and the classics (Euripides shows up).
9. The term "writing prophet" indicates that the biblical books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel purport to be written by the prophets themselves. Their authorship is highly unlikely, although some snippets may be traced to the mouths of the prophets mentioned, recorded perhaps by disciples.
10. As a small sample, Isaiah 7:14 famously mentions the "young woman" (translated as "virgin" in the Greek and older English translations) who will "conceive and bear a son." Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 contains the text of one of the "servant songs," which speaks of undeserved suffering by God's chosen servant on behalf of others. These texts and others like them were mined heavily by early Christian authors in their depictions of Jesus, for they were eager to make connections with the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and thereby claim that Christ had been foretold in that text.
11. Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Des Johannes* (Bremen: Karl Schünemann, 1840); Bruno

- Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1841); Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker Und Des Johannes, Dritter Und Letzter Band* (Braunschweig: Fr. Otto, 1842); Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelien Und Geschichte Ihres Ursprungs*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1850-51); Bruno Bauer, *Die Theologische Erklärung Der Evangelien* (Berlin: Gustav Hempel, 1852).
12. Bruno Bauer, *Das Entdeckte Christenthum. Eine Erinnerung an Das 18. Jahrhundert Und Ein Beitrag Zur Krisis Des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843); Bruno Bauer, *Christianity Exposed: A Recollection of the Eighteenth Century and a Contribution to the Crisis of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Esther Ziegler and Jutta Hamm (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2002).
 13. Bruno Bauer, *Kritik Der Geschichte Der Offenbarung: Die Religion Des Alten Testaments in Der Geschichtlichen Entwicklung Ihrer Prinzipien Dargestellt* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1838). At the time Bauer was also editing the *Zeitschrift für spekulative Theologie*, which ran only to three issues, and writing for the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. Here he tried to develop an alternative theology that categorized Christian doctrines in terms of logical categories.
 14. Marx would have been reasonably well prepared for a course on the Bible, since in a typical Gymnasium curriculum of the time he studied German, Latin, Greek, French, and Hebrew, as well as the “sciences” (religious knowledge, mathematics, history, geography, and physics). Or rather, he didn’t study Hebrew, if the absence of any comment on his “Certificate of Maturity” is any guide. In the other two biblical languages, Greek and Latin, he was quite proficient — as he was in religious knowledge: “His knowledge of the Christian faith and morals is fairly clear and well grounded; he knows also to some extent the history of the Christian Church.” See “Certificate of Maturity for Pupil of the Gymnasium in Trier,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1925]) 644.
 15. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel, with a Reprint of the Article Israel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1994 [1885]).
 16. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch Bearbeitet* (Tübingen: C.F. Osiander, 1835); David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902). Strauss argued that the Gospels were deeply and inescapably mythical and that Jesus was no different from any other human being, except in the way he embodies the possibilities for us all to rise to transcendence. This implicitly democratic argument threatened the exclusive claims of the Prussian state and the churches, for whom Jesus’ divine singularity underpinned their exclusive claims.
 17. Or, as Engels puts it, “the battle for dominion over German public opinion in politics and religion” is in fact a battle “over Germany itself” (Frederick Engels, “Schelling on Hegel,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1841}] 181; Friedrich Engels, “Schelling Über Hegel,” *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 [Berlin: Dietz, 1985 {1841}] 256). So also Marx: “There are two kinds of facts which are undeniable. In the first place religion, and next to it, politics are the subjects which form the main interest of Germany today. We must take these, in whatever form they exist, as our point of departure” (Karl Marx, “Letters from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 3 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1844}] 143; Karl Marx, “Briefe Aus Den „Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbüchern” *Marx Engels Werke* [Berlin: Dietz, 1974 {1844}] 344). Marx often becomes exasperated at the backward religiosity and piety of bourgeois German economists and political theorists, especially compared to those in England and France (Karl Marx, “Draft of an Article on Friedrich List’s Book *Das Nationale System Der Politischen Oekonomie*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 4 [Moscow: Progress, 1975 {1971}] 266, 284-85).

18. The Pietistic revival in the 1810s and 1820s was a confluence of the longer history of German Pietism and revivalist waves that rose across Europe in response to Enlightenment rationalism, “Godless” revolutionary republicanism, and the social dislocation produced by the inroads of industrial capitalism. The emphasis was on recovering one’s walk with God, the inner life of faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the all-important role of God’s word, the Bible. The big difference from earlier moments of Pietistic fervor in the eighteenth century was that the nobility and intellectuals took it up with not a little enthusiasm. This combination of the aristocracy and bourgeois intellectuals meant that it was not merely a revival from above, but that it also took a distinctly conservative turn. The controversies of the 1830s and 1840s provided yet another turn in the rumbling history of the Reformation. From Luther’s defiance (and assistance by the Duke of Saxony) in the sixteenth century to the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) between Protestants and Roman Catholics that raged over the German states, Italy, and the Low countries, Protestants in the north and Roman Catholics in the south had dug themselves in to become deeply conservative. The Catholics looked to the pope, while the Protestants (a mix of Lutherans and some Calvinists in the far north) drew upon conservative streams of Pietism, marrying an inner walk with God to a tenacious hold on the Bible as the “word of God.” Despite all the best efforts of the state to keep both Protestants and Catholics in a civil if often fractious relationship, the mutual antagonism ran deep.
19. Bruno Bauer, *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg: Ein Beitrag Zur Kritik Der Religiösen Bewußtseins. Kritische Briefe Über Den Gegensatz Des Gesetzes Und Des Evangeliums* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1839). This position developed over Bauer’s studies of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John (written over an intense period from 1840 to 1842), only to receive full expression in his *Christianity Revealed* of 1843. See Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Des Johannes*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelischen Geschichte Der Synoptiker Und Des Johannes, Dritter Und Letzter Band*; Bauer, *Kritik Der Evangelien Und Geschichte Ihres Ursprungs*. For an excellent discussion that traces the way Bauer’s position developed over these works, see Douglas Moggach, *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 59-79. Unfortunately David Leopold skips by the importance of Bauer’s biblical criticism in *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 101-105.
20. Bauer would soon find himself without a post at all. This one-time favorite of Hegel, who recommended Bauer for a royal prize for an essay on Kant in 1829, was initially dismissed from his post as licentiate at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in the same year he taught Marx. His crime: his attack on a colleague in *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg* (Bauer, *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg: Ein Beitrag Zur Kritik Der Religiösen Bewußtseins. Kritische Briefe Über Den Gegensatz Des Gesetzes Und Des Evangeliums*). Hengstenberg happened to be a leading Pietistic theologian, colleague, and former teacher. Bauer, it seems, could not suffer fools gladly. Fortune was with him, for the Minister of Culture, Altenstein, was favorable to the Hegelians and moved him out of harm’s way — or at least so he thought — to Bonn. But fortune did not smile on him for much longer. Altenstein died in 1840, the same year Friedrich Wilhelm III gave up the ghost. Along with the new king came a new Minister for Culture — or as his title was known in full, for Religious Worship, Education and Medicine — by the name of Eichhorn. This enlightened bureaucrat had no time for the Hegelians and was certainly not going to protect the young radical. Bauer had lasted five years in Berlin (1834-39), but he lasted barely three in Bonn. At the end of March in 1842 his *licentia docendi* was revoked by Eichhorn and he was dismissed by direct order of the new king. With no options left in a university,

he purchased a small farm, ran a tobacco shop and wrote — as prolifically as ever — in the evenings until his death in 1882. I hesitate to use the designations of “left” or “right” Hegelians, not merely because Bauer refused to see himself in these terms, but above all because the distinction was invented by David Strauss in his *Streitschriften Zur Verteidigung Meiner Schrift Über Das Leben Jesu Und Zur Charakteristik Der Gegenwärtigen Theologie* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1980 [1837]); David Friedrich Strauss, *In Defence of My Life of Jesus against the Hegelians*, trans. Marilyn Chapin Massey (Hodgson: 1983). Strauss used it to return fire against Bauer’s (and others’) criticisms of his original *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch Bearbeitet* (*The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*), characterizing Bauer as a “right” Hegelian and himself as a “left” Hegelian.

21. Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, April 8, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Barmen, Bremen, November 20, 1840,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1913]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 23-May 1, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 28-20, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, May 24-June 15, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, June 15, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, July 12-27, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, July 30, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, October 8, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, October 20-21, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, October 29, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, November 13-20, 1839,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]); Frederick Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, December 9, 1839 - February 5, 1840,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1920]). The German originals may be found in Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 8.-9. April 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]), Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 20. November 1840,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, Um Den 23. April - 1. Mai 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, Um Den 28.-30. April 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 24. Mai - 15. Juni 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 15. Juni 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, 12.-27. Juli 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 30. Juli 1839,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]).

- [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 8. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 20./21. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 29. Oktober 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Wilhelm Graeber, 13.-20. November 1839," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]); Friedrich Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 9 Dezember 1839 - 5. Februar 1840," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 41 (Berlin: Dietz, 2008 [1920]). Frederick Engels, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible Or: The Triumph of Faith, to Wit, the Terrible, Yet True and Salutary History of the Erstwhile Licentiate Bruno Bauer; How the Same, Seduced by the Devil, Fallen from the True Faith, Became Chief Devil, and Was Well and Truly Ousted in the End: A Christian Epic in Four Cantos," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1842]); Friedrich Engels, "Die Frech Bedräute, Jedoch Wunderbar Befreite Bibel. Oder: Der Triumph Des Glaubens. Unter Mitwirkung Von Edgar Bauer," *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1842]).
22. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839"; Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841."
 23. "On the nineteenth day of the second month of 1839, on the day when midday is at twelve o'clock, a storm seized me and carried me afar and there I saw them playing cards" (Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, Bremen, February 19, 1839," 414; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 19. Februar 1839," 361) is playfully modelled on the beginning of Ezekiel's vision: "In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month ... the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem" (Ezekiel 8:1, 3).
 24. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841"; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841."
 25. Engels, "To Friedrich Graeber, February 22, 1841," 527; Engels, "An Friedrich Graeber, 22. Februar 1841," 479.
 26. Engels, "The Insolently Threatened Yet Miraculously Rescued Bible"; Engels, "Die Frech Bedräute, Jedoch Wunderbar Befreite Bibel."
 27. Frederick Engels, "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1842]) 238-40; Friedrich Engels, "Schelling Und Die Offenbarung. Kritik Des Neuesten Reaktionsversuchs Gegen Die Freie Philosophie," *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1842]) 312-14.
 28. Schelling had been called out of retirement by the Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, to come to the university in Berlin in order to refute the Hegelians. Engels attended his opening lectures.
 29. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989 [1841]); Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen Des Christentums* (Stuttgart: Reclam, Ditzingen, 1986 [1841]).
 30. Engels, "Schelling and Revelation: Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy," 239; Engels, "Schelling Und Die Offenbarung. Kritik Des Neuesten Reaktionsversuchs Gegen Die Freie Philosophie," 313. Compare Revelation 19-20.
 31. They include: renouncing the world (John 12:25; 15:18; and the whole of chapter 17); what was formerly obscure is now clear (1 Corinthians 13:12); the jewel that was found after a long search (Matthew 13:44-46); giving up everything to follow the truth (Luke 9:57-62); it is stronger than everything in heaven and on earth (Romans 8:35-39); it provides a firm confidence that it can never waver or yield (Hebrews 11:1).

32. See the section called “The Critical Last Judgment” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “The German Ideology: Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Progress, 1976 [1932]) 210-11; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Die Deutsche Ideologie. Kritik Der Neuesten Deutschen Philosophie in Ihren Repräsentanten Feuerbach, B. Bauer Und Stirner Und Des Deutschen Sozialismus in Seinen Verschiedenen Propheten,” *Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels - Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1969 [1932]) 222-23. The other samples come from early pieces, such as an account of the struggle between the Hegelian Michelet and the Pious Leo (Engels, “To Friedrich Graeber in Berlin, Bremen, About April 23-May 1, 1839”; Engels, “An Friedrich Graeber, Um Den 23. April – 1. Mai 1839”); the street fight between the supporters of the two ministers in Bremen, Krummacher and Paniel, (Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber in Barmen, Bremen, November 20, 1840”; Engels, “An Wilhelm Graeber, 20. November 1840”); and his anticipation concerning the overcoming of Hegel (Frederick Engels, “Engels to Marx in Paris, Barmen, 19 November 1844,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 38 (Moscow: Progress, 1982 [1913]); Friedrich Engels, “Engels an Marx 19. November 1844,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 27 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1913]). He also makes use of the same language laced with biblical quotations and allusions to blast the close ties between the German nobility and an arrogant Roman Catholic Church (Frederick Engels, “Requiem for the German *Adelszeitung*,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress, 1975 [1840]) 66-67; Friedrich Engels, “Requiem Für Die Deutsche Adelzeitung,” *Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 1:3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1985 [1840]) 98-99).
33. On 28 July 1894, Engels wrote to Kautsky: “There is no hurry about printing the article. Once I have seen to the proofs you can print it when you wish, in September, say, or even October. I have been mulling over the thing ever since 1841 when I read a lecture by F. Benary on *Revelation*. Since then I have been in no doubt that here we have the earliest and most important book in the New Testament. After a gestation period of fifty-three years there is no great need to hasten its emergence into the world at large” (Frederick Engels, “Engels to Karl Kautsky in Stuttgart, London, 28 July 1894,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 50 (Moscow: Progress, 2004 [1935]) 328-29; Friedrich Engels, “Engels an Karl Kautsky 28. Juli 1894,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 39 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1935]) 276.
34. Frederick Engels, “The Book of Revelation,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 26 (Moscow: Progress, 1990 [1883]); Friedrich Engels, “Das Buch Der Offenbarung,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 21 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1883]).
35. Engels’s relationship with Bauer moves in the reverse to Marx. While Marx gradually became estranged from his one-time friend, Engels moved from satire and dismissal to a deep appreciation of Bauer’s contribution to biblical and philosophical thought.
36. Frederick Engels, “Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress, 1989 [1882]); Friedrich Engels, “Bruno Bauer Und Das Urchristentum,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 19 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1882]).
37. Frederick Engels, “On the History of Early Christianity,” *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 27 (Moscow: Progress, 1990 [1894-95]) 462; Friedrich Engels, “Zur Geschichte Des Urchristentums,” *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 22 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972 [1894-95]) 465.
38. Engels is not overly keen on Renan, since he feels that Renan borrowed and distorted German biblical scholarship. See also the short review of Renan’s *The Antichrist*: Frederick Engels, “Note on a Review of

- E. Renan's *L'antéchrist*," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Moscow: Progress, 1988 [1873]).
39. For example, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Michael V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); Bruce W. Winter, ed., *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).
 40. Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1988); Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1998); Niels Peter Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity*, trans. E. F. Maniscalco (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic, 1999); Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Messiah Myth: The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David* (New York: Basic, 2005); Philip Davies, *Whose Bible Is It Anyway?* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1995); Philip Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1995); Philip Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Philip Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History - Ancient and Modern* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).
 41. Engels, "The Book of Revelation," 117; Engels, "Das Buch Der Offenbarung," 15.
 42. See especially Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 131-76.
 43. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Circular against Kriege," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress, 1976 [1846]) 46; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Zirkular Gegen Kriege," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972 [1846]) 12; Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology," 484-530; Marx and Engels, "Die Deutsche Ideologie," 473-520; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Great Men of the Exile," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress, 1979 [1930]); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Die Großen Männer Des Exils," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1930]).
 44. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress, 1979 [1852]) 142; Karl Marx, "Der Achtzehnte Brumaire Des Louis Bonaparte," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1852]) 153. And of course Engels's popular work, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, argued that this type of socialism was fine for the early, crude stage of socialism, but it really was not going to help mature socialism all that much; Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress, 1989 [1880]) 285-97; Friedrich Engels, "Die Entwicklung Des Sozialismus Von Der Utopie Zur Wissenschaft," *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 19 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973 [1880]) 189-201.
 45. Moses Hess, *Die Heilige Geschichte Der Menschheit* (Stuttgart: 1837), Moses Hess, *Die Europäische Trierarchie* (Leipzig: 1841), Moses Hess, *The Holy History of Mankind and Other Writings*, ed. Shlomo Avineri (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004). See the excellent discussion of Hess in Stathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2003) 121-66.

What Kind of Revolution Do You Want? Punk, the Contemporary Left, and Singularity

Reiichi Miura

Introduction: Aestheticization of the Political

When Leftist progressive programs work in the paradigm of the post-ideological politics of identity, that is to say, when the goal for radical political intervention becomes not to change political systems, but to achieve an epistemological revolution concerning the value of self-realization, it becomes similar to the punk movement that originally started as a movement in popular music. This is the thesis I would like to argue in this paper. Or, more precisely, I would even like to argue that the punk movement should be seen as a latent model for the biopolitical program advocated by such thinkers as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. We therefore can and should learn from the punk movement the structural limits of the program advocated by them.

The main theoretical framework in this argument is the notion of singularity, which, as I will demonstrate, functions as the key concept both for the aesthetics of punk and for the revolution that Hardt and Negri advocate. The use of the notion, on the one hand, makes Hardt and Negri's program assume the form of an epistemological revolution: that is to say, in their conception of revolution, the most important thing is in essence not to change the existing social and cultural institutions in the real world, but to change in the first place our understanding of the world and subjectivity. On the other hand, the implicit commitment to singularity in the aesthetics of punk, which, I will argue, is at the same time to be seen as the end of aesthetics, makes it necessary for the musical movement to function simultaneously as a political movement. The concept of singularity is generally understood to be a possible amendment to the limit of identity politics. Yet, when commitment to singularity leads to advocating an epistemological revolution, that commitment implicitly encourages a certain kind of quietism: if a revolution in changing how we see the world is sufficient, then of course we do not have to go to the trouble of trying to change the world in reality. If liberation or production of singularity is the fundamental model of revolution the contemporary

Left imagines, it is already enacted in the punk movement. In the comparison between the movement in popular music and the trend in the Left imagination, I would like to see the changes in the definitions of the political and the aesthetic in relation to the meaning of identity and singularity in our present.

If one aspect of the meaning of the punk movement lies in its shock effect, and if the primary impact can be epitomized by the debut of the Sex Pistols, their first single, "Anarchy in the UK," certainly indicates that the song's political nature must be one of the most shocking elements of the band: the song starts with the declaration that the singer is "an anarchist" as well as "an antichrist." Of course, the band did not stop there, and went on to release "God Save the Queen." (The Clash's debut single was also the political "White Riot," and there is now a "list of political punk songs" in Wikipedia, which enumerates more than a hundred such songs.)

This of course is what happened in the lyrics of popular songs. Now everybody knows that Johnny Rotten is a punk rather than an anarchist. His declaration produced an impressive shock, probably intentionally, on those who first experienced punk, but the band, as well as Rotten, did not propose any political plan to develop an anarchist cause. In other words, it might be reasonable to think that, in the lyrics, "anarchist" means not someone who is committed to a political cause, but one who simply says "No" to any political plan. The starting point of my argument is that it would be a misunderstanding to think that the latter is politically more radical than the former.

The band's attitude is of course commonly perceived as being just nasty, bad-mannered, and anti-social, rather than political. They became notorious when "swearing at Bill Grundy on live primetime television," to quote from John Davies's essay, "brought them to the attention of the tabloids, the *Daily Telegraph*'s editorial writer, and, it seemed, the whole country."¹ And Davies thus defines the status of the band in the context of the UK punk movement:

[I]t is the Sex Pistols who have deservedly held punk's centre stage. Since 1976, they have been regarded as the quintessential punk group. If not actually the first to release a single and an L.P. (these titles are claimed by the Damned), the Sex Pistols were the first to proclaim "the end of rock 'n' roll" and the first to self-destruct when they were about to become just another rock 'n' roll band.²

In their original career up to 1978, the Pistols continued emphatically to transgress the accepted social norm and to betray the expectations of those involved with them. Or, more correctly, the original history of the band as reported underlines the transgression and the betrayal. The question here is how we should understand the political meaning of the transgression and the betrayal found in the legend, if not the real history, of this legendary punk band that was understood as behaving anti-socially, declaring the end of rock, and acting self-destructively.

Listening to another of the Pistols' songs, "E.M.I," which ridicules the record company that was disgusted enough to terminate its contract with them, their critique could be interpreted as aimed at the oppression imposed by control society: hypocritical corporate capitalism's suppression of the band's artistic freedom. The critique grows more salient when it is put into the context of the punk movement in general. (The Clash has a well-known song on the theme, "Complete Control," and even in "White Riot" there is criticism of school.) Furthermore, the critique is seen as part of the DIY, or "do it yourself," philosophy that is generally considered to mark the nature of the true punk. With a philosophy warning punk bands of the danger of "selling out" to major record labels instead of committing to independent ones, the Pistols (although they, along with Malcolm McLaren, did get contracts with major labels) demonstrated that they were ultimately unable to "sell out," as they were never happy with major labels.

The Sex Pistols performed apparently political songs that produced effects in their scandalism or anti-social attitudes. But primarily the political topics they mention had an aesthetic or, simply, shock effect that made the songs conspicuous, ear-catching, and popular: the political side had a certain kind of aesthetic value here, although this does not necessarily mean that the songs have no political value. In what political context, then, should we put such aestheticization of the political, where the aestheticization works not in order to conceal and justify the controlling of society, as Walter Benjamin once stated, but rather, apparently, to criticize control society? In considering the aesthetics of punk as epitomized by the Sex Pistols, we are not concerned with how to depict the political value of a certain genre of pop or rock music (as we all know and exercise the kind of analysis that sees a political dimension in what appears as aesthetic), but with how to depict the way in which what appears as the cultural exploits the political. Naturally, this is about how a configuration of discourse defines the truly political in our age, in which the political seems to have its foundation in cultural politics.

Anti-Aesthetic of Singularity

Not a few contemporary thinkers claim the value of the commitment to singularity in conceptualizing an alternative form of community that amends the limit of the identitarian formula whereby a community stands on a shared identity. If we regard identity as a technology of control along Foucauldian lines, the commitment is a critique of control society. One of the typical arguments is found in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*, where the resistance to Empire as the global regime of biopower is to be enacted by the alternative community of the multitude made up of singular subjects.

Basically, singularity means to conceive each and every human subject as an instance of an ultimate difference that cannot be reduced to sameness:

The multitude is composed of a set of singularities — and by singularity here we mean a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different. The component parts of the people are indifferent in their unity; they become an identity by negating or setting aside their differences. The plural singularities of the multitude thus stand in contrast to the undifferentiated unity of the people.³

So the commitment to singularity enables us to imagine a community where no minority is suppressed. Although this argument apparently follows Deleuze's ontology, where the essence of being is defined not as identity but as difference and, therefore, representation is seen as the subordination of differences to the identical (Deleuze and Guattari's influence on Hardt and Negri is obvious), the multitude of singularities in Hardt and Negri's argument is conceptualized not on an ontological but on a political level, as in their definition "Multitude is a class concept."⁴ Most simply, the multitude here is their alternative to the concept of the proletariat, or the poor: it is "meant to repropose Marx's political project of class struggle" and is "based not so much on the current empirical existence of the class but rather on its conditions of possibility."⁵ For Hardt and Negri, the multitude as an association of radically different subjects is a possible answer to the aporia of the "unity and plurality" of the working class.⁶

Concerning the unrepresentability of singularity, Kojin Karatani explains that the idea refers to what could be called the "thisness" of the subject.⁷ It is because of the singularity of the subject that, as he demonstrates, one is not able to tell a mother who has lost her child that she could have another one: a child is seen as a singular subject since it is irreplaceable even when a mother has or will have more children. This means that, ultimately, a singular subject is irreplaceable even if there were to exist precisely the same human being, or even a clone, identical in every possible way. The singularity of a singular subject is thus defined as something that can only be named as the "thisness" of the subject: "thisness" as set in the beyond of representation. To conceive a singular subject is, therefore, to imagine a subject that defies any form of representation.

To put this the other way around, if you imagine an item that articulates the singularity of a subject, or a describable mark of singularity, you are not talking about singularity: you are still talking about identity. Philosophically speaking, you are able to imagine someone who shares the articulated marker, the describable item, and therefore to imagine a community whose members share the item, which yet might not fit the known categories of race, gender, or class. It is the logic of identity that is followed in the community since the community is made of the logic of the same, sharing an identical item. This in turn means that in such a conception, a community is always conceived within the logic of inclusion and exclusion.

So, to imagine a singular subject means to imagine a subject whose essence is utterly

unrepresentable, even though the “essence” can be defined as absolute difference. If, for Hardt and Negri, the conception of the multitude as a set of singularities means to open the possibilities of a new form of the proletariat, what they want is to regard the essence of the working class as unrepresentable in order to propose a new form of solidarity in the working class.

Hardt and Negri’s proposal does not seem to me a mere fancy because, as I believe, the aesthetics of punk, as epitomized by the Sex Pistols, is a demonstration of the aesthetics of singularity as expressed in reference to the predicament of the (British) working class.⁸ What lies at the core of this aesthetics is the symptomatic performance of the unrepresentability of one’s identity that has turned into singularity: it is self-destructive as punk expression since it acts out the ultimate uselessness of every medium, including rock or pop music, for the expression of one’s truth. The tunes the band performs must be simple, short, and aggressive, for they are to express the essential inadequacy: even rock ‘n’ roll is a nuisance, a pain in the arse, which could only be the second-best thing available. Sid Vicious became legendary by performing the paradox most clearly: he acted out on stage his inability to play the bass. The Pistols hate everything since they are frustrated; they are always frustrated since their essence is by nature unrepresentable. Since it is unrepresentable, punk expresses anxiety only in performativity, implying the impossibility of representing the truth. This is why the Pistols had to break their instruments, incite the audience, and even symbolically destroy the whole stage and their performance.

In fact, what the Pistols tried to express may be a concrete and specific frustration they felt in their specific experience in their own cultural context. Yet, I wish to argue, the Pistols are punks rather than anarchists; their “message” has a shock effect, that is, a meaninglessness that defies communication, rather than a communicative value that persuades the listener of how he or she is alienated. They are punks when their songs have aesthetic rather than political value: even when their songs fail to represent the actual and political predicament they have to live through, they certainly offer and demonstrate a new style of rock music. Their songs are disconnected from, or transcend, if you will, the specific political situation they live in. And when we admit this aesthetic dimension in the Pistols, what we see in them is the performance of the aesthetics of singularity, or aesthetics corresponding to the concept of subjectivity as the singular, rather than the political expression of any specific situation.

Yet, logically at least, the aesthetics of singularity involves the end of the aesthetic. If punk music demonstrates the radical expressionism of the singular subject, what is expressed there is the ultimate inadequacy of the medium they use as well as of any other possible medium: singularity is expressed only when one performs in such a way as to show that even the three-chord rock ‘n’ roll they more or less love is ultimately useless. This is where punk signifies the end of rock ‘n’ roll.

The punk movement thus concerns post-historicism. It is the invention of a “new” style that paradoxically tells us that there cannot be any new style that represents

the punks' singular truth, since singularity defies representation. The style tells the death of rock: it implicitly insists that the history of rock has reached its ultimate dead end with the invention of punk, where even rock 'n' roll appears as insufficient. It is the declaration of the post-history of rock in the sense that, while the history of rock music can be seen as a process of searching for a better beat or a better musical style that more adequately represents the performer's self, when punk music returns to the simplest form of three-chord rock 'n' roll, punk performers know from the beginning that there cannot be an adequate medium for their expression. Punk's aggressiveness is directed at its own medium of music in this sense: it is an empirical revolution that finds its own medium an obstacle rather than a true medium. When punk negates the possibility of rock music functioning as a medium of representation, every rock band before punk looks merely sophisticated and elitist.

This aesthetics at the end of history entails the changes in aesthetic values that we frequently encounter in talk about cultural politics. The end of the aesthetic involved in punk aesthetics follows the same logic as the critique of universalist aesthetics in the multiculturalist agenda. Put most simply, the style in punk is seen as a sign of the culture to which one belongs rather than as an aesthetic expression. The punk movement thus works to form an imagined community: when you play punk tunes or go to punk shows, you are a punk. To love punk music defines your identity, simply speaking. On the other hand, if you love a Beatles song and are smitten with Beatlemania, you are still who you are.

This entails the paradox that punk is and is not a style. One way to articulate this paradox is to speculate what "cover" means in the aesthetics of punk. A good example is Sid Vicious's great cover of "My Way," where the song's message really starts to sound punkish to the appreciative listener (although to "do it my way" suggests here to destroy the song, in stark contrast with Sinatra's version). Put schematically, this means that a punk can cover every possible song, while nobody can cover a punk song if one is not a punk. As Sid exemplified, a punk can sing any song in his own punkish way if he likes, whereas it is not possible to present the essence of a punk song in a covered and rearranged version. The point is not that if a punk song is covered in a different arrangement it is no longer punk (although that is true), but that, while we discover how beautiful a song of, say, Bob Dylan's really is when sung by, say, Peter, Paul and Mary, a true punk song does not have such an aesthetic essence to be exposed in a new arrangement. This does not mean that there is nothing beautiful in a punk tune, but that while it may have a beautiful melody line, that line cannot be the essence. Schematically, a punk tune is what is played by punks; when some other people perform it, it is a fake. In the sense that punks invented a new style of rock music, punk music is a style; yet at the same time it defies the notion of style insofar as punk's "style" defies the necessary condition of what an aesthetic style means: the style being the aesthetic essence that has universal applicability.

Another way of explicating the paradox is to consider the fact that we are not able

to tell, in principle, which song of the Pistols is better than others; all we can do is to tell which is most typical or exemplary. For, if there is a song better than others, the song must be well-written; if there is a song better-written than others, there must be a better technique of song-writing that can represent the truth of punk; and if there is a better technique, the band should start to develop from the technique, ceasing to be a punk band. On the other hand, even a band like the Rolling Stones, whose image as wild, surly, and more or less anti-social (at least in their earlier career), shows an aesthetic attitude crucially different from punks. When the Stones identify themselves as prophets of R&B, we are still able to apply the deep structure of aesthetics in order to appreciate the value of their songs. And, as another example, when Eric Clapton confesses his desire to be a black, the desire still clearly concerns the idea of aesthetic excellence: he does not want to be black just in order to be black; he wants to be so in order to play better or more authentic blues. The desire might be problematic, but the structure of the desire illustrates the aesthetic dimension, or confusion, in pop and rock music. Punk invents a style, but the essence of the style means a dead end. The aesthetics exemplified by the punk movement is significant because the aesthetics involves a logic that tells the end of aesthetics.

Punk music thus signifies an empty form of expressionism that is the logical conclusion of singular subjectivity. It has to be called empty because, ultimately, it has nothing specific to express except the impossibility of expression. This is where the aesthetic is understood only in terms of the anti-aesthetic: the aesthetic is a mirror of the politics of those who want to belong to the identities constituted around the aesthetics. It is commitment to singularity that necessarily only translates the aesthetic into the political.

The Political and the Biopolitical

Yet, I believe, it is impossible to define “punk” as an essentially political movement. In *The Philosophy of Punk*, Craig O’Hara succeeded in illustrating what kind of political philosophy is involved in the punk movement.⁹ When he argues that punk’s initial characteristic is its stress on “rebellion” (38) and taking on “responsibility” (39), that its ideology is roughly identical to anarchism, where its non-conformism involves anti-violence, pro-feminism, and eco-consciousness, and that its most distinguished political and ethical attitude is found in the faith in the DIY philosophy, where self-control and self-government are chosen over popular and commercial success, I do not disagree with him, although, as O’Hara himself admits, there could be other definitions of the punk movement. Even when the movement does involve such a philosophy, however, there is a problem with O’Hara’s argument: if commitment to the philosophy is the essence of the punk movement, then to play punk tunes, theoretically, turns out to be just an accessory to the philosophy. This might be O’Hara’s true point, but I believe that the essence of punk lies in the bands’ activities, tunes, records, and performances, rather than what philosophy the movement follows. What

I am trying to analyze is a cultural movement in the realm of pop and/or rock music, not a political movement of new anarchism that starts around the end of the 1970s in Europe and the United States.

What O'Hara unwittingly presupposes is the concept of punk as an identity: since you are a punk when you love punk tunes, what you do off stage is as meaningful as what you do on stage. That is to say, the reason he wrote the book on punk philosophy is that punk cannot be merely an aesthetic expressed in its songs. This clearly demonstrates that the category of aesthetics bankrupts itself with the re-definition of the new realm of the political when an aesthetic style is connected with the notion of identity, or "lifestyle," the term more often used in the case of the punk movement. With the end of the pure and ideology-free category of aesthetics, the aesthetic becomes the political, where all everyday activities eventually assume significant political values.

Analysis of the punk movement makes it clear that the changes in the definitions of the aesthetic and the political result from the concept of "rebellion" or a critique of control society; or, more precisely, the concept of "society" or "the establishment" as the technology of invisible control. Michel Foucault calls biopolitics a field of new political power that emerged in the nineteenth century in order to govern, regulate, and control populations.¹⁰ According to him, biopolitics came into being as a new configuration of political power, different from the older notion of politics, when "population" was starting to be recognized as a new object of governance, something essentially different from an aggregation of people. Although what Foucault argues is a new form of controlling power and what I find in the punk movement is resistance to this (sometimes Hardt and Negri call the former biopower and the latter biopolitics), my point here is that the passage from the political to the biopolitical appears as the emergence of a new field that used to be regarded as outside of the political. The politics of identity as resistance to hegemony, as symbolized by the political dimension of the punk movement, should be understood in terms of biopolitics rather than politics. The punk movement is not a political movement per se, as far as it is conceptualized around the hub of punk music as music; yet it certainly involves a genuine biopolitical dimension — a new political dimension that is not thoroughly political in the older definition — when the music functions as a certain kind of marker of identity.

In fact, politics in culture has been central not only in the academic literature on popular music, but also in the wider range of cultural studies. Talking about rock music in general, Lawrence Grossberg, a well-known scholar of cultural studies, thus defines the "politics" of rock.¹¹ It essentially functions as "an affective machine" that "operates on the plane of affect and its primary effects are affective": that is to say, "It does not (or only rarely) challenge the major dimensions of American ideology; it is largely liberal and ameliorist."¹² The "affective machine," however, enacts "a politics of fun (where fun is not the same thing as pleasure, nor is it simply a historical experience)." The meaning of the "politics of fun" concerns the music's relation to its

supposed target of “youth”: “Youth itself is transformed from a matter of age into an ambiguous matter of attitude, defined by its rejection of boredom and its celebration of movement, change, energy; that is, fun. And this celebration is lived out in and inscribed upon the body — in dance, sex, drugs, fashion, style, and even the music itself.”¹³

The reason the “affective machine,” through the “politics of fun,” concerns only the limited audience of the young, however it might be transformed, is that rock is “a differentiating machine”: “It continually differentiates Us (those within the space of its logic) from Them (those outside the space of its logic).”¹⁴ Grossberg furthermore argues: “The history of rock is marked by a continuous struggle over what is really authentic rock and which groups are really invested in it. To be clear here, I am not saying that there really is such a difference; rather it is an effect of rock’s differentiating work. . . . In this way, rock is continually restructuring itself as a field, reconstituting its ‘center.’”¹⁵

One thing that becomes clear here is that Grossberg points out what I argued to be the politics of identity involved in the punk movement as the fundamental characteristic of the politics of rock in general. Although I will have some points to make later about the degree to which rock music historically worked as a “differentiating machine,” it is also true that what I referred to as the characteristic of the punk aesthetic — the belief that every song can be covered by a punk, but no punk song can be covered by a non-punk — is to be found in other rock musicians and other kinds of rock music believed to belong to other subgenres. It is plausible, I certainly agree, that an enthusiastic fan of Led Zeppelin will believe that Zep can play anyone else’s song as if it were a genuine Zep song, while no musician except the members of the band could play any Zep song as a Zep song. And the same can be said of numerous groups. My point is that, if we regard the history of the original Sex Pistols as the paradigmatic example of the punk movement, the characteristic of what I called the aesthetics of punk can be seen as a series of coherent logical necessities of the commitment to singularity. In other words, I am trying to do a tentative mapping of the history of rock music in which what is exemplified by the Sex Pistols is a kind of logical apex of the belief in rock’s “progress.” It is only when one believes in the empty expressionism of the singular subject that one can say that the paradox in the notion of “cover” in punk is a theoretical requisite, which in fact seems to be believed by a comparatively larger audience and to be believed to be not a matter of a band, but the nature of the movement. On the other hand, if Led Zeppelin writes songs that are really fit to express its essence (as is probably believed by many of its fans), what the band covers can only be a good imitation of genuine songs of its own (in spite of what fans might believe listening to a cover). The empty form of expressionism is a theoretical realization of what Grossberg argues to be the politics of rock in general.

Grossberg concludes that “rock is a deterritorializing machine that defines a politics of everyday life.” Adopting the notion of “everyday life” from the situationist

Henri Lefebvre (which is, Grossberg notes, “a kind of disciplinization” in Foucault’s term and “a politics of territorialization” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms), he observes that the politics of rock is “defined by its identification of the stability of everyday life with boredom” and then “draws or produces ‘lines of flight’ which transform the boredom of the repetition of everyday life into the energizing possibilities of fun.”¹⁶ So, when he declares that “all rock can do is change the rhythms of everyday life,”¹⁷ he means:

In this context it is important to begin by admitting the obvious and painful truth that rock rarely challenges the political and economic institutions of society (and when it does, it is usually either marginal, utopian, or hypocritical). It does not even challenge or attempt to negate the political and economic conditions of everyday life. It remains largely within the privileged space of everyday life, although it often imagines its romanticized other — its image of alienated rebellion, its black musical sources — as living outside everyday life.¹⁸

From this observation, we might understand why O’Hara tries to explicate the punk movement in terms of its “philosophy” rather than of its musical elements. It is possible to argue that while the punk movement emphasizes the aspect of a differentiating machine (you are a punk when you love punk), it at the same time reinforces its political aspect, making what you do as a punk off stage (the anarchist politics that agrees with feminism, ecology, alternative lifestyles) just as significant as what you do on stage.

Yet, as argued here, O’Hara’s latent project to define punk as a “political” movement is in vain, and Grossberg’s critique of the limit of the politics of rock fairly clearly demonstrates what it means to analyze a cultural movement in terms of the “political.” When Grossberg states that “rock rarely challenges the political and economic institutions of society,” his observation ignores the biopolitical effects that rock, and especially punk as a movement, entails. It might even be said that the limit Grossberg points out coincides with the borderline between the political and the biopolitical, for his definition of rock as an affective machine can be a critique of rock’s limit as long as one does not see the possibility of the affective effects forging the listeners’ identity, through which they start to act in order to change the world (about which O’Hara offers numerous examples). O’Hara’s argument essentially focuses on what can be called the performative effect of popular music, or the music’s power to change the listeners’ identity, in just the same way that Judith Butler argues that the norm of gender performatively defines one’s subjectivity, while Grossberg carefully remains suspicious of the power of the politics of fun, as the politics of the body, changing “everyday life into the energizing possibilities of fun.”

In fact, I would rather like to argue that what matters in the analysis of the

political effect of the punk movement are not the confusions or disagreements about empirical consequences that the punk movement brings about, but the differences in the paradigms, political or biopolitical, that one presupposes in the analysis. When Grossberg observes that “all rock can do is change the rhythms of everyday life,” rock is politically impotent for him, but to change the rhythms of everyday life is in fact everything that a biopolitical program could imagine. It certainly is difficult to bridge the political and biopolitical paradigms. For one thing, if it is the ultimate goal of biopolitics to forge one’s new identity by changing one’s rhythm of everyday life, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether the subsequent political action that the person with the new identity enacts is a subjective act or an effect of the music which one believes has changed one’s identity: in the paradigm of the older politics, it is subjective and the music is only a cue, but in the biopolitical paradigm it is in fact evidence that music can change the world. For another thing, and more essentially, the antinomy between the political and the biopolitical concerns the realm that politics should refer to. While something politically meaningful can be achieved only when it effects changes in the public realm, as is implied in Grossberg’s argument, the biopolitical by definition problematizes the definition and the segregation of the public and the private. If a political achievement means changes in the public organizations that govern the shape and the formation of the private, the biopolitical viewpoint insists that that is setting the cart before the horse, as is exemplified by “the personal is political,” the well-known slogan of feminism as one of the earliest (bio-) political programs focusing on the value of identity. In the paradigm of biopolitics, the private, and how the realm of the private is defined, should be the ultimate target of the political program. Hence it is the greatest biopolitical achievement if the rhythm of everyday life can be altered.

As long ago as 1979, in one of the earliest monographs on the punk movement, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige analyzed it in terms of lifestyle, or identity, pointing out punk’s relation to the subculture of the black minority in England and its music, reggae.¹⁹ In its general theorization of “subculture” in cultural studies, *Resistance through Rituals* argues that, being “highly ritualized and stylized,” subcultures only offer “a resolution which, because pitched largely at the symbolic level, was fated to fail.”²⁰ This observation returns us to the problem of biopolitics. The problem involves Grossberg’s critique of identity politics in rock formation: the postulation of its “romanticized other” as “living outside everyday life.”

Self-Marginalization

In this part, I would like first to clarify the confusion in my argument concerning singularity and identity. I defined the aesthetics of punk as one of singularity, and the biopolitics involved in the punk movement as the politics of identity. This confusion results from a more profound paradox involved in my definition of the aesthetics of punk: although it is an empty expressionism of singularity, it at the same time

functions as the biopolitical imperative that decides one's identity as a punk. This is confusingly paradoxical, especially when I, following Hardt and Negri, defined singularity as a certain kind of critique of identity; but this, as I will explain, is also logical.

The paradox not only results from a logical necessity, but it also concerns my insistence that the analysis of the punk aesthetic becomes meaningful for a critical understanding of Hardt and Negri's advocacy of the new Leftist movement in the future. Toward the end of *Multitude*, after repeating the definition of the multitude as being "composed of radical differences, singularities, that can never be synthesized in an identity,"²¹ they argue that the "primary decision made by the multitude is really the decision to create a new race or, rather, a new humanity."²² "Race" is, of course, what we usually regard as a category of identity. Presumably, they tentatively call the multitude "a new race" because of its biopolitical nature — it is described in terms of corporeality or bodily metaphors since the imperative for the singular subject, according to them, is "Become different than you are!"²³ in a "spontaneous and improvised" process²⁴ without appeal to any "political" program — and they quickly revise "race" to "humanity." So, it is possible to consider their use of "race" as a slip of tongue (although they use the word four times in the paragraph), but there certainly is a need to use some category of identity to describe the goal for the multitude because it is by definition unrepresentable: they have to use their neologism, "multitude," or to adopt a certain existing category of identity that is named and representable.

After the appeal to the creation of "a new humanity," furthermore, Hardt and Negri justify the appeal to identity with a re-definition of "love": "When love is conceived politically, then, this creation of a new humanity is the ultimate act of love."²⁵ Even though the appeal to the category of identity, "a new humanity," may involve the identitarian limit of exclusion and inclusion, the limit is to be amended by re-creating the bond of the collectivity, or a new form of love that is "conceived politically." This may be so; yet we hardly need reminding that when the neoconservatives promoted neoliberal programs, they also appealed to love in terms of "family values" in order to destroy existing social and cultural communities — recall Margaret Thatcher's declaration that "there is no such thing as society"²⁶ — and to introduce the market fundamentalism of free competition. Thatcher and Hardt and Negri are of course saying different, or even opposing, things, but they both are talking in the same paradigm: it is the mysterious "love" as a sophisticated instance of personal responsibility. In its context Hardt and Negri clearly imply by "love" something wider than the normative heterosexual bondage, but even Thatcher continues after the declaration: "It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbor." This is a political form of "love" and is, certainly, a good thing.

In order to analyze the paradox of singularity and identity in punk aesthetics, we need to pay attention to one of the ideological cores of the punk movement: the DIY philosophy. It clearly looks ideologically meaningful when O'Hara introduces it as a

kind of base structure that defines punk's difference: "Punk Rock has differed from standard Rock and Roll not only in sound, lyrical content and performance styles, but also in the way bands do their business and interact with the audiences."

DIY thus means that punks belong to independent labels, publish their own 'zines, and manage their shows by themselves. According to him, the reason the DIY tactic is meaningful is: "By working for a major label and giving them the right to market a band's songs, art works, lyrics, and image for them, a band places commercial success over creativity and messages."²⁸

I do not deny that there must have been cases where major labels forced punk bands to commercialize, suppressing their artistic initiative. Yet, what O'Hara's rhetoric demonstrates is the effect of the differentiating machine where there cannot be anyone in the major labels who appreciates the artistic side of the bands. Postulating the demonic Other, his rhetoric becomes Manichean, where to belong to a major label means to yield to commercialism. It is in this rhetoric that belonging (to which label) becomes the central matter, for "major label" is conceptualized as something contagious: if one touches it, one must contract the disease. Here, DIY means the transformation of anti-commercialism into the politics of identity: you have to belong to a race other than that of the major labels in order to criticize commercialism at all.

Regarding commercialism as contagious in this way involves another rhetoric that defies representation. The philosophy of DIY insists that you can never be represented correctly by anyone else: hence you must do everything by yourself. DIY is the rejection of delegation. To be a punk means to be a radical individualist. In other words, individualism here signifies the othering of others.

In considering this, Brian Cogan's note on DIY seems more acceptable: "Although there is no one complete easy definition of the DIY aesthetic and many punks disagree among themselves as to what truly constitutes a true DIY initiative, it can be sufficient to summarize the DIY ethos as one of independence from corporate control with an emphasis on individual creativity and self-expression. The DIY aesthetics is controversial to this day as to the extent one can work within the system and how much an individual can have control over his or her work and means of production."²⁹ This explanation very clearly shows, firstly, that from the tension between the desire to define the "true DIY initiative" and its impossibility follows the identitarian paradigm of inclusion and exclusion, and, secondly, that because of the paradigm, DIY as an aesthetic can function only with the confusion about the borderline that tells a true punk from a not-so-true punk.

Logically speaking, this results from the commitment of punk aesthetics to singularity: because the essence of a punk is an indefinable and unrepresentable difference, the philosophy of punk should, simultaneously, work within the rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion (in trying to valorize the impossible difference) and face the structural impossibility of defining the identity of punk. And yet, at the same time, this is also where we should understand that this paradox of singularity makes no

exception for punk aesthetics. We use “race” as a category of identity as a matter of everyday language, but what is “blackness” and who are “black people”? The moment we start thinking of the discourse of race critically, we notice that the category of “black” is a historical construct that works only in the confusion at the borderline, that the essence of “blackness” can only be defined as an indefinable difference when we try to use the category of “black” tactically, and that the concept of the community of “black people” can be meaningful at all only when we conceptualize it as a set of singularities, that is, not as a group of people who are uniform in whatever sense but as a set of people who are essentially different from one another. In a sense, an appeal to identity always involves a latent appeal to singularity: categorization of people is conceivable only when we unwittingly posit its indefinable and mysterious essence as difference, insofar as we believe that each and every human being is different. The conceptualization of singularity is a critical commitment that reveals the paradox involved in the rhetoric of identity and its politics rather than sophistication or amendment of the politics of identity. In using the rhetoric of belonging and non-belonging, the notion of singularity insists that its entailing politics illogically remain, while it should be logically impossible when singularity is by definition indefinable. In other words, the rhetoric of singularity only completes the paradigm of difference involved in that of identity.

Part of the first quote from Hardt and Negri should be repeated here to argue the point more clearly:

The component parts of the people are indifferent in their unity; they become an identity by negating or setting aside their differences. The plural singularities of the multitude thus stand in contrast to the undifferentiated unity of the people.

Of course, the people are not a homogeneous collectivity; “the people” here are conceptualized as homogeneous in a certain kind of political discourse. By the same token, I do not believe that it ever happened that the “component parts” of the people became identical; the concept of the people has always been part of the confusion at the borderline that tells those who belong to it from those who do not. That is to say, we do not have to “become different than we are” in order to forge the multitude: we are already forging the multitude, logically speaking, since we are different from one another and we only have an impossible singularity, or the essence of us as one people, in order to imagine us as a people. As Deleuze argues, the heterotopia of singular differences is our ontological condition, our state of nature, if we believe in the value of singularity in the first place. To advocate for a return to the status quo of singularity is a philosophical perversion, if not a new form of conservatism.

Analyzing the L.A. punk movement from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, Daniel S. Traber critically calls the aesthetics he finds in it “self-marginalization.”³⁰ Quoting

Black Flag's "White Minority" — "Gonna be a white minority / All the rest'll be the majority / We're gonna feel inferiority / I'm gonna be a white minority" — as an epigraph for the essay, he observes:

Clearly there are political motivations behind self-marginalization in punk, but its initial and fundamental concern is that of a privatized quest to differentiate one's self from the status quo, as a person free of control outside him/herself³¹

Commitment to singularity is commitment to freedom by way of making one's essence a radical difference. The theoretical shift changes the notion of culture as an aesthetic realization into the expression of one's belonging, for the singular subject without representable truth principally defies anything universal in the paradox that my essence as difference is universal. In this sense, the concept of singular subject is an attempt to imagine what can be called an ontological minority: one is marginalized in the world of the Truth when one is a figure of radical difference. Theoretically speaking, this is where one can only claim "spontaneous and improvised" desires, for, under the rule of Truth, the marginalized cannot appeal to reason or rationality, as Hardt and Negri correctly observe: "What Lenin and the soviets proposed as the objective of the insurrectional activity of an elite vanguard...must be expressed today through the desire of the entire multitude."³² Since the principle of the multitude is not reason but desire, the process it will use should only be "spontaneous and improvised." Commitment to singularity is commitment to the desiring subject. Hardt and Negri are here using the same paradigm as neoliberal market fundamentalism toward apparently opposite ends (and signifying their congruence with punks). So, probably, the true problem is whether or not our essential desire is for neoliberalism: an assertion hard to refute.

Conclusion: Limit of the Biopolitical Program

My argument presupposes a vague impression of the ubiquity of the notion of punk, or commitment to the "spirit" of punk, in contemporary culture, and a rough mapping of rock history before and after punk. As for the former, although many seem to agree that the original punk movement was rather short-lived (which is only natural if we believe that a self-destructive tendency is one of its elements), there have been various "resurrections" of punk not only in terms of the developed, or watered-down, forms of hardcore, straight-edge, emo, pop-punk, etc., but also in the way that a band that does not follow the musical style, like the Smiths or the Prodigy, for two contrasting examples, is described as an heir of the spirit of punk. While it is naturally confusing as to who is the true heir, the situation becomes all the more confused when the spirit of punk is argued to be found in various cultures other than popular music. In an anthology titled *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk*, we are able to find

arguments for punk spirit in fine art, literature, science fiction (cyberpunk), film, comics, fashion, and so on. I believe that the popularity of the word does not simply come from abuse of the notion, but rather that it came to be used as an umbrella term for biopolitical rebellion. In other words, the fundamental point of my argument is that Hardt and Negri's political program is punk.

With regard to history, my point is to see in the original punk movement a stark watershed where identitarianism replaced universalism.³³ One example of the end of universalism is the absence of a British invasion after punk: when, as a variation of the punk spirit, the idea of universal success ceased to appeal and a local success came to be seen as just as valuable as a global one; the Smiths or Oasis, for example, probably the most successful bands respectively in the 1980s and 1990s in Britain, both of them defining their character in terms of the tradition of Britishness, did not dream the dream of conquering the American market.

I do not consider this absence to be accidental, since the meaning of "genre" in popular music seems to have changed in this regard. Rock music before punk was essentially based on the appropriation of black music. Early rock 'n' roll bands played and learned from R&B, and in the 1950s the color line in musical categorization was not strict or strong: a black musician could play rock 'n' roll. Of course, the problem of the color line is complex and complicated, but in the 1960s there still was Jimi Hendrix, and the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton can be seen as, to some degree, white musicians trying to play black music, while punk is essentially regarded as a white movement. Rock's appropriation of black music is undoubtedly a form of exploitation, but the exploitation is only conceivable due to the appeal of the universal aesthetic value of music: they exploited R&B because R&B is great regardless of the color of those who play it. It is only when the notion of universal music has lost its appeal, then, that "mixture rock," white rock with black rhythm, is possible as a subgenre: just as the notion of a hybrid is possible only when one admits the existence of race as an entity, so mixture is possible only when black music and white music are conceived of as being essentially different. Why do we regard Hendrix as a rock guitarist while we call Prince the genius of R&B?

It is interesting that the glam rock movement frequently used identity as its theme, as most clearly exemplified by David Bowie (or the Lodger, Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane), who also questioned the representative nature of the rock hero in such songs as "Fame," "Heroes," and so on, just before the rise of punk; this is assuming that the universalism in rock music before punk took the form of the appeal of aesthetic sophistication in terms of art and progressive rocks, and that the punk movement is in essence a rebellion against such universalism. For the changes in the meaning of genre are found not only in relation to race. The music scene after punk sees a proliferation of various subgenres such as hardcore, slash, emo, alternative, techno, dance, house, mixture, neo-acoustic, and world music. As Grossberg argues, the rock music scene is always more or less sectarian with the effect of the differentiating

machine. Yet, while the paradox of subgenre before punk means that the belief in genre means to believe in the value of the music that belongs to it — insisting, even if parochially, that the genre has universal value (witness the formation of Southern rock, for example) — the paradox of genre after punk signifies that, while each musician hates categorization, he or she at the same time makes an appeal to the value of authenticity in terms of the genre's rules (c.f., the subgenre of emo). This is the contrast between universalism and identitarianism. Genres must be transcended in universalism; they must proliferate in identitarianism.

I do not believe that the watershed symbolized by the punk movement happened only in the logic inherent in the field of music. It must have involved a wider configuration in our cultural politics, most generally observed in relation to the shifts of paradigms around the end of Cold War, or, for example, Francis Fukuyama's corresponding insistence of the end of history. So my point here is that while Fukuyama's argument is valuable when we consider it as an observation on our cultural politics in general that the universalist discourse of progress is coming to be seen as obsolete, the end of history is not conceived (only) because of the end of communism in international politics. Even in the history of pop music, as I have tried to argue, the replacement of universalism with the rhetoric of identity is traceable as a necessity of history, not as any form of deprivation or coercion.

In other words, the desire for self-marginalization involved in the punk movement should be regarded as the epitome of the problems of our cultural politics in the post-Cold War era. After the part quoted above, Traber identifies the "privatized quest" of the marginalized self as the "crusade for individualism, for escaping the authority of society."³⁴ The cultural analysis of punk is meaningful since punk, on one hand, is obviously a non-conformist rebellion against control society, which basically is the universalist paradigm of Cold War discourse, as exemplified, for example, by the critique of other-directed personality in David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*; and yet punk is also, on the other hand, an identitarian movement as we have demonstrated. If this is because punk truly signifies the divide between universalism and identitarianism, Hardt and Negri's politics of singularity is to be seen as an identitarian translation of the Cold War paradigm of conformism and individualism into that of the multitude and singularity.

In a sense, it is a truly utopian and desirable thing that singular punks should form a global community of the multitude from which nobody is excluded. Yet, as I have argued, you do not have to become a punk, either philosophically or aesthetically, in order to form the utopian community: what is required is an epistemological revolution, a change not in the institution of community but in the notion of community, since what Hardt and Negri advocate is not political intervention but re-definition of the idea of solidarity. You do not have to change anything in the world; you only have to change your conception of community. On the other hand, however, there is a disturbing aporia in conceiving a community of punks because punk is and

is not a matter of lifestyle. If punk is an identity that defines its lifestyle, there should be a qualification for joining the punk community; if punk is a singularity, on the other hand, you do not have to exclude anyone because everyone is a punk.

In fact, there is already an answer to this in the biopolitical discourse: punk is not a style, nor a matter of lifestyle; it is commitment to life itself. Ian MacKaye of Minor Threat, Fugazi, and Discord Records tells us: "So first it was a fashion thing, then it was a music thing. And then I went to go see my first show, which was The Cramps. What I saw there was a room full of people who were challenging conventional thinking on every front and I realized that, whoa there's no limit to this! It's not a lifestyle, it's just a way of being. Ideas, thinking, life. 'Lifestyle' suggests that it's something you can check in or check out of."³⁵ Clearly, the implication here is that to be a punk means to live one's life to the fullest (and therefore, you cannot choose to be a punk as a mere matter of lifestyle). Here, to be a punk truly is the ultimate goal in the biopolitical paradigm where everything politically important ceases to be a matter of politics in the public world and the ultimate form of politics takes the shape of the politics of life.

And when Hardt and Negri talk about poverty in accord with their Marxist heritage, they virtually define the poor in the same line: "*The only non-localizable 'common name' of pure difference in all eras is that of the poor. The poor is destitute, excluded, repressed, exploited — and yet living! It is the common denominator of life, the foundation of the multitude.*"³⁶ When the poor is defined as "excluded, repressed, exploited" as well as "destitute," not having money does not qualify for being poor; it rather is significant in its biopolitical foundation as one who is "living" in spite of deprivation. The poor is an identity, according to them. This is the reason why they argue: "*The poor is itself power. There is World Poverty, but there is above all World Possibility, and only the poor is capable of this.*"³⁷ If the poor is itself power, it is questionable whether or not one would want to grow out of poverty: it rather seems to be "a way of being" where one leads one's life to the fullest. The most significant problem is that since Hardt and Negri treat the poor as if it were an identity, it is ambiguous what the qualification is to acquire the name of the poor. Can one be the poor if one wants to be? If to stop being the poor is not the goal of Hardt and Negri's program, the goal instead might be that everyone becomes the poor, forming the community of the poor from which nobody is excluded.

This certainly is a program of self-marginalization. In accord with Grossberg's critique of punk's romanticization of its "image of alienated rebellion and its black musical sources" as the other who lives outside "everyday life," Traber also points out: "What aims to be a critique of repression in L.A. punk ends up an agent of it, for its rejection of the dominant culture relies on adopting the stereotypes of inferior, violent, and criminal nonwhites."³⁸ The rhetoric of singularity is in fact a mere translation of the rhetoric of identity. Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?

Notes

1. John Davies, "The Future of 'No Future': Punk Rock and Postmodern Theory," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 29: 4 (Spring 1994): 3-25.
2. Davies, "The Future of 'No Future'" 12.
3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004) 99.
4. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 103.
5. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 105.
6. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 103.
7. Kojin Karatani, *Tan-kyu II (Investigations II)*. 1989. Kodansha-gakujutsu-bunko. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994.
8. See Roger Sabin (Ed.), *Punk Rock: So What? The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999).
9. Craig O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*, 2nd ed. (London: AK Press, 1999).
10. See Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Vol. Three, ed. James D. Faubion; trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 2000) 201-22; "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76.*, eds. Muaro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana; trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003); and *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, ed. Michel Senellart; trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
11. Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997).
12. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 113.
13. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 114.
14. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 113.
15. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 113-49.
16. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 114. For an analysis of the relationship between the punk movement and situationists, see Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).
17. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 115.
18. Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself* 114.
19. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).
20. In John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview." *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson. 1975 (London: Hutchinson, 1976) 9-74; 47.
21. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 355.
22. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 356.
23. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 356.
24. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 354.
25. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 356.
26. See Margaret Thatcher, "Interview for Woman's Own." Margaret Thatcher Foundation. 1 January 2009. <<http://www.margarethathatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689/>>.
27. O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk* 133.
28. O'Hara, *The Philosophy of Punk* 157.
29. Brian Cogan, *Encyclopedia of Punk Music and Culture* (Westport: Greenwood, 2006) 62.

30. Traber, Daniel S., "L. A.'s 'White Minority': Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginalization." *Cultural Critique* 48 (Spring 2001): 30-64.
31. Traber, "L. A.'s 'White Minority'" 38.
32. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* 353-54.
33. Although it is not my intention to write an appropriate history of rock here, which is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, my crude mapping is conceptualized along the lines of George Lipsitz's argument. See George Lipsitz, "Against the Wind: Dialogic Aspects of Rock and Roll." *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990) 99-132.
34. Traber, "L. A.'s 'White Minority'" 39.
35. Ian MacKaye, "Ian MacKaye Speaks to Bryan Raymond Turcotte," in Bryan Raymond Turcotte, *Punk Is Dead Punk Is Everything* (Corte Madera: Gingko, 2007) 6.
36. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000) 156.
37. Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 157.
38. Traber, "L. A.'s 'White Minority'" 49.

The Soviets of the Multitude: On Collectivity and Collective Work: An Interview with Paolo Virno

By Alexei Penzin

Paolo Virno is one of the most radical and lucid thinkers of the postoperaist political and intellectual tradition. Of all the heterodox Marxist currents, *postoperaismo* has found itself at the very center of debates in contemporary philosophy. Its analytics of post-Fordist capitalism refer to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, to Heidegger and his *Daseinsanalysis*, to German "philosophical anthropology," and to Foucault and Deleuze with their problematization of power, desire, and control apparatuses. Subjectivity, language, body, affects or, in other words, life itself, are captured by this regime of post-Fordist production. These "abstract" concepts and discourses have entered the reality of contemporary capitalism and become fundamental to it, as real, functioning abstractions. Such theoretical suggestions have launched enormous polemics over the last two decades.

Collectivity and subjectivity are two poles of the contemporary "culture industry." Virno proposes to rethink the meaning of this Adornian notion. "Culture industry" is a model for the whole network of production in the post-Fordist economy in which each subject-producer is a "virtuoso." In fact, in the actual conditions that have led to the disappearance of the standardized molds of the industrial Fordist epoch, there has been a profusion of performances without any pre-established scripts. This is one of the reasons why contemporary art provides the quintessence of virtuosic practices: the subjectivity of the contemporary artist is probably the brightest expression of the flexible, mobile, non-specialized substance of contemporary "living labor." However, there is still the need to identify its antipode, which classically is the collectivity.

To outline the opposite pole of subjectivity, I questioned Paolo Virno about the use of the term "multitude" — as a new political articulation of labor that avoids a repressive unification in the One (the State, nation, or a cultural "grand style") — in order to understand how it is possible to think its mode of unity, how new forms of micro-collectives work and how one might explain their explosive proliferation and creativity.

It is particularly interesting for me to ask the following questions not from a post-Fordist position, but rather from the post-socialist world, being myself part of a collective initiative that works in a space between theory, activism and artistic practices. In the post-socialist zone, new forms of labor (as well as poverty, extreme precariousness and anomie), which replaced the Soviet *ancien régime* under neo-liberal slogans with furious, destructive negativity, presented themselves as urgent or necessary components to the “transition to free market and democracy.” We witnessed the atomization and fragmentation of post-socialist societies, the horrifying violence of “primitive accumulation” (Marx) in the 1990s, followed by the violence of “primitive political accumulation” (Althusser) as the rebirth of some mutant form of a repressive State in the 2000s. Maybe we should break forever with the historical past of State socialism with its pompous glorification of monumental collectivity. However, is it really the case that, in the end, State socialism has to become the “communism of capital,” to use Virno’s words? Virno’s contribution is especially pertinent to understanding whether these new developments are forcing us to recall those revolutionary political institutions after which the Soviet Union was named: the soviets, or workers’ councils, which served as tools for democratic self-organization. This is the context in which we finally came to discuss “The Soviets of the Multitude.”

Re-thinking the collective or “collectivity” occupies an important place in your theoretical work. In *A Grammar of the Multitude*, you speak of the necessity for a new articulation of relations between the collective and the individual. That would mean blurring the borders between the individual and the collective, private and public in contemporary post-Fordist production, understood as a “broad-based experience of the world.” You take as a point of departure Gilbert Simondon’s conception of the collective as something that is not opposed to the individual but, on the contrary, is a field of radical individualization: the collective refines our singularity. Recalling Marx’s notion of the “social individual,” which presupposes that the collective (language, social cooperation, etc) and the individual coexist, you elaborate quite a paradoxical definition of Marx’s theory as a “doctrine of rigorous individualism.” On the other hand, taking into account contemporary forms of labor, you propose the model of the individual “virtuoso,” which, as it seems, does not presuppose any other dimension of collectivity with the exception of the situation of public performance itself. Can we think of the realm of the collective as just a background, or a pre-individual material involved in a kind of teleology of individuation, or is the collective just a passive audience? Is the collective deprived of any constituent, affirmative or creative function? Could you clarify the place of the collectivity in your thinking?

I owe a lot to Lev S. Vygotskij’s thoughts on the collective, on the relation between the collective and singularity.¹ His main idea is that the social relation precedes and allows for the formation of the auto-conscious “I.” Let me explain: initially there is

an “us”; yet — and here lies the paradox — this “us” is not equivalent to the sum of many well-defined “I’s.” In sum, even if we cannot yet speak of real subjects, there is still an inter-subjectivity. For Vygotskij, the mind of the individual, rather than an incontrovertible departing point, is the result of a process of differentiation that happens in a primeval society: “the real movement of the development process of the child’s thought is accomplished *not* from the individual to the socialized, *but* from the social to the individual.” Gradually the child acquires the collective “us,” which we can define as an *interpsychical* dimension, turning it into an *intrapsychical* reality: something intimate, personal, unique. However, this introversion of the interpsychical dimension, this singularization of the “primordial us,” does not happen definitively during childhood: it always repeats itself during adulthood. Experience is always measured — either in an insurrection, a friendship, or a work of art — through the transformation of the interpsychical into intrapsychical. We constantly have to deal with the *interiority of the public* and with the *publicity of the interior*.

This means that the human nature cannot be defined through the observation of a single member of its species, of his own perceptions, affects and cognitions. Instead, the human nature consists of a set of relations established between a plurality of individuals. To be more precise: instead of connecting given singularities, this “set of relationships” *constitutes* these single individuals as such. Human nature is located in such a thing that — not belonging to any individual mind — only exists in the relation *between* the many. To speak of human nature means to develop a *philosophy of the preposition “between.”*

I understand your objection regarding the “virtuoso”: in this case transindividuality, the collective dimension, *seems* to remain in the background, reduced to being the stalls of passive spectators, that in the maximum can applaud or boo the performance they are seeing.

But is that really the case? Maybe not. Let’s try to consider *l’artista esecutore* (the performing artist) through Vygotskij’s eyes. The audience — with its habitudes, competences and emotions — constitutes the *interpsychic* ambit, the preliminary “us” that the *virtuoso* introverts, turning it into something *intrapsychic*, singular. The virtuosic execution stages this transformation. If we think of contemporary production, we must understand that each individual is, *at the same time*, the artist performing the action and the audience: he performs individually while he assists the other’s performances.

In those factories in which cognitive work is predominant and verbal language constitutes the main productive instrument, the “public” is made of other *virtuosi* who, in their turn, head for the stage. At the end, what the single producer executes is the “score,” be it either collective or transindividual. In fact, this “score” is made of social cooperation, of the set of relations that define us, of the faculty of language, and so on.

Contemporary philosophical thought proposes critical models for understanding collectivity, reintroduced under the name of “community” (Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben). This thought deconstructs politically dangerous essentialist representations of community as One (a unified political body, the Leader, the State). At the same time, by introducing the logic of multiplicity and singularity, this thought confronts the vision of singularities as active and productive forces, considering them as a kind of static “being-together” of passive existences exposing themselves one to another. How does a political thinking that elaborates the concept of the multitude relate to this “community” discourse?

The thought of “community” carries a basic defect: it neglects the principle of individualization, that is, the process of the formation of singularities from something all its elements share. The logic of multiplicity and singularity is not sufficient, and we need to clarify the premise, or the condition of possibility, of a *multitude of singularities*. Enouncing it as a provocation: we need to say something about the One that allows the existence of many unrepeatable individuals. The discourse about the “community” prudishly eludes the discourse about the One. Yet, the political existence of the “many” as “many” is rooted in a homogeneous and shared ambit; it is hacked out of an impersonal background.

It is with respect to the One that the opposition between the categories of “people” and “multitude” clearly emerges. Most importantly, there is a reversion in the order of things: while the people tend to the One, the multitude derives from the One. For the people, the One is a *promise*; for the “many,” it is a *premise*.

Furthermore, it also mutes the definition of what is common or shared. The One around which the people gravitate is the State, the sovereign, the *volonté générale*. Instead, the One carried on the backs of the multitude consists of the language, the intellect as a public or interpsychical resource, of the generic faculties of the species. If the multitude shuns the unity of the State, this is simply because the former is related to a completely different One, which is preliminary instead of being conclusive. We could say: the One of the multitude collimates in many ways with that transindividual reality that Marx called the “*general intellect*” or the “social brain.” The *general intellect* corresponds to the moment in which the banal human capacity of thinking with words becomes the main productive force of matured capitalism. However, it can also constitute the foundations of a republic that has lost the characteristics of Stately sovereignty.

In conclusion, the thought of the “community,” even if laudable in many respects, is an impolitic thought. It takes into account only some emotional and existential aspects of the multitude: in short, a lifestyle. It is obviously important, but what it is fundamental to understand is the work and the days of the multitude as the raw matter to define a well-rounded political model that moves away from that mediocre artefact of the modern State, which is at once rudimentary (regarding the social cooperation) and ferocious. What is fundamental is to conceive the relation between

the *One* and the *Many* in a radically different way from that of Hobbes, Rousseau, Lenin or Carl Schmitt.

Your argument related to our subject also develops on the level of the critical appropriation of concepts in German “philosophical anthropology” (Arnold Gelen, Helmut Plessner). As you say, what we nowadays call “human nature” is the basic “raw material” for the capitalist production. “Human nature” interpreted as a set of “bio-anthropological invariants,” as a kind of potentiality referring to the faculty of language, to neoteny as the retention of juvenile traits in adult behavior, to “openness to the world” (i.e. the absence of fixed environment), etc. You state that these anthropological invariants become sociological traits of a post-Fordist labor force, expressing themselves as permanent precariousness, flexibility, and the need to act in unpredictable situations. Post-Fordist capitalism does not “alienate” human nature, but rather reveals it at the center of contemporary production, and by the same move, exposes it to apparatuses of exploitation and control. Former ways of easing the painful uncertainty and instability of human behavior through ritual mechanisms and traditional social institutions melt into air. How does this new moment change the specificity of collective work today? Is it possible to speak of the collective dimension as a practice of self-organization, mutual aid, and protection without any institutional framework? Can we say that this collectivity is now forming in the context of life outside of the sites of production, in the space of “socialization outside of the working place”?

Let us agree on the use of the word “institution.” Is it a term that belongs exclusively to the vocabulary of the adversary? I don’t think so. I believe that the concept of “institution” is also (and perhaps mainly) decisive to the politics of the multitude. Institutions constitute the way in which our species protects itself from uncertainty and with which it create rules to protect its own praxis. Therefore, an institution is also a collective, such as *Chto delat/What is to be done?*²² Institution is the mother tongue. Institutions are the rituals we use to heal and resolve the crisis of a community. The true debate should not be between institutional and anti-institutional forces; instead, it should identify the institutions that lay beyond the “monopoly of the political decision” incarnated by the State. It should single out the institutions that meet the “general intellect” referred by Marx, that “social brain” that is, at the same time, the main productive force and a principle of republican organization.

The modern central state is facing a radical crisis, but it has not ceased to reproduce itself through a series of disturbing metamorphoses. The “state of permanent exception” is surely one of the ways in which sovereignty survives itself, indefinitely postponing its decline. The same applies to what Marx said about joint-stock companies: these constituted “an overtaking of private property operated on the same basis of private property.” To put it differently, joint-stock companies allowed the overcoming of private property but, at the same time, articulated this possibility in such a way that

they qualitatively reinforced and developed that same private property. In our case, we could say: the state of permanent exception indicates an overcoming of the form of the State on the same basis of its “statuality.” It is a perpetuation of the State, of sovereignty, but also the exhibition of its irreversible crisis, of the full maturity of a no longer statal republic.

So, I believe that the “state of exception” allows us to reflect on the institutions of the multitude, about their possible functioning and their rules. An example: in the “state of exception”, the difference between “matters of right” (de jure) and “matters of fact” (de facto) is so attenuated that it almost disappears. Once more, the rules become empirical data that can even acquire a normative power. Now, this relative distinction between norms and facts that nowadays produces special laws and such prisons as Guantanamo can suffer an alternative declension, becoming a “constitutional” principle of the public sphere of the multitude. The decisive point is that the norm should exhibit not only the possibility of returning into the ambit of facts, but also to its factual origin. In short, it should exhibit its revocability and its substitutability; each rule should present itself as both a unit of measure of the praxis and as something that should continuously be re-evaluated.

On an empirical level, the specificity of contemporary production saturated by “mass intellectuality” — both in mainstream currents of business and cultural industry, and on the side of alternative or resistant political and cultural forms — consists of the formation of relatively small collectives, workgroups, research teams, organizational committees, various collaborations, initiatives, etc. They have definite and more or less long-term tasks like realizing a project, preparing a publication or a conference, designing an exhibition or, on the other hand, organizing a social movement with regard to this or that pretext, initiating protests around this or that event, etc. How would you locate this proliferation of micro-collectives in a broader context of recent developments in post-Fordist production?

Micro-collectives, workgroups, research teams, etc. are half-productive, half-political structures. If we want, they are the no man’s land in which social cooperation stops being exclusively an economic resource and starts appearing as a public, non-stately sphere. If examined as productive realities, the micro-collectives you mention have mainly the merit of *socializing the entrepreneurial function*: instead of being separated and hierarchically dominant, this function is progressively reabsorbed by living labor, thus becoming a pervasive element of social cooperation.

We are all entrepreneurs, even if an intermittent, occasional, contingent way. But, as I was saying, micro-collectives have an ambivalent character: apart from being productive structures, they are also germs of political organization. What is the importance of such ambivalence? What can it suggest in terms of the theory of the organization? In my opinion, this is the crucial issue: nowadays the subversion

of the capitalistic relations of production can manifest itself through the institution of a public, non-stately sphere, of a political community oriented towards the *general intellect*. In order to allow this subversion, the distinctive features of post-Fordist production (the valorization of its own faculty of language, a fundamental relation with the presence of the other, etc.) demand a radically new form of democracy. Micro-collectives are the symptom — as fragile and contradictory as they may be — of an *exodus*, of an enterprising subtraction from the rules of wage labor.

In the contemporary “creative industry,” collective work often takes the paradigmatic form of “brainstorming.” It consists of the discussion and production of both ideas and solutions, even if a considerable part of them are rejected after critical examination, though this work sometimes opens the door for unexpected innovations. In the conditions of Fordism, massive collectivities — organized through a strict disciplinary division of labor — produced the well-known effect of the multiplication of separate productive forces of workers (“the whole is more than the sum of its parts”). Maybe it would be possible to make a (disputable) assumption: under the conditions of post-Fordism, collective work can be organized through “subtraction” when the result of the work is inferior to the sum of the collective effort. This becomes a sort of exception, an unexpected innovation (“the whole is less than the sum of the parts”). On the other hand, if not considered in terms of products, such collective work produces a feeling of strong subjectivity and strength, valorizing each member of the collective. What is your opinion? Would it be possible to connect this “subtractive” mode of functioning with the disappearance of a measure for work in contemporary production?

That’s the perfect way of saying it, that in post-Fordism, “the whole is less than the sum of parts” — I will repeat this expression from now on. It is a formula that correctly expresses the copiousness of social cooperation regarding its economical-productive finality. We are currently witnessing a phenomenon in collective intelligence that is identical to what happened thirty years ago in Italy, with the Sicilian oranges, when tons of fruit was destroyed in order to keep prices high. But this comparison only works to a certain extent. Nowadays, the quota of collective intelligence that is thrown away in the production of goods is not physically destroyed, but somehow remains there, as a ghost, as a non-used resource that is still available. The power that is freed by the *sum of the parts*, even if not expressed in its *whole*, meet a very different destiny. Sometimes it becomes frustration and melancholic inertia, or it generates pitiless competition and hysterical ambition. In other cases, it can be used as a propeller for subversive political action. Also, here we need to bear in mind an essential ambivalence: the same phenomenon can become both a danger and a salvation. The copiousness of collective intelligence is, altogether, *heimlich* — familiar and propitious — and *unheimlich* — disturbing and extraneous.

In one of your statements in which you discuss the contemporary culture industry, you argue that post-Fordist capitalism provides relative autonomy for creativity.³ It can only capture and appropriate its products, commercializing and instrumentalizing the innovations emerging in subcultures, in “ghettos” — alternatives to the mainstream — as well as, we can suppose, in the field of production of critical knowledge and art. Referring to Marx’s dichotomy, you say that this means a return to “formal subsumption.” Therefore, capitalists do not organize the whole chain of production process, they just capture, and commodify, spontaneous, “self-organized” social collaborations and their products. This thesis seems to be contrary to the position of Negri and Hardt. They describe postmodern “biopolitical production” as an effect of real subsumption of labor under capital. Could you explain your argument and the differences of your position regarding this question?

Those who study social communication are very attentive to the so-called “pragmatic paradoxes.” What is that all about? Of exhortations or intrinsically contradictory orders, such as “I order you to be spontaneous.” The consequence is an obvious antinomy: I cannot be spontaneous if I am obeying to an order and, vice-versa, I cannot obey to an order if I am behaving in a spontaneous way. Alas, something similar happens in contemporary production in which there is the imperative to be efficacious through behaviors that cannot be conformed to any predetermined obligation. To show this paradox, I sometimes speak of a return of the “formal subsumption” of labor under capital. With this expression, Marx designates that moment in the industrial revolution in which capitalists appropriated a production that was still organized in a traditional way (craftsmanship, small rural property, etc). It is obvious that, in our case, it is a very particular “formal subsumption,” for the capitalists appropriate not something that already existed but, on the contrary, an innovation that can only exist with the recognition of a certain autonomy of social cooperation. This is a rough similarity. It is obvious, however, that the paradox “I order you to be spontaneous” tests the contemporaneous social conflict: the match point lies in the stress of either “I order you” or of “to be spontaneous.”

In our present time, the labor force enriches the capital *only if* it takes part in a form of social cooperation that is wider than the one presupposed by the factory or the office. In post-Fordism, the efficient worker includes — in the execution of his own labor — attitudes, competences, wisdoms, tastes and inclinations matured somewhere else, outside that time specifically dedicated to the production of goods. Nowadays, he who deserves the title of *Stakhanov* is he who is professionally entangled in a net of relations that exceeds (or contradicts) the social restrictions of his given “profession.”⁴

As is well known, many avant-garde movements in twentieth-century art were organized by the logic of groups and collectives, which claimed that their programs aimed at revolutionizing the traditional aesthetic forms (dada, surrealism, Soviet

avant-garde, situationism, etc). Over the past twenty years, artists and curators have visibly become more and more interested in collective work, and they make this interest the subject of research and representation in their practice. Probably, the logic of innovation in contemporary art depends on collective work and co-authorship, and the artistic collectivity is not just a matter of some “party-style” sharing of a common program. You work on a theory of innovation in your recent texts, which has been partially published in the book *Multitude between Innovation and Negation*. How do you take into account this dimension of collectivity and co-authorship? Could we say that the moments of co-innovation are simultaneously the moments in which the subjectivization of the collective takes place?

I believe that there are two main differences between the avant-gardes of the first part of the twentieth century and the present collective artistic practice. The first concerns the relation with reproducibility of the work of art. Walter Benjamin noted that the dadaists and surrealists anticipated, with their expressive inventions, the functioning of techniques that, within a short period of time, would guarantee the unlimited reproduction of artistic objects. The historical avant-gardes tried to manage the transformation of the unicity attributed to the aura of the work of art into the condition of seriality in which the “prototype” — the original model — lost its weight. Obviously, the present collective artistic work accepts, from the beginning, technical reproduction, using this characteristic as the starting point to produce a sparkle of unicity, of unmistakable singularity. Using a slogan, I would say that the challenge is a sort of *unicity without aura*: a non-original unicity that originates in — and exclusively in — the anonymous and impersonal character of the technical reproduction.

The second difference concerns politics. The historical avant-gardes were inspired by the centralized political parties. In contrast, today’s collective practices are connected to the decentered and heterogeneous net that composes post-Fordist social cooperation. Reusing your nice formula, I would say that co-authorship is an attempt to correct on an aesthetic level the reality of a production in which “the whole is less than the sum of parts.” It is an attempt to exhibit what would be the sum of the parts if it was not reduced to *that* whole.

In conclusion, I’d like to ask you a question that departs from the local situation I share with my friends from the Chto delat/What is to be done? group as well as other new initiatives, movements, political and artistic collectives from the post-socialist, or post-Soviet world. Here, collectivity has a different wager in the course of the history of the revolutionary movement — from the “soviets” (worker councils) as organs of direct democracy and self-government, to their function as organizers of the production process in early USSR, and finally their bureaucratization and submission to Party control. We are also aware of Stalin’s “collectivization.” This complicated historical experience also had an artistic dimension — just think of Alexander Rodchenko’s famous idea of “workers’

clubs” as places of mass engagement and politization. Nowadays, the activists of new political movements in post-Soviet countries try to rethink this political, historical and aesthetic experience. What is your relation with the experience of the soviets? Was it important for your political formation?

Before saying something about the soviets, I’d like to gesture to the political-intellectual tradition from which — without meriting it — I come. The critique of that modern barbarity that is wage labor, dependent on the employer, the critique of that “monopoly of the political decision” that is the State — these were our references in the 1960s and 1970s, and they still are today. These references made us enemies of the real and ideal socialism. From the beginning, our tradition longed for the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the CPSU. It was divorced from the culture and the values of the “labor movement,” and this allowed it to understand the meaning of the labor fights against the wage. It recognized capitalism’s devotion to “permanent revolution,” to the continuing innovation of the labor process and ways of life, in order to avoid astonishment or lament, since the production of surplus value is no longer connected to the factory and sovereignty does not coincide any more with the nation-states.

No nostalgia, hence. On the contrary, there is a lasting sense of relief for the fall of a regime founded on the cancerous metastasis of the State and on the glorification of labor (of that work that any laborer desired to suppress). Saying so, now we can speak of the soviets. The problem is: how do you articulate a public sphere that is no longer connected to the State? What are the institutions of the multitude?

The democracy of the multitude takes seriously the diagnosis that Carl Schmitt proposed, somewhat bitterly, in the last years of his life: “The era of the State is now coming to an end [...]. The State as a model of political unity, the State as titleholder of the most extraordinary of all monopolies, in other words, the monopoly of political decision-making, is about to be dethroned.” With one important addition: the monopoly of decision making can only really be taken away from the State if it ceases once and for all to be a monopoly. The public sphere of the multitude is a *centrifugal force*. In other words, it excludes not only the continued existence, but also the reconstitution in any form of a unitary “political body.” But here, the crucial question returns: which democratic bodies embody this centrifugal force?

Hobbes felt a well-known contempt for those “irregular political systems” in which the multitude adumbrated itself: “Nothing but leagues, or sometimes mere assemblies of people, without union to any particular designee, nor determined by obligations of one to another.” Well, the democracy of the multitude consists precisely of such institutions: leagues, assemblies and, why not, *councils* (“soviets” in Russian). Except that, contrary to Hobbes’s negative judgment, here we surely are not dealing with ephemeral appearances. The leagues, the assemblies, the soviets — in short, the organs of non-representative democracy — give political expression to the productive cooperation that has at its core the general intellect. The soviets of the multitude

produce a conflict with the State's administrative apparatuses, with the aim of eating away at its prerogatives and absorbing its functions. Those same basic resources — knowledge, communication, etc. — that are the order of the day in the post-Fordist production are translated into political praxis.

What I mean is that the word "soviet," which became unpronounceable due to solid historical reasons, has now, and maybe only now, acquired a pregnant meaning. We can only realistically speak of the soviet at the dawn of the State, in the period of the cognitive work in which we must valorize whatever is singular and unique in the experience of each member of our species. Of course, to say *that*, we need to find other words.

Notes

1. Lev Semyonovich Vygotskij (1896–1934) was a Soviet psychologist and internationally-known founder of cultural-historical psychology. Vygotskij was a highly prolific author. His major works span six volumes, written over roughly ten years, from his *Psychology of Art* (1925) to *Thought and Language* (1934). The philosophical framework he provided includes not only insightful interpretations about the cognitive role of tools of mediation, but also the re-interpretation of well-known concepts in psychology such as the notion of internalization of knowledge
2. Chto delat/What is to be done? (www.chtodelat.org) was founded in 2003 in Petersburg by a group of artists, critics, philosophers and writers from Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhny Novgorod with the goal of merging political theory, art and activism. Since then, Chto delat has been publishing an English-Russian newspaper on issues central to engaged culture, with a special focus on the relationship between a re-politicization of Russian intellectual culture and its broader international context.
3. See, for example, Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen, “The Dismeasure of Art: An Interview with Paolo Virno” in *Open. Cahier on Art and the Public Domain* 17, 2009. <http://www.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en>.
4. Alexey Stakhanov (1906–1977) was a miner in the Soviet Union, Hero of Socialist Labor (1970), and a member of the CPSU (1936). He became a celebrity in 1935 as part of a movement that was intended to increase worker productivity and demonstrate the superiority of the socialist economic system.

Nataša Kovačević. "New Money in the Old World: On Europe's Neoliberal Disenchantment." *Mediations* 25.1 (Fall 2010) 93-105 www.mediationsjournal.org/articles/new-money-in-the-old-world

The New Old World

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New Money in the Old World: On Europe's Neoliberal Disenchantment

Nataša Kovačević

In the current climate of Euro-conformism reflected in (mostly technocratic and government-funded) conferences and symposia about the future of Europe and the European Union, Perry Anderson has attempted to open up a democratic, lively public debate about the political and economic directions European countries are taking. *The New Old World* starts out by declaring Europe an "impossible object" of academic scrutiny because any attempts to grasp it dissolve into discontinuous and fragmented studies that are too broad and sweeping or else too insular and nationally based (xi). For Anderson, Europe is an "impossible object" of democratic politics also because its decisions are frequently not ratified by popular vote; more importantly, despite its stated commitment to vibrant exchanges of ideas across the European borders, its unanimity of "*pensée unique*" undermines any emergence of a healthy public, intellectual sphere (xvi). A collection of previously published essays that trace the development of the European Union over the past two decades, Anderson's critical evaluation of Europe's increasing neoliberalization aims to recreate just such an intellectual sphere — a true democratic "republic of letters" which would animate the stagnant political conformism in which Anderson sees Europe flailing (xvii).

Anderson is wary of idealistic proclamations about the European Union's unique achievements as a supranational formation, including its self-congratulatory image as a paragon for world politics and embodiment of values higher than those of the United States. Primarily, his critique is directed at the neoliberal ascendancy that has gripped and subsequently privatized all of Europe, and the elitist political apparatus that doesn't seem to enjoy much support among the populace. Nonetheless,

he vehemently disassociates himself from Euroskeptics, particularly those on the Left (and perhaps implicitly, those in Britain), and instead repeatedly expresses his admiration for the project of European integration which he believes has no historical precedent and whose “grandeur continues to haunt what it has since become” (xv). These romanticizing proclamations about Europe, as we shall see, somewhat frustrate and undermine Anderson’s critical lens: throughout the book, the European Union is consequently accepted as an unquestioned good, and if animated political debate occurs, it is meant merely to resolve the current economic crisis and redefine European politics.

The book, thus, starts with tracing the historical roots of European integration, meticulously comparing actual post-World-War-II political decisions with concurrent theoretical elaborations of Europe’s ideal political makeup. This part of the book, “The Union,” offers an overview of conflicting ideas that eventually synthesize and birth the European integration. Anderson excavates the origins of an international Europe that some day, one imagines, might crystallize as “the history of EU” and replace or overshadow the narrowly national histories. The second part focuses on “The Core” of Europe — Germany, France, and Italy — which, according to Anderson, has carried the brunt of European integration politically and economically, and molded it intellectually and culturally. This focus on unity, progress, and common building of a European home is contrasted in part three, which carries a deliberately prickly title “The Eastern Question” and examines Europe’s attitude to traditional antagonists and peripheral “others”: its violent and contradictory interventions in Cyprus and its problematic treatment of Turkey. The history of European trials and tribulations is appropriately wrapped up in “Conclusion,” which, having examined various antecedents and prognoses for EU expansion, offers a relatively bleak vision of Europe’s future. This pessimistic discussion radically shifts the tone of much of the book, even as it holds out hope that Europe will be able to reform itself and survive the current crisis.

While Anderson’s task is ambitious and daunting in trying to create cross-border connections that so many studies of Europe fail to accomplish, his theoretical framework nonetheless replicates a traditional trajectory of a national history. As Nico Wilterdink has observed, the attempt to intellectually forge a European collective identity has led to the creation of a *de facto* nation of Europe, and a propagandist “Euro-nationalist” narrative that justifies European integration. Just like a traditional account of the birth of a nation, Euro-nationalism also focuses on a teleological progress from Europe’s distant past to the present, “uninterrupted cultural traditions,” “unique characteristics and special achievements that command the admiration of other nations,” and “major historical figures and important events.”¹ Simultaneously, Wilterdink argues, Euro-nationalism ignores the relations of power that have determined intellectual and artistic achievements and downplays “wars,

oppression, and genocide” that do not fit into the ideal national image.² I do not mean to downplay, in turn, Anderson’s repeated focus on the devastation of a major world war as the very engine of European integration; instead, I wish to point out how his discursive framework itself ends up strengthening the ideology which he intends to subject to critique.

“The Union” begins precisely with such origins of the European idea which gradually morphs into reality from the 1950s onward. The major historical figure that becomes, effectively, the EU’s founding father is Jean Monnet, the man with a federalist vision of Europe that Anderson clearly admires. Anderson first highlights “neo-realist” historical accounts of European integration, which suggest that far from being an idealistic federalist enterprise, it was primarily a pragmatic solution to intergovernmental European relations in the wake of war devastation. One of the promoters of this perspective, historian Alan Milward, argues that the initial Steel and Coal Community was a French-German agreement designed to contain Germany’s economic and military power. According to Milward, other reasons behind banding together to create stronger economies include fears of the Cold War Eastern bloc and of popular unrest in Europe’s increasingly democratizing and demanding postwar societies. However, Anderson intimates, this pragmatic version doesn’t tell the entire story: what is missing is the federalist vision of Jean Monnet, who was not attached to the idea of the nation-state and moreover ignored the alleged intra-European fears and antagonisms which Milward highlights. Monnet was, nevertheless, a “stranger to the democratic process” and worked exclusively among the elites; this initial lack of popular participation in the “movement towards European unity” presages the EU’s current political framework (16). Overall, however, Anderson lavishes much praise on Monnet’s “genius” in designing an “unexampled objective — a democratic supranational federation” (24). This sapling European Union, in Anderson’s account, is not only exceptional because it allegedly transcends the framework of the nation-state, but also because it is divinely innovative and creative: instead of being “imitative,” it issues forth from itself.

Continuing with the broad historical-theoretical introduction, the book goes on to evaluate the contemporary outcomes of the process started more than fifty years ago. The prevalent theme of European post-German unification landscape and its subsequent monetary integration policy is the lack of democratic participation beyond the national level. As Anderson notes, the only formally elected body in the EU is the European Parliament. But even this parliament functions more as a “ceremonial apparatus” of government, as it has no permanent home, no power of taxation, no ability to initiate legislation, and no say over executive appointments (23). Anderson characterizes the EU legislative apparatus as a “customs union with a quasi-executive of supranational cast” (23). In this climate, Anderson speculates that the monetary unity — the enshrining of the European Central Bank as a financial authority whose dogged insistence on “sound money” overrules national protections

— will create a political apparatus even more immune to and distant from popular pressures (30). Meanwhile, German unification is dangerously poised to upset the balance of power in Europe, making Germany powerful beyond containment and exposing implicit national animosities. For Anderson, this becomes apparent precisely in the process of deciding which former communist countries to admit into the Union: different Western European countries favored different post-communist candidates. Although, initially, there were equally conflicting attitudes to Yugoslavia's disintegration, Germany's hasty recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, which Anderson deems responsible for triggering the Yugoslav wars, prompted other Westerners to quickly follow suit. Anderson suggests that, in a way, this new peaceful Europe is in danger of replicating the old Europe of violence and competition: "In the past decade the Luftwaffe has returned to the Balkans, *Einsatztruppen* are fighting in West Asia, the Deutsche Marine patrols the Eastern Mediterranean" (51).

This imperial role that Europe is once again comfortable playing is also castigated in the account of European participation and/or endorsement of U.S. military adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in its housing of CIA prisons and downplaying of civilian casualties. While its foreign policy does not really present a humane alternative to the U.S., as some apologists of the EU would like to believe, its domestic decisions are also increasingly undemocratic and socially pernicious. Anderson repeatedly characterizes the EU as a democratic caricature given that most of its power structures are opaque to regular citizens and that fewer people vote in the EU parliament elections each year. More importantly, he laments the seismic shift from the legacy of social democracy to a neoliberal Europe dedicated to capital and a stable currency rather than public welfare benefits. Anderson seems nostalgic for a "social Europe" of Monnet and Jacques Delors, where, presumably, there would be no room for a "prefabricated consensus" or "deadly conformism," and where "democratic participation and political imagination" would not be "snuffed out" (62). In other words, he imagines a Europe that is a shared community rather than a business.

Because of such a bleak evaluation of what the EU has degraded into, Anderson's enthusiastic appraisal of the post-communist EU enlargement is all the more puzzling. It is clear that Anderson is no apologist for "really existing socialism," despite his leftist sympathies and politics. However, his account of what has frequently been a socially devastating, quasi-colonial incorporation of former communist countries into the neoliberal circuits of the EU — and the rest of the world — downplays the negative consequences of this process. Not only does Anderson ignore the systematic dismantling of intricate social and economic welfare systems in former communist countries, but his assertion that former Eastern Europe plays the role of the American South given the similar business-friendly fiscal policies, "weak or non-existent labor movements [and] low wages" isn't seen as contradicting his idealistic statement that its entry into the Union is "finally" a chance to leave behind a "millennial record, of repeated humiliation and oppression" (55, 54). Anderson acknowledges that Eastern

Europe provides the rest of the Union with a new pool of cheap labor, but not much outrage is expressed over this: though these countries have low wages and no labor unions or welfare policies, Anderson is impressed by their “virtually frictionless implantation of political systems matching liberal norms — representative democracies complete with civil rights, elected parliaments, separation of powers, alternation of governments” (53). In the case of Eastern Europe, the dismantling of social welfare systems results in “good” neoliberal client states; here, an unflinching endorsement of the EU trumps Anderson’s otherwise astute political instincts.

Later on, Anderson identifies another potentially problematic outcome of post-communist EU expansions, which further threatens to dampen his optimistic evaluation: with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, the Union’s overall coefficient of income inequality has transcended even that of the “arch-capitalist US” (114). This, combined with what Anderson sees as EU’s lackluster economic output and employment performance in the past several decades, has potential to destabilize the Union particularly in times of economic turmoil, as we’ve seen recently. Surveying major texts theorizing EU’s politics, economy, sociology, and other aspects, Anderson notes strangely elitist, virtually authoritarian tendencies: “Hostility to any smack of federalism; minimization of the bearing of classical democratic norms; preference for voluntary over mandatory regulation; rejection of welfare barriers to market dynamism” (118). Both theoretical and practical rollbacks of market regulations and democratic norms seem to work well only for EU elites, stretching from Romania to Ireland, but it is not clear how they will reduce pervasive international as well as intranational inequalities. At the end of the first section of the book, Anderson concludes that the language of class, indeed, “does not belong to the discourse of Europe” (131). But even as he says one should look for it beyond the bounds of liberal discourse on Europe, and therefore turns to the work of the Marxist Amsterdam School, he only spends two tantalizingly short pages on this discussion.

This raises the larger question of the text’s focus — if Anderson’s purpose is to analyze the lack of popular participation and social welfare benefits in the EU, why does he dwell in detail on discourses stretching from liberal to neocon, but pays only passing homage to Marxist (or any other leftist) contributions? While *The New Old World* helpfully illuminates the *prevailing* discourses on the EU, which certainly help explain its current political and economic mood, doesn’t such an approach itself suggest that there is no room for “the language of class” in his text? This top-down approach to the narrative of EU history continues in the second, “Core” section, where Anderson moves to the national level and zeroes in on three principal members of the EU: France, Germany, and Italy. For Anderson this selection is justified because these countries’ powerful economies and immense political weight have, locally as well as in Europe as a whole, crucially shaped the neoliberal ascendancy. Moreover, Anderson asserts, these three countries “enjoy, by common consent, the richest cultural and intellectual history” (xii).

Time and space constraints make it impossible to focus on each EU member, of course, and unfamiliarity with East European languages makes research on those countries difficult for Anderson. Nonetheless, this designation of the most powerful, populous, and richly intellectual “core” suggests that this is where *real* EU politics and culture will continue to take shape. What happens in German journals or in French cinemas comes across as more interesting and significant than what happens in their Latvian or Swedish counterparts. Such diligent focus on the traditional “core,” while seemingly convenient or justified, draws time and resources away from the analysis of understudied European societies — and languages — thus perpetuating academic inequality. This approach not only enshrines West Europe as “the” Europe, but also unwittingly belies a Euro-nationalist perspective I initially posited, by highlighting “major” players in historical events and occluding all sorts of “minor” phenomena, traditionally the disenfranchised social groups and events not deemed properly historical.

Thus, when we start reading about France’s political and cultural development since World War II onwards, it is repeatedly lauded for its exceptionalism — it is a land of grandeur, of resistance to NATO, of incredible intellectual achievement of the Foucault-Lacan-Derrida fame, as well as the only country where students repeatedly distrust the government and take to the streets (and what about Greece?). Anderson sees the current French climate as somewhat imaginatively depleted and looks with nostalgia to the times of vibrant intellectual and political debate of the 1960s and 1970s, especially to illustrious journals like *Le Débat* with its wide-ranging breadth of topics and influence on French public opinion. So his narrative traces the ups and downs of French liberalism, its subsequent disillusionment with radical leftist politics, and its downward artistic and cultural spiral from the heady, utopian times of Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Paul Sartre to the contemporary cynical visions of Michel Houellebecq. Even the onetime liberal thinkers and historians, like Pierre Nora and François Furet, gaze increasingly inward into the soul of France and become virtual architects of new French nationalism.

This cultural shift from an enchantment with leftist revolutionary politics to a more “sober” liberal attitude coincides with the steady neoliberalization of French economy, which begins with the quasi-socialist François Mitterrand. From then onward, each attempt to pare away the social benefits of the welfare state, Anderson notes, meets with wide popular resistance; nonetheless, France today is heavily privatized and its markets deregulated, regardless of who is in power. Thus, Anderson sees Jacques Chirac as a “symbol of futility and corruption,” misrepresented by the Left as a significant alternative to Jean-Marie Le Pen (177). On the other hand, the avowedly right-wing Nicolas Sarkozy, despite his Hollywood antics, receives a positive appraisal because his neoliberal reforms have been quite mild and his administration reflects a wide political and social spectrum, including large numbers of women, Maghrebis and Africans, and Center-Left representatives. Ultimately, however, Anderson laments

Sarkozy's current positive attitude to U.S. imperial wars and what he sees as the country's increasing "intellectual parochialism" (185).

One might assume that Anderson's lengthy discussion of Nora's recent monumental history *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire* only supports his argument about French parochialism, in so far as he castigates Nora for a conservative investment in "Frenchness" and for downplaying French colonial violence, genocide, and conquest. However, Anderson's own account of France is guilty of this rhetorical crime. While he doesn't deny that France, crucially, lost its empire in the 1960s, he pays only passing attention to what might be arguably the most radical shift in French society since the war: huge postcolonial, non-French, and non-Christian immigration which is putting to daily tests French "exceptional" civilization and multiculturalism. Anderson briefly mentions the debates over multiculturalism in French journals, acknowledges the 2005 protests, and praises Pierre Bourdieu for supporting the rights of *sans-papiers*. But nowhere does he mention or quote from any one of the postcolonial Francophone intellectuals; they don't even figure in the French postwar cultural or social space. Unless represented by Bourdieu or other luminaries of French high culture, they simply remain invisible.

The essays on Germany's postwar politics feature a wider social range of class actors and perspectives, although the concurrent discussion of developing intellectual trends still largely focuses on high culture. Germany is also seen as exceptional among the European economic giants in that its social democrats both hail and draw significant support from traditional working classes and unions, unlike in France and Britain, whose intellectual middle-class social democrats are alienated from their constituencies. Also, German working classes have been less pulverized and preserved more manufacturing jobs following neoliberal reform, even in the face of increased unemployment, loss of social benefits, and wage stagnation. Nonetheless, Anderson argues, their expectations have been betrayed by each leftist-liberal party. The Greens, led by Joschka Fischer, former supporter of squatters' rights and protester against Ulrike Meinhof's death, have gradually abandoned radicalism only to accept NATO expansions and neoliberal reform, moving virtually to the right of SPD. In turn, SPD's Gerhard Schroeder's policies reflected, as in France, a "neo-corporatist entente between government, firms, and unions" aiming at wage restraint and a more flexible labor market (238). Today, CDU's Angela Merkel no longer has to apologize for the ruthlessness of neoliberal reforms or for her support of the Iraq occupation. For Anderson, Germany has become a mini-U.S.: the land of increasing inequalities, gated communities, immigrant slums, and yuppie managers with little patience for trade-union talks. Its politicians' joint endorsement of the humanitarian militarism in Yugoslavia and participation in the Afghanistan war have tarnished Germany's image; Anderson believes that the reason for these dangerous policies is Germany's wish to prove it is "a normal force for the good, as responsible as any power in the democratic West" (242).

Anderson also discusses innovative political developments in the East, where PDS, successor to East German SED, has evolved into a lively radical Leftist movement thanks to its charismatic leader Gregor Gysi. In recent years, they have combined with Western leftists into “Die Linke” coalition, unapologetically critical of both domestic economic and foreign militant policies. Nonetheless, Anderson’s account of Die Linke sounds fairly disenchanted; he doesn’t seem to put much credence in this movement as a possible resurrection of leftist politics in Europe. Nor does East Germany figure prominently elsewhere in Anderson’s discussion, except in the overview of its post-1990 social devastation, population decline, and widespread loss of labor rights. Anderson does give a voice to former GDR citizens who feel relegated to second-class citizen status following a practical economic and political colonization of the country by FDR (235). He also focuses on both East and West Berlin, primarily because the new German capital becomes a symbol of difficult decisions regarding the treatment of Nazi and GDR landmarks, reflecting both “guilt and nostalgia” and an “antiquarian masochism” (229). But he is completely silent on GDR’s political and cultural life pre-unification; instead, FDR’s longstanding politics of consensus and fear of excess come to represent *all* German politics. Just as GDR does not contribute much to German politics, so the massive postwar immigration to Germany merits only a few sentences. Thus, Anderson only cursorily applauds Germany’s recent changes to the outdated *jus sanguinis* citizenship law which will facilitate the naturalization of the diverse groups of immigrants and help them participate more in political and social life.

When turning to the overview of Germany’s cultural trends, Anderson predictably remains with the familiar terrain of FDR, which comes to speak for GDR as well. Among intellectual developments, as is to be expected, Anderson focuses on the high culture of German journals and prominent philosophers. The radical landscape of the 1960s and 1970s is characterized by a revival of German Romanticism and a continued allegiance to the Frankfurt School, but this lively counterculture grows up into stodgy academia and critical journalism. Even Jürgen Habermas’s leftist-liberal endorsements of the Enlightenment sound like “sobering” alternatives to both Derridean poststructuralism, on the left hand, and to Ernst Nolte-type conservative German historiography, on the right hand. Anderson also analyzes at length the contemporary conservatism of what once used to be a radical journal *Merkur*. Sympathetic to the Frankfurt School and European Surrealism, and critical of FDR’s “pseudomorphosis” in the postwar period, it was transformed by Karl Heinz Bohrer and Herfried Münkler into a right-wing publication that seeks a new German “creative aesthetics” (268). These writers argue that postwar flagellation has stripped Germany of meaningful symbolic form, and believe that the solution lies in, unsurprisingly, Germany’s increased military role in a world beset by “terrorism.” Anderson describes this as “adjusting Prussian modes of thought to contemporary conditions” (274).

This increasing conservatism also characterizes the third core country, Italy, exceptional, according to Anderson, because of a fatal confluence of various political

malignancies that only individually plague other countries: widespread corruption, politicians' inconsistencies, and mafia violence (280). Anderson's richly descriptive style reaches new heights when it takes on the absurdities of Silvio Berlusconi's rise — and repeated returns — to power, resembling Rushdie's luscious magical-realist prose in his allegory of twentieth-century Pakistani politics, *Shame*. The reader is taken for a dizzying ride through much political back-scratching and the serendipitous circumstances which combined to bring Berlusconi to a seemingly uncontested position of authority. Anderson, like many analysts before him, ascribes Berlusconi's success to his dubiously-achieved financial control of all major Italian media as well as to his Reaganesque, glamorous media personality, embodying, ironically, the sensibility and popularity standards of the very media he owns. When Berlusconi's Center-Right coalition — Forza Italia, united with Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale as unlikely bedfellows — alternates in power with the Center-Left forces led by Romano Prodi, Anderson does not see a qualitative shift in political or economic attitude. For instance, early Berlusconi is evaluated as very mild when it comes to neoliberal reform, and Prodi's government is much more aggressive comparatively. While the Center-Left are credited with some attempt at the reform of the inefficient Italian justice system and legislative behemoth, they are ultimately faulted for failing to prosecute corrupt political practices of their Berlusconi predecessors and institute significant reforms to benefit the working and middle classes. When the Center-Right returns to power in 2008, it does so with a vengeance, Anderson argues: with blunt racist, anti-immigrant language, immunity for corrupt politicians, ruthless neoliberal reforms, and cuts to social and welfare programs, beginning with education.

Throughout, Anderson tries to solve the "puzzle" that is Italy, as he presents it: the cultural mentality of a country that seems so inured to double political standards that its voters can be indifferent to Berlusconi's "flagrant reputation" (292). For Anderson, precedents are abundant: "the eminent theorist of democracy, universally respected as a personification of ethical principle, with no qualms about tanks bombarding the Russian parliament...the rising politician, declaring Mussolini the greatest statesman of the twentieth century at one moment, certified as a guardian of the constitution by a Resistance veteran at the next" (292). The Italian communist party, the PCI, is subject to the most stinging critique for such political opportunism: Anderson at turns qualifies it as Stalinist, out of touch with the democratic demands of 1968 student protests, too forgiving to postwar Fascists and clericalists whom it maintained in power, and steeped in high culture and ignorant of popular forms that appeal to its potential constituencies. The PCI is, for Anderson, primarily an intellectual affair, doomed as it was to an oppositional status for decades, gathering in its glow the giants of the Italian artistic scene such as Italo Calvino, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Luchino Visconti, and Gillo Pontecorvo (327). Intriguingly, Anderson concludes that the PCI was unprepared for Berlusconi's appeal because it never bothered to engage with lowbrow culture as Godard or Rainer Werner Fassbinder had done (330).

Equally, Anderson here dedicates much attention to dissecting the factionalism within the PCI and its sympathizers, and consequently laments its departure from the intellectual impetus originally provided it by Antonio Gramsci. The PCI, in one way or another, purges itself of and/or inspires dissidence, whether in the shape of *operaismo*, *autonomia*, or *Il Manifesto* groups. Anderson sees the violence of the Red Brigades as another manifestation of popular dissatisfaction with the PCI. Major Italian leftist philosophers Antonio Negri, Giovanni Arrighi, and Giorgio Agamben are all distanced from its politics, and Anderson adds that many giants of Italian academia do not, in fact, reside in Italy. Overall, Anderson's outlook for Italy is pessimistic, given its declining living standards, resurgence of traditional conservatism, significant unemployment rates and (shockingly) low education statistics. Nor does he see recent union and student protests against Center-Right reforms as effective: the "Left has adopted one symbol after another from the vegetable kingdom, or thin air — the rose, the oak, the olive, the daisy, the rainbow. Without some glint of metallurgy, it seems unlikely to make much headway" (351).

This militant rhetoric that qualifies the Italy chapters, but not the ones preceding it, continues to inform Anderson's passionate defense of Cyprus's opposition to British colonialism in "The Eastern Question." The greatest value of the chapters on Cyprus and Turkey is their unmasking of the allegedly peaceful and human-rights rhetoric of the EU. In the case of Cyprus's division, endorsed by the "civilized" EU, Anderson deliberately makes parallels with the Israeli occupation of Palestine. He details the Cypriot Greeks' postwar struggle for unification with Greece which is repeatedly undermined by the British, reluctant to give up control of the island. Anderson greatly admires the rebellion-organizer and later president Archbishop Makarios, the priest with leftist sympathies who distanced himself from the Greek military junta and instead turned to non-aligned Second and Third World leaders. Historical memory is short when it comes to the UN treatment of Cyprus, Anderson suggests, just like it is in the case of Palestine and Israel: in both instances it becomes imperative to find a solution for a peaceful coexistence, disregarding the history of violence and occupation. But today's appeals by the EU and UN to Cyprus to resolve their own "mess" obscure virtual British endorsement of the Turkish occupation of part of the island, and a successful campaign to pit the two ethnic groups against each other so as to weaken Greek claims for independence. It is this same Britain that — still — refuses to relinquish its Guantánamo-type bases in Cyprus as it determines Cyprus's future in the EU.

In the case of Turkey, Anderson's argument that, aside from protests by a few member states and anti-Islamic right-wing parties, the majority of EU political establishment has a vested economic interest in Turkey's accession would be in conflict with the less optimistic prognoses for its future in the Union. Anderson offers a sweeping portrayal of Ottoman society so as to contrast it with the rise of Kemal Atatürk's republicanism, which, despite industrial modernization and

increased social rights, remained a one-party dictatorship, rooted in aggressive Turkish nationalism and explicit secularism which obscured a systematic repression of other belief systems. This gesture is necessary to Anderson to demonstrate the continuity of Turkish politics until today, with Center-Right parties in power which are (too) friendly with the superpower-of-the-moment, from Hitler's Germany to Bush's U.S. As in Cyprus, in Turkey, too, the "democratic" world powers conveniently overlook problematic policies — they are held responsible for endorsing the Greek and Turkish population "exchanges" post-World War I, not condemning repeated Turkish military rule and repression during the Cold War, and refusing to pass an international law condemning the Armenian genocide. Although the current Erdogan regime overtly flirts with Islamic conservatism and chauvinist Turkish nationalism, the EU, according to Anderson, desires Turkish accession both to deflect the lure of fundamentalism in this secular society and to use Turkey's "difference" as self-immunization against claims of its Christian homogeneity.

Thus, the EU is more about pragmatic strategy than any egalitarian, idealistic concern of nations: Turkey would be "militarily, a bulwark against terrorism; economically, dynamic entrepreneurs and cheap labor; politically, a model for regional neighbors; diplomatically, a bridge between civilizations; ideologically, the coming of a true multi-culturalism in Europe" (470). This means that the multicultural EU will not differ significantly from any fortified empire that fears barbarians at its gates, using borderland peoples as bulwarks in the same way that the Austro-Hungarian Empire used Krajina Serbs to defend its borders from Ottoman Turkey, for instance. In light of this conclusion, as well as Anderson's descriptions of increasing class antagonisms in a neoliberal Europe as evidenced in French and Irish rejections of the EU treaty, it is unclear what the worth and purpose of the EU project is, exactly. Even if its grand achievement of unification, as Anderson claims, overcomes Europe's petty national conflicts, will it represent a significant alternative to erstwhile European colonial policies? The beginning of the book certainly seems to suggest so. But the ending, especially the "Prognoses" chapter, is far less enthusiastic. Uncannily, this chapter also contains about ten pages, which, for the first time in the book, focus in some detail on postwar immigration to the EU as one of the greatest tests for Europe's claims to democracy and diversity. Anderson here tries to correct Europe's "political myopia" — which, I have argued, also characterizes much of his book — and argue that immigration should certainly register "on the radar screen of the European elites" as a significant new development (528).

In a few broad strokes, Anderson highlights the undisputedly inferior economic and social position of immigrants across major EU host societies and is sympathetic to their plight. Nonetheless, he laments the fact that this has led to conflicts across ethno-religious lines, which have displaced the properly Marxist class conflicts, without offering a subtle analysis of how immigrant status in fact overlaps with lower-class status in many of the cases he describes. Also, while he denounces Western

military involvement in the Middle East because it affects the growing dissatisfaction and alienation among Muslim immigrants in the EU, he unwittingly echoes neocon rhetoric which would group the various ethnicities that arrived since the war as undifferentiated “Muslims,” itself a scare-word of European and American racism. In “Fanatics in Europa,” Aamir Mufti historicizes this rhetorical shift, saying that twenty years ago, in Britain, for instance, immigrants would have been referred to (not without racism) as Pakistanis, Somalis, West Indians, Turks, or Arabs, but today they are seen as a “universal and homogeneous community” of Muslims.³ In other words, the problem is not merely with “Muslims” being accepted or rejected in Europe, as Anderson states, but with the very reductions of unaccountably rich immigrant lives to “Muslim” markers of identity.

Overall, throughout his affectionate yet prickly analysis of the EU project, Anderson does not seem to think of the EU as a new empire, but rather as a positive supranational force which should turn its back on neoliberal reforms that have gone wild. Nonetheless, one does not get a sense that this would necessarily involve an alternative to capitalism, but rather some sort of humanized capitalism, along the lines of social-democratic welfare policies preceding the times of Reagan and Thatcher. Still, it is only toward the end that Anderson considers the EU problem in the context of its global economic policies, leading to “Inequality within Europe; inequality between Europe and the worlds it once dominated” (538). He continues:

Were Europe genuinely concerned by the fate of the rest of the world, it would be spending its resources on disinterested aid to the regions where immigrants come from, not casually importing and then ejecting their labor for its own convenience. But that would indeed require a collective will capable of a true project, instead of the blind workings of the market (538).

This collective will, however, does not exist yet; and it is unlikely that it will arise, barring some future global catastrophe that forces it upon an unwilling EU.

Notes

1. Nico Wilterdink, "The European Ideal. An Examination of European and National Identity," *Archives européennes de sociologie* 34 (1993): 122.
2. Wilterdink, "The European Ideal" 123.
3. Aamir Mufti, "Fanatics in Europa," *boundary 2* (2007): 21.

Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity

José Esteban Muñoz

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Queer Principles of Hope

Kevin Floyd

If you listen closely, you can hear queer studies bearing witness to Marxism's continuing vitality and, indeed, contributing to it. To the extent that Marxist intellectuals remain unaware of the way in which capital has become one of queer studies' fundamental interpretive horizons, and Marxism one of its increasingly apparent touchstones, this is surely because in order to be aware of this development, one would have to follow journals like *GLQ*, the special queer studies issues of journals like *Social Text*, and book series like Duke's "Series Q" and NYU's "Sexual Cultures."¹ And so if what looks like a kind of ongoing intellectual convergence also seems one-sided, if it also throws into relief a simultaneous and persistent divergence, this is a divergence operating much more clearly, today, at the level of academic marketing than at the level of ideas. Occasional, scattered exceptions have appeared in journals like *Science and Society* and *Rethinking Marxism*, and this review is another. Such exceptions are important: sustained engagements with the Marxist tradition within the domain of queer studies carry a potential to invigorate and extend Marxian analysis itself. That potential is abundantly evident in José Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*, a book one could argue is most centrally about potentiality as such.

In the course of an introduction, a conclusion, and the ten lush chapters in between, *Cruising Utopia* elaborates an archive of queer aesthetic practices from the present and the recent past — the book reaches back as far as the fifties — practices we can certainly characterize as socially "marginal," but which the identitarian, privatizing, and spatial logics of neoliberalism have made more so. The book reads these practices through a utopian, dialectical lens that will be familiar to readers of *Mediations*. But the lens itself is also made less familiar, turned to a potentially startling angle. More

on this below. What is evident most immediately is the sheer range of material under examination. Utopia makes rich, telling appearances here in lots of places, including the denaturalizing figuration of nature in Warhol; the ironic commodity-love of Frank O'Hara; the tender, redemptive homoeroticism of a play by Amiri Baraka; Jack Smith's doomed Atlantis; and what we need to call, as Muñoz suggests, the totality thinking of Samuel Delany.

Though a range of aesthetic genres are on display, a primary focus throughout is the utopian significance of gesture, of physical movement in performance art broadly defined, from theater to drag to dance. So in a brilliant, moving examination of Baraka's *The Toilet*, Muñoz locates a redemptive utopian longing in the most ephemeral gestures of intimacy and affection between two young men who form what we can at best tentatively call an interracial male "couple," gestures to be discovered in a play that most spectacularly portrays racialized and heterosexist violence. Utopian performance is registered less fleetingly in the work of the late dancer Fred Herko, whose ornamental, stuttering, flamboyant gestures — in the context of postmodern dance norms that prioritized the representation of quotidian movement — interfere with what Muñoz calls "straight time," with normalized rhythms and tempos. Indeed much of the book places special emphasis on performance that disrupts that form of routinized, instrumental enactment, in both work and leisure, that Marcuse called the performance principle. The book centrally traces movements that interrupt "the coercive choreography of a here and now that is scored to naturalize and validate dominant cultural logics such as capitalism and heterosexuality" (162).

In one respect the book considers its own analytic method less important than its archive. *Cruising Utopia* has a tendency to draw on whatever interpretive model it finds useful at the moment. Thinkers as varied as Agamben, C.L.R. James, Raymond Williams, and Derrida make important appearances. But the priority on archive over conceptual apparatus is also paradoxically consistent with the work of the book's most obvious theoretical influence, Ernst Bloch, thinker par excellence of that capacity to see utopian wish, utopian longing, utopian affect in cultural narratives, objects, and fragments all around us. I would note that Marcuse is only slightly less central, and for all the suggestion that Marcuse's thought travels into a contemporary setting less smoothly than, say, Adorno's or Benjamin's, that some of his most influential work can seem difficult to disentangle from its moment — e.g. the ostensibly "fifties" (or is it "sixties"?) cast of *Eros and Civilization* — he continues to be crucial for queer utopians. And in this respect, *Cruising Utopia* is very much in the grain of earlier work by Lauren Berlant and Laura Kipnis, for example.

But it is Bloch who provides the crucial dialectical articulation of the "no longer conscious" with the "not yet": Muñoz archives what has been lost, and what we are continuing to lose, in the long, sad shift from the sexually revolutionary energies of the fifties and sixties to their neoliberal neutralization. So John Giorno's description of his encounter with Keith Haring in a subway men's room makes a heteronormalized

present suddenly unfamiliar, providing an “afterimage” of a characteristically seventies/eighties gay “promiscuity.” But the scare quotes around this latter term are crucial, because the utopianism at work here is not simply Dionysian or pornotopic. It is inherent in collective practices every bit as social as they are sexual, practices queer studies has persistently and cogently read as forms of *worldmaking*, that crucial term for the labor of producing and sustaining social/sexual practices from which immanently critical forms of knowledge, affect, and belonging emerge. Men’s rooms, after all, were part of a network as emphatically social as it was covert, and as basic to the labor of collective formation as “physique pictorials” were in earlier decades. And this is a worldmaking now threatened as powerfully by the privacy fetish driving arguments for gay marriage as it was in the eighties by the “gay plague.” So if “queer world-making, then, hinges on the possibility to map a world where one is allowed to cast pictures of utopia and to include such pictures in any map of the social” (40), this scene of Giorno and Haring’s tearoom entanglement becomes indispensable precisely in its pastness. This corroboration of the “no longer conscious” with the “not yet” locates resources for utopian imagination in past moments, past spaces, providing critical leverage on “the coercive choreography of [the] here and now,” a present naturalized as ahistorical, as that pure temporal repetition Benjamin called empty, homogenous. Here, as in Marcuse, as in certain moments in Adorno, and indeed as in Lukacs, a less airtight past, a past providing some breathing room — a past Muñoz refuses to deny may be “willfully idealized” (86) — becomes a kind of repository for utopian speculation, memory assuming its critical power in the face of a contemporary moment in which “there is no alternative” seems if anything an even more potent alibi than it was twenty-five or thirty years ago. To the extent that this archive is “no longer conscious,” the labor of remembering can begin to disclose the limits, the contradictions, of a present experienced as fully positive, as self-identical. “Queer cultural production is both an acknowledgement of the lack that is endemic to any heteronormative rendering of the world and a building, a ‘world making,’ in the face of that lack” (118). As the dialogue on utopia between Bloch and Adorno puts it, in a formulation crucial for Muñoz, “something’s missing.”²

The book’s introduction is called “Feeling Utopia”: transformational imagination emerges here from embodied practice, including the gestural interruptions to which I have already referred, but also from affect, sensation, the immediate experience of wishing, longing. Muñoz emphasizes practices of utopian beauty and warmth over what queer studies sometimes likes to call “negative affect,” “paranoid reading.” We could be struck by the sheer boldness of drawing on Bloch in a conjuncture as politically neutralized as the present can appear to be. Or we could conclude instead that Bloch is ready-to-wear if one’s objective is to locate utopian anything in the present. Muñoz rightly points out that actually realized utopian enclaves are a history of failure; and so “astonishment,” a radical affective openness to unpredictable newness is joined here, as Bloch’s terms insist it must, with the possibility of disappointment. This is

a Blochian “concrete” utopianism in which the affective indeed trumps the purely conceptual or epistemological, what Bloch calls those “abstract” utopias ungrounded in any historically specific or practical consciousness. It would seem that *Cruising Utopia* strongly prefers concrete, wishful utopianism to a Jamesonian articulation of utopia, for example — which, though I would argue that it is not exactly “abstract” in Bloch’s sense, would nonetheless most centrally signify our very incapacity to imagine a break with the present at all. Muñoz is less ready to affirm the claim that contemporary political imagination is so thoroughly atrophied. If one of *Cruising Utopia*’s implications is that something’s missing, another is that we can at least catch inchoate glimpses of what that something might be — as in a wonderfully suggestive chapter called “Utopia’s Seating Chart,” which examines the “mail art” that traveled through the postal service courtesy of an early seventies art collective called the New York Correspondence School. Right around the time a movement called gay liberation was taking shape, this group of artists exploited the postal service in an effort to imagine a network, to “cognitively map” a form of social connection, to project a kind of aesthetic blueprint for queer collectivity as such.

But these concrete practices are also, again, “willfully idealized,” the book embracing a kind of paradoxical concrete idealism in the face of the hopelessly pragmatic contemporary “politics” embodied by lobbying groups like the Human Rights Campaign. So in this sense, utopia does indeed seem, even here, to signify its own material impossibility, and indeed Muñoz has more recently remarked that his book is about “performing impossibility in the face of the pragmatic.”³ If this framing of the analysis by the opposition between a gay pragmatism and a critical idealism necessarily raises the question of politics, the emphasis, again, is on potentiality: “queer idealism may be the only way to usher in a new mode of radicalism that can perhaps release queer politics from its current death grip” (172); the book elaborates and encourages utopian imaginings from which “a generative politics can potentially be distilled” (173). What the book’s insistence that utopia can still be imagined shares in common with Jameson’s suggestion that it can’t is then what can only be called a sobriety about the contemporary political landscape. To a limited extent, the aesthetic seems here again to be what Marcuse calls “affirmative.” While for Muñoz the aesthetic by no means merely affirms the social as it is, it explicitly critiques the present from the vantage of the ideal: as in Marcuse’s account of affirmative culture, idealism is the means of maintaining some kind of radical critique of a politically unpromising now. Aesthetic critique becomes the inevitable substitute for an activist critique hardly imaginable beyond the terms of the immediately practical. To this extent, at least, the book’s implication is consistent with one of the most familiar themes from Marxian cultural analysis: art has a capacity to perform (or at least intimate) what politics too rarely can.

But an impossible utopian worldmaking must nonetheless be practiced — immediately — because the stakes are high. Here is where the book’s autobiographical

dimension becomes important, a dimension operating most powerfully when the emphasis is on those utopian performances the book associates with queer youth of color. Indeed, the “astonishment” the book recounts is often childish in the best sense, Muñoz explicitly identifying with queer youth of color and eloquently reminding us that he used to be one himself. This astonishment is not only a response to utopian beauty and warmth, but also to the social violence from which it is inseparable. Add Adorno, then, to the list of this book’s influences: *Cruising Utopia* consistently elucidates utopian gestures formed through and through by damaged life. The chapter on Baraka’s play, where queer, racialized hope is inseparable from queer, racialized violence and loss, is one example. And this chapter concludes with Muñoz’s now famous response to Lee Edelman’s very different take on childishness and futurity: Edelman can only refuse the future and the transcendent Child he sees as currently figuring that future because, in his account, “queer” is irreducibly white. Muñoz’s already widely cited response: “Racialized kids, queer kids” — unlike the fantasized Child we encounter in Edelman — “are not the sovereign princes of futurity” (95). They are, in fact, under threat; so we have to continue to seek “a ‘not-yet’ where queer youths of color actually get to grow up” (96).

Such urgency grounds the book’s discussion of Kevin Aviance, a black drag performer whose gestures unmistakably reference the racialized performances of “the pier queen” (74). His performances evoke, that is, not only a gay flamboyance which may well have always been legible as utopian in Bloch’s sense of the term. These movements also necessarily register those areas near the piers at the end of Christopher Street which were famous as a site of gay promiscuity in the seventies and eighties; where, in the wake of Reagan’s “morning in America,” queer youth of color gathered and performed voguing and dancing contests; and where those same youth are now harder to find, as condominiums and private security forces have appeared, precisely in order to capitalize on the area’s storied queer history. We can locate not only “celebration” in Aviance’s movements, then, but also “the strong trace of black and queer racialized survival” (80). Aviance’s moves register this fabulousness, moreover, in the damaged present of those sweaty, glamorous, decidedly nonmarginal spaces catering to white gay men. On a stage high above a dancing mass of machismo, Aviance performs “gestures [that] connote the worlds of queer suffering that these huddled men attempt to block out but cannot escape, and the pleasures of being swish and queenly that they cannot admit to in their quotidian lives” (79). The longings of concrete utopian practice are here flamboyant and damaged all at once. What this performance seems to conjure — to refuse to allow to vanish — are worlds confined to the least visible spaces in the neoliberal city, spaces defined fundamentally in relation to a dynamic of privatizing violence.

So if everyday queer life is flamboyant, or at least aspires to be, if the performative suggests the inseparability of the aesthetic from the practical, what kind of twist do we find, here, on the Marxian account of art’s capacity to do what politics so often

can't? The book ultimately maintains a kind of richly suggestive unease about the very boundary separating aesthetic performance from politics. This comes across most powerfully in the book's return to the violence of Giuliani's New York City, where the constellation of zoning ordinances, real estate speculation, and his infamous police force managed to eviscerate whatever delicate infrastructure of queer worldmaking the city had provided. Queer worlds of color included bars like the Magic Touch in Jackson Heights (now closed), where performers mixed with patrons, a site of social connection and collectivity, of cross-race and cross-class "contact," in the simultaneously sexual, affective, and critical sense Samuel Delany gives this term in his elegy for the pre-Disney Times Square.⁴ This, Muñoz suggests, was a space where the line between the stage and the audience could vanish, where the fourth wall was routinely shattered. Muñoz then links the Magic Touch's blurring of the aesthetic and the practical to a mass demonstration in Washington Square Park, to which the police responded exactly as we would expect, with dispersal: "the state understands the need to keep us from knowing ourselves, knowing our masses" (64). If this collective action was political, it was also necessarily performative, aesthetic; it was action which refuses this distinction, as anyone who has participated in a mass action worth the name can surely appreciate. Muñoz recounts the way in which a neoliberal urbanization atomizes collective queer worlds even as it creates, in the process, the very conditions for glimpses of other possibilities, other practices of sociality, other futures.

The book is at its most powerful in this refusal to separate the aesthetic from the political, in its emphasis on performative gestures that bleed into sociopolitical reality, that exceed the bounds of the static aesthetic object. What performance can perform, Muñoz shows, is a dialectical thinking and feeling beyond those ways of differentiating the aesthetic from the political that we encounter in so much of the dialectical tradition on which he draws.

Notes

1. As I write this, a special issue of *GLQ*, “Queer Studies and the Crises of Capitalism” (173 [2011]), is going to press.
2. Ernst Bloch and Theodor Adorno, “Something’s Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing,” in Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).
3. <http://www.socialtextjournal.org/periscope/2010/06/response.php#more>. Accessed December 15, 2010.
4. Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

Pink Pirates: Contemporary Women Writers and Copyright

Caren Irr

Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010, 348 pp.

US\$34.95

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Under a Pink Flag

Madeleine Monson-Rosen

In *Under the Black Flag*, the 1925 collection of pirate biographies notable for its influence on William Burroughs and Kathy Acker, Don Carlos Seitz relates the story of seventeenth-century pirate captain James Mission, who prefigured the French Revolution as well as the pink pirates described in Caren Irr's text. Mission's men, according to Seitz (and Defoe, whose history Seitz adapted), rejected the black flag for the white, founded the commune Libertatia on the Madagascar coast, held all property communally, and sailed the Atlantic, freeing slaves and adopting them into their African utopia while they plundered French, British, and Spanish vessels. Necessity compels Mission to declare war on every nation that would close its borders to him, yet he and his men are humane and gracious to all whom they encounter in battle.¹

This delightful, though apocryphal, history offers a literary precedent for the pirates invoked in *Pink Pirates*. But Irr is less concerned with the maritime variety of pirate than with constructing a history and genealogy for a piracy related to the now more ubiquitous variety: the scourge of the information economy and pillager of intellectual property. Irr's pirates are far from fearsome. In many cases, they remain committed to ideologies of domesticity, maternal affection, and the preservation of community. However, Irr's pink pirates share with Captain Missions's both an illegitimate relationship to property and the commitment to a commons.

The pink pirates are less individuals than they are figures for the creative commons, a generative, feminine space created both in relief by the inability of women authors to hold copyright on their own work through the late nineteenth century, and in positive space by the utopian vision of a commons characterized by democracy, fair use, and communal property, and often symbolized by domestic space and traditional

knowledge. Irr argues that women writers, pink pirates whether they claim that status or not, create this commons both in their writings and in their relationship to copyright legislation.

Two methodologies inform Irr's work. The first reads the complex and constrained relationship between women and copyright extending from the first legislation granting copyright to authors (Britain's Statute of Anne), to the current double standard in copyright that benefits men and masculinist ideologies of property ownership. The second interprets the "association of feminism with literary piracy" in the work of contemporary women writers, establishing an analogy "between a purportedly female creativity and the literary pirate's extralegality[...]. This pink pirate represents the endurance of creativity outside the bounds of the law" (2).

This association between femininity and extralegality gives rise, in *Pink Pirates*, to some paradoxical and provocative assertions: the intellectual property of women always has an unstable relationship to copyright law, and so the tenacious efforts of some women to protect that intellectual property have a piratical character even when that property becomes normative and commercial. Barbie, for instance, offers an interesting case study: created by a woman, and therefore pink, yet contributing to restrictive, sexualized, and idealized notions of femininity. Attacks, literal or figurative, on Barbie also have a piratical character, in part because they are subject to vigorous prosecution as violations in copyright. So both Barbie's creator, Ruth Handler, and artist Paul Hansen (creator of the art work "Big Dyke Barbie") have a pink and piratical cast. A similar paradoxical case involves a novel manuscript based on the life of sixteenth-century female pirate Grania O'Malley, written by a female author, and then appropriated and published by female employees of the Little, Brown Company, to whom the original manuscript had been submitted. Irr's reading highlights the ways in which the professionalization of women, especially in the publishing industry, pits female piratical practice against itself. The would-be authors in this case turned to the court, rather than to informal associations and female social networks, as earlier women authors whose authorial rights were less secure had done for both the dissemination of writing and the attribution of authority, or, as women writers in the contemporary period will, to invoking the commons, and a piratical practice, in order to critique proprietary individualism.

Irr's history begins with the passage of the Statute of Anne in 1710, a signal moment in the shift from the patronage system of literary production to the market model, which requires contracts between author-owners, printer-publishers, and reader-consumers. According to Irr, the mainstream reading of the Statute of Anne — that it provides a monetary incentive to be the sole creator of a work — has been called into question by various copyright historians, including those who see other steps in the literary production process, such as the printing and distributing of texts, as equally if not more important than the invention of proprietary authorship. Women authors, Irr notes, deferring to the work of Catherine Gallagher on female

authorship in the literary marketplace, proliferated during the eighteenth century despite being technically prohibited from signing publishing contracts by the principles of coverture.² These women sometimes capitalized on their extralegal status by negotiating or renegotiating publishing contracts. Alternately, women authors take advantage of archaic models of textual production, such as circulating manuscripts among friends prior to publication, thus creating a common space of textual sharing before taking the books to market. Feminist legal scholarship, Irr argues, revives this model of the commons as an alternative paradigm for distribution of intellectual resources. Intellectual property held commonly rather than privately detaches “authorship from ownership.” The feminist critics of copyright who will inform Irr’s analysis “describe creativity as a socially embedded, transformative use of a repertoire of texts available to a network of contributors. While disassembling Anglo-American copyright, in other words, feminist legal scholars have reanimated the commons that is the precondition of intellectual property.” The Statute of Anne becomes a “sort of pirate flag”:

Even while codifying copyright, it raises an alarm that points to the existence of a concomitant pink piracy. In a pattern that we will come to recognize as typical of pink pirate discourse, the proper name of an exceptional queenly authority (Anne) has been folded into a myth that keeps the dominant gendered ideology of writing alive. At the same time, in its defensive insistence on a single form of authorship, the Statute of Anne indirectly gestures toward the back channels of a nonproprietary pirate practice. (23)

From Anne, Irr surveys the history of women and copyright in the U.S. through the nineteenth century, highlighting the significant contributions made not only to letters, but also to copyright law, by figures such as Susanna Rowson and Harriett Beecher Stowe, both blockbuster authors officially prohibited from holding the copyright to their own work (Irr has personally surveyed hundreds of contracts issued to women authors by the Houghton company between 1840 and 1900). The function of this history is to set the scene for the four twentieth-century novelists of whom Irr offers readings as exemplars of piratical practice and as visionaries of a pink commons.

The nineteenth-century women writers whom Irr surveys in the first chapter provide a basis for thinking about the ways in which copyright legislation has always been gendered, and how, even in literary forms dominated by women, women writers often find themselves on the wrong side of the law. This antagonistic relationship is constitutive both of women’s literary practice and the law that attempts to contain it. While women typically sign publishing contracts in their own names, circumstances often complicate their relation to intellectual property. Fanny Fern, a prolific and

successful author, could require that her husband sign a prenuptial agreement ensuring that she maintained copyright on her publications, but still needed him to file suit against a plagiarist on her behalf.

Irr's opening chapters offer a persuasive account of the ways in which, from 1710 through the first half twentieth century, the tension between women's writing and copyright are constitutive both of the legislation governing intellectual property and of a separate, extralegal system of creation and circulation. In addition to creating an alternate history of authorship, this section of *Pink Pirates* contributes to the shifting conversation on print culture, which, after the contributions of iconoclastic historians such as Adrian Johns and N. Katherine Hayles, has to consider piracy itself as a significant formative influence on the literary marketplace.³

As she moves into discussion of the contemporary novelists who represent the main case studies of the book, however, Irr takes up the literary work and the related legislation in discrete sections. While throughout the nineteenth century women writers as figurative pirates and privateers play an instrumental role in the development of copyright law, Irr treats law and literature in the second half of the twentieth century as relatively separate discourses, having little tangible to say to each other. In one instance, Irr even appears to apologize for linking the two, suggesting that the work of Kathy Acker, work which has been the subject of various legal proceedings, is insignificant when considered alongside intellectual property and First Amendment case law:

Although Acker's wild writings and literary experiments with a post-human, fully sexualized world seem unlikely to reorient expert legal discussions any more than do those of any other literary figures, her challenging writings certainly encourage those who study them to bring to their discussion more vivid ways of imagining territories of writing that are neither obscene nor owned. For interested parties at the edge of copyright reform, they might suggest that a language of the commons may need spicing up — may need more Maya Angelou and less Angela Davis. (132)

In fact, Acker's books were banned in Canada for some time, on the basis of customs law adapted from the antiporn legislation authored by Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon. Irr pairs her discussion of Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* with a pornography case, *Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc. v. Pussycat Cinema Ltd.*, whose opposing sides "largely mirror feminist debates about pornography" (112). Of course Acker has herself been the subject of these debates. Nicola Pitchford's study *Tactical Readings* vigorously argues that feminism's pornography conflict, that is, what constitutes a tolerable limit on explicit speech and representation, is precisely a conflict about postmodern works like those of Kathy Acker as well as more

recognizable types of pornography.⁴

Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders, Inc. v. Pussycat Cinema Ltd., and related case law in which the copyright on the image of the cheerleader is protected from ostensible illegitimate use in pornographic films and publications, confuse, Irr suggests, questions of form and content in ways that feminists should be worried about. Instead of simply protecting copyright from infringement, cases such as this ensure that “sexual content — understood as embodied, feminine, pornographic, and commercially confusing — stands at the periphery of legitimate expression; it is controlled and dominated by law because its ‘value’ is in question while its subordination to property rights, especially copyright, is not” (112). “Embodied, feminine, pornographic, and commercially confusing” are of course all terms that could apply to Acker’s fictions. But instead of bringing the two subjects into conversation, Irr repeatedly keeps the legal canon separated from the literary. The result is a discussion that takes place in two different registers, and thus shies away from making strong claims about the ways in which feminist fiction might contribute to bringing about a real, and not just symbolic, pink commons that has the potential to reform intellectual property relations.

Acker, whose later fiction was increasingly occupied with pirates, and Leslie Marmon Silko, whose later novels share an interest in illegal and illicit property relations — in *Almanac of the Dead* this includes smuggling and gun-running, and *Gardens in the Dunes*, discussed in the final chapter of *Pink Pirates*, is concerned with bio-piracy — contribute the most paradigmatic vision of pink piracy in this study. The book’s other two subjects, Ursula K. LeGuin’s 1977 science fiction novel *The Dispossessed* and the works of Andrea Barrett, are concerned with alternate approaches to intellectual property. For LeGuin, this concern takes the form of a juxtaposition. In the universe of her novel one planet supports an anarchistic civilization, a colony of a neighboring, capitalist planet. In Barrett’s work, different types of knowledge constitute alternate approaches to intellectual property: indigenous, cultural, communal knowledge; scientific knowledge produced collaboratively; and women’s traditional, domestic knowledge. The “spaces” invoked by these alternate properties — the scientific community, the home, the virtual repository of cultural memory — are all sites of the pink commons. For Irr, Acker and Silko imagine the pirates who will populate this virtual space.

In the end, Irr follows Silko, who, Irr argues, endorses a “middle position” symbolized by the botanical hybrids of the novel. *Gardens* places itself “between those who romanticize authentic, static tradition and those who celebrate the unregulated flux and flow of appropriation” (138). In Irr’s reading, “Silko’s novel certainly does not exemplify a postmodern free-for-all in which all appropriations are equally meritorious or legitimate and no differentiations between fair and unfair use are made.” And Irr’s image of the pink piratical commons is by no means an unregulated free-for-all, an unrestricted marketplace like that created by Acker’s pirates. Irr’s

piratical commons, like Silko's, "prioritizes meeting basic human needs" (157), not, one guesses, the more outrageous needs of Acker's perverse protagonists.

In her conclusion, Irr once again narrates a history, and the conclusion complements the introduction. Where the introduction offered a survey of the history of women and copyright law, the conclusion traces the concept of a commons through the history of visions of the state. And as with the introduction, whose synthesis of the legal and the literary offers a compelling and convincing narrative of their constitutive and sometimes oppositional relation to each other, so the conclusion offers a survey of philosophical texts, from the *Republic* and More's *Utopia*, through Hobbes and Locke with a detour into Melville, and concluding with Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, in order to show that any exercise in thinking the state has also required thinking the commons. This history, along with its counterpart in the introduction, offers the most forceful demonstration of the overarching claims of the book: that the commons is a historically gendered space, that female creativity has always taken place outside the law, and that a rearranging (a "rejiggering" in Irr's term) of property relations can precipitate a rearranging of social relations.

Notes

1. Don C. Seitz, *Under the Black Flag: Exploits of the Most Notorious Pirates* (New York, Courier Dover, 2002).
2. Catherine Gallagher. *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1710* (Berkeley, U of California P, 1994).
3. Adrian Johns. *The Nature of the Book* (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1998); Katherine Hayles. *Writing Machines* (Cambridge, MIT P, 2002).
4. Nicola Pitchford. *Tactical Readings: Feminist Postmodernism in the Novels of Cathy Acker and Angela Carter* (London, Bucknell UP, 2002). See page 151 and following for a discussion of Acker's Canadian censorship.

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