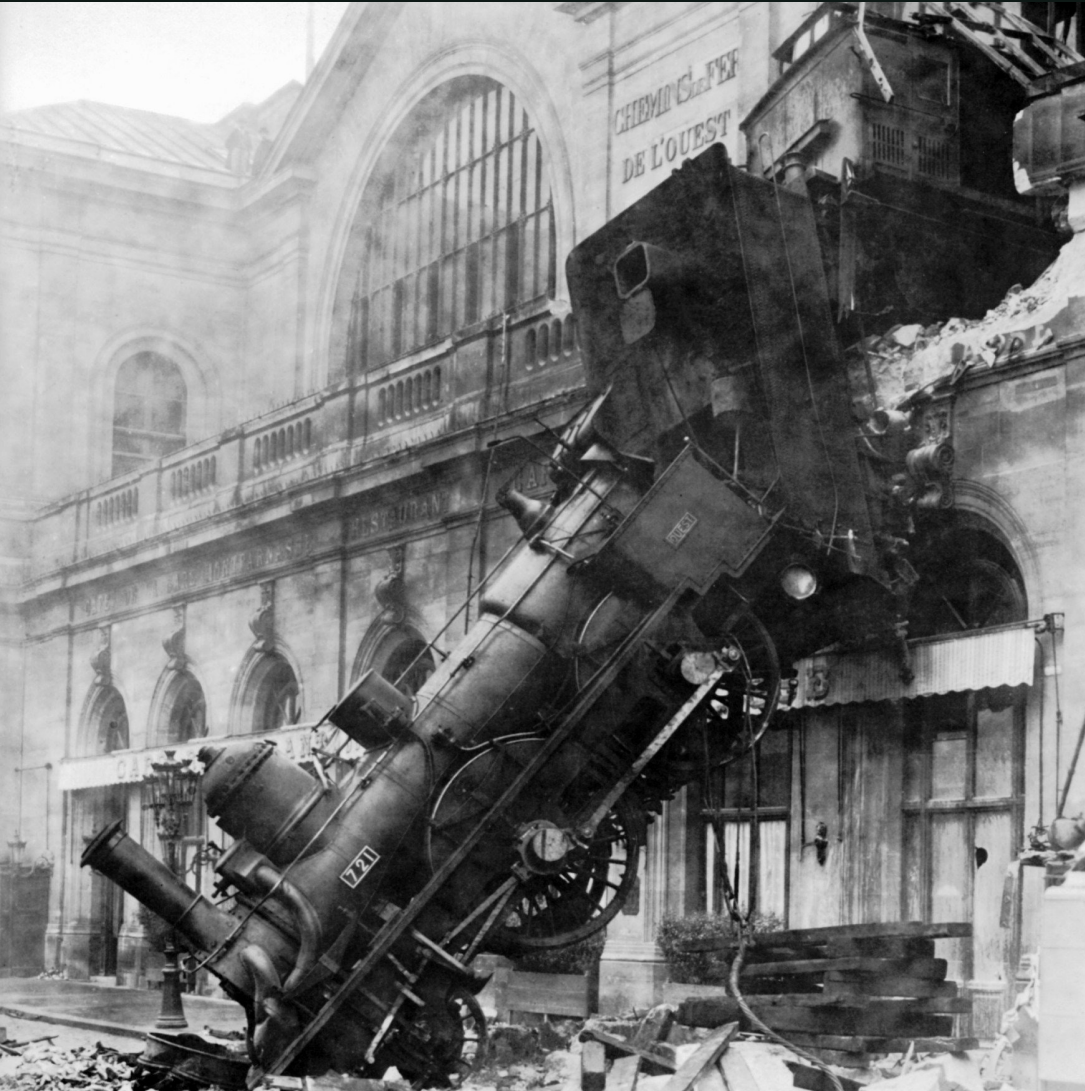


Mediations

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Editors’ Note

This issue is, in one sense, backward looking — even at its most speculative in the closing essay. It is also, or because so, recuperative. The historical, literary historical, and speculative essays collected here each in some way seek to reclaim what has been lost to history, whether a particular individual, political program, or genre with the hope of mobilizing toward its revolutionary potential. It begins, in this vein, in a literary mode with two essays by Roberto Schwarz on the imperatives and difficulties of literary realism. The first, an unpublished excerpt from “Two Girls,” underscores Schwarz’s commitment to “composition” or form as producing truth claims about the world that are no less specific to art. The second essay on Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* posits as fundamental the distinction between an observational mimetic standpoint and a realism that “mobilizes the categories within which it moves,” further clarifies the stakes of Schwarz’s critical project.

From there the issue pivots to a more explicitly historiographic mode. Philip Bounds revises the relationship between the British Communist literary theory of the 1930s and doctrinaire Soviet Literary Theory by arguing that although British literary theorists such as Alick West and Christopher Caudwell were influenced by, for example, Nikolai Bukharin’s efforts to define a Soviet literary aesthetic, they extend those arguments in a way that has been often overlooked. Thus questioning the assumption that British communists in the 1930s were mouthpieces for Stalin’s regime, Bounds makes the case for their important role in forging a Marxist aesthetics. Jessica Manry’s essay is similarly reevaluative, arguing that the work of George Padmore — which has been overlooked to our detriment — continues to hold lessons for Marxist thinkers on the questions of class or race. By reading Padmore’s work from his later writings back to earlier ones, Manry recuperates Padmore’s later (less dialectical) work for a Marxian project by demonstrating the ways the pressures of neoliberal thought came to influence his writing and by no less demonstrating the ways his later thought maintains the revolutionary impulses of his earlier writing.

Just as each of these essays is an attempt to parse the nuances of the contradictions and struggles of a pragmatic Left politics, Oded Nir’s essay argues that “peace” occupies an uncertain and often contradictory position in Left Israeli politics. Reading “peace” as a kind of “vanishing mediator,” that is everywhere and nowhere, Nir argues that peace — whatever its status or prospects — has not only galvanized the neoliberalization of the Israeli state, but almost completely disappeared as a horizon

of Left politics. The renewal of the Israeli Left, argues Nir, stands or falls precisely with the way it narrates the disappearance of peace.

Deborah Young shifts the focus slightly to offer a theoretical account of capitalism's propulsive drive toward social death. Drawing heavily on the *Wertkritik* school, Young weds Marx's theory of value to Sigmund Freud's articulation of the death drive, arguing that even though capitalism seems more than content to sacrifice its agents (subjects) to profit, those agents continue to do its bidding. In a sense, this requires reading Freud against himself, as Young notes, no less than it requires re-evaluation of Marxian notions of value. This heterodox reading of both thinkers combined raises pressing questions of how to think historically about the present (and ongoing) crisis of capital.

The issue then concludes with theses by Darko Suvin, who is less concerned with history as such, than with the ways science fiction mediates that history to imagine a future — one is tempted to say, he is primarily concerned with future histories. In these theses, Suvin returns to many of the arguments he has made throughout his career and consolidates them to proffer a new theory of anti-utopia and counterrevolution. Suvin puts it most succinctly in the form of a question: "What happens when...all of us find ourselves thrust inside anti-utopia, a kind of demented *Tron* movie we cannot get out of, increasingly more bitter if not impossible to live in?" To answer this question is to begin to think historically about capitalism's anti-utopian (and anti-humanist) drive, he suggests, and, at the same time, to think about its alternatives. When science fiction adopts the logic of anti-utopia it strikes its most forceful counterrevolutionary posture.

Reviews by Anirban Karak on Terry Pinkard's philosophy of history and Thomas A. Laughlin on Fredric Jameson's theory of realism round out the issue, bringing together the strands of art and history that run through many of the essays collected here.

Davis Smith-Brecheisen, for the *Mediations* editors

Figure of Speech vs. Figure of Composition

Roberto Schwarz

Translated by Nicholas Brown

Today's reader knows that the comparison of a novel with reality is an unpardonable critical gaffe: literature, fundamentally owing its existence only to language, doesn't refer to anything beyond itself. In Roland Barthes' famous and influential formulation, the prose of realist fiction produces a "reality effect," which, as an effect, has nothing whatever to do with reality. In brief, this "effect" — illicit and ideological in the pejorative sense — is a product of the accumulation of "useless details": useless, that is, from the standpoint of narrative progression. Rhetorical in nature despite an appearance we might call empiricist, the ruse of the superfluous detail would deceive the reader and lead him, like a moviegoer so ingenuous as to forget he's at the cinema, to believe in the direct presence of the brute contingency of life. Thereby realism palms off the ineluctable insistence of language, or of its rules and genres.

When we recall the formal and critical audacity of the great realist works, to say nothing of their antennae tuned to the most subtle and dramatic changes in the world's physiognomy, the poverty of the definition is perplexing. It transforms one of the conquests of modern culture into a defect. It is as though the composition of the novels of Stendahl, Balzac, and Flaubert did not in fact seek to imitate and apprehend the rhythm of contemporary society — the essential subject-matter of modern life. Better said, the whole effort would amount to nothing more than playacting, since the foremost objective would be to dupe the reader by means of the "referential illusion," causing him to disregard the difference between the book he has in his hands and the reality outside it. In other words, social experience and the linguistic systems that govern literature would exist in mutually impervious domains. Realism thus understood loses its mimetic dimension: its openness to its own present, to the *sui generis* configurations that the new sense of history was discovering. But these configurations, discerned by the writer precisely in a profusion of objects and empirical connections, are promoted to a principle of composition to which those empirical contents, distilled and stylized according to the dynamism of the form, are

then subordinated. In breaking with conventional forms, realist writing — Barthes notwithstanding — took upon itself the responsibility of imagining and composing the movement of society, thereby making it available for critical contemplation. Composition composes a figure that, whatever else might be said, is not a figure of speech.

Notes

This paragraph of Roberto Schwarz's *Two Girls* was omitted from the English translation. Occupying pages 103-104 of *Duas Meninas* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), it would go at the end of section 6 on page 153 of *Two Girls and Other Essays* (London: Verso, 2012). We can only speculate why Schwarz's editors opted at the beginning of this decade to suppress it. At the end of the decade, it is clear that Schwarz's longstanding commitment to a limber realist imperative — to "composition" or form as producing truth claims of a kind specific to art — is the advanced position in relation to an anglo-american critical field that has been struggling, with decidedly mixed results, to free itself from the presupposition — imported half a century earlier under the sign of the "linguistic turn" — that language is a closed system divorced from practice.

Henry James's Method

Roberto Schwarz

Translated by Nicholas Brown

The explication of an encounter with beauty mobilizes and refines concepts demanded by the imaginative synthesis involved in the experience of an artwork. Justifying displeasure is less rewarding. The lack of a unifying sense of beauty is a poor topic: confirmed by the discovery of inconsistencies, its criterion can only be a schematic sense of unity. Since the ideal novel, from whose perspective the real one appears lacking, is our own construction, we remain trapped within our own concepts. Rather than finding our world-view enriched by the ideas of a novel that doesn't please us, we would correct it according to our own past experience. Negative criticism can be amusing, but it is self-referential. It might be useful for literary politics or help to mark out theoretical positions, but it doesn't make a contribution of its own.

■

James leaves one with a sense of incompleteness equal to his finesse. The lacuna is consistent: in style, plot, characterization, and conception of society, to the point that one has a presentiment there of a virtue: the dramatic staging of the precariousness with which we apprehend the meaning of human situations. Kafka would be the exemplar. His characters have an insufficient sense of the way their world works, and this insufficiency, together with the perplexity and above all the fear that this causes, is the content of his prose. A world that is both intelligible and worth relating — the basis of the classic novel — is put into question, and this impossibility is the theme of post-realist fiction. But the lack of both magnitude and transparency is a negative state, and it has to be presented as such to be true. The presentation of negative life must not lose the contrary, positive referent — even if this is only implicit, in the form of a horizon, of an anxiety — that reveals the damage it entails. Lacking this, the presentation of immediate life is prattling self-indulgence, a lack of importance portending nothing. The reference to an absent plenitude, a sense of distance, is therefore essential to such fiction. It can express itself in hatred for its own subject

matter, in bafflement before it, in doubt — all of these forms of narrating do justice to the lack of meaning as a lack. If that distance disappears, the presentation of incompleteness remains incomplete. The integrity of meaning, its full immanence, is not merely an attribute of the literary school known as realism. As a presence or as a present and sensible absence, it is fundamental for comprehension. In relation to it, as the logic that governs *The Portrait of a Lady* will show, James's position is ambiguous.

■

The social structure implied in *Portrait of a Lady* is complex: we are presented with aristocrats and an American industrialist; retired Americans living in comfortable seclusion in Europe; a beautiful woman, without money or scruples, ambitious for her illegitimate daughter; an aesthete; and finally, the American girl, suddenly transformed into an heiress: the figure, that is, of a life worthy of being lived and novelized. Just a glance is enough to suggest the categories and conflicts that would tend to emerge from the composition of this group: American democracy and European traditions; access to life or exclusion from it, through inheritance or lack of money; personal quality, linked or opposed to work or leisure; social conventions seen as limitations or as aesthetic object; the moral implications of luck or cunning, and so on. Our reading of the book, however, will show that none of these notions are developed with any rigor — even though all of them present themselves at one opportunity or another. They, and with them the situations in which they take part, don't reach a degree of definition and crisis sufficient for their meanings to crystalize. Could it be said, then, that social structure is only incidental, inessential to the book? Perhaps James is interested in a form of psychology that has nothing to do with social positions, which are then only present in the novel as a resource to give texture and variety to its cast of characters. But if we reimagine the book along these lines, stripped of everything social, as though all the relations in it were exclusively personal and resolvable in terms of individual psychology, the result would not account for the text. The characters and their acts seem, on the contrary, to define themselves in relation to money, tradition, and the rest. We arrive at a paradox: social relations are peripheral and essential at the same time. To say that the book is without value because it lacks a minimum of internal coherence is false in the face of our experience of it: *Portrait* is nothing if not coherently elaborated. We need then a second response capable of interpreting the paradox. What does it mean, then, to confront social determinations only to proceed as though they did not exist? In real life it could be cluelessness, generosity, cunning. The literary text, however, is nothing but construction: where every gesture is intentional, the question is more tenacious.

If the paradox is more than a contradiction, there must be some meaning in constructing social determinations only to deny their validity. Social structure, as disregarded, is essential to the book. To produce it precisely as the determination to ignore it is to stage the gesture of *apparent liberty*; the correlate of apparent liberty

is the *impotent consciousness* that knows itself to lack a basis for action. These two attitudes permeate the great moments of the text, whose physiognomy they determine. These modes of falsity and impotence deliver the one-sidedness of the world in James from being a mere flaw; they give a falsified representation its truth. They insinuate a corrosive into the proclamations of inner life, which wants to be independent of objective determinations. By means of the precariousness they introduce into the narrative tone, these modes guarantee a sustained criticism of the very content of the narration. Even so — and here is the ambiguity — they don't do so with the necessary force and penetration. It's true that affected small talk, subtle and negligent, rings false. But in the end its false liberty imposes itself on the theme: money and social position appear as though really secondary, natural appendices of so much finesse. Neither have the scenes of impotent consciousness the necessary profundity to clarify the tissue of human relations that the book mobilizes. As we shall see, James doesn't satisfy his own famous demand, according to which the novelist must "know as much as possible" about the substance of his art.

■

Seated at the hearth, alone, a young woman becomes aware of the sinister nature of her relationship with her husband; two people, measuring one another across a tactical dialogue, judge the force of their respective positions, in order to act according to the balance of power between them, which has been concealed until this moment. These scenes, typical of James, are his best. Free, fluttering consciousness is forced to recognize its real possibilities and conditions: apparent liberty is reduced to impotent consciousness. We are accustomed to saying that the fundamental experience of James is one of liberty. But it would be truer to say that it is a progressive sense of confinement between empty alternatives.

The realist writer advances us from the present to the future. The situation as given appears to its characters as a limit, but it is also the concrete field of their liberty. The physiognomy to come depends on what they do to confirm or transform their situation and themselves: their alternatives have content. James's scenario runs from the infinite possibilities projected by apparent liberty to the consciousness of limitation. The acts that gave form to the present are in the past. The Jamesian moment takes place in the aftermath, in a dead time when what is important has already taken place; all that remains is to take stock. One might insist that on the contrary *Portrait of a Lady* unfolds in time and cannot but project a future. Nonetheless, scenes of momentous decision, in which the dimension of openness to the future is experienced, are carefully omitted; they appear only as already consummated, when characters evoke and analyze them. Skipping over the moments of choice in which new features configure themselves, James creates a temporal sequence articulated not by actions, but by passive moments in which what has already come to pass is recognized, and suffered. The future is composed like a sophisticated but mechanical expiation of the

past. This is the foundation for the strange Jamesian education that is accomplished in the submission to reality as it is. As the consciousness of the characters grows, with it grows the certainty of impotence. If this dialectic, taken to the extremes of irresponsibility that it permits, were freed from the limitations imposed by decorum and common sense, it would reveal the cannibal fatalism behind stoical refinement; it would lead to a profound portrait of the world presented and therefore to its symbolic liquidation; it would be its own natural critique. James, however, detesting whatever smacks of stridency (the horror Dostoyevsky caused him is well known), concentrates instead on the beauty proper to lucidity itself, detached from its active reach. Thus the vileness of the final pages: there can be no destiny, no meaning for a consciousness that doesn't unfold itself in action and suffer practical consequences.

■

Discussing the contradiction we are pointing to, Richard Chase presents a solution so simple it would be perfect if it were true:

The conscious assimilation of romance into the novelistic substance of *The Portrait* took place in two different ways. It was assimilated into the language of the book and produced a general enrichment of metaphor. It was also brought in in the character of Isabel Archer, the heroine, who is to a considerable extent our point of view as we read. Isabel tends to see things as a romancer does, whereas the author sees things with the firmer, more comprehensive, and more disillusioned vision of the novelist. Thus James brings the element of romance into the novel in such a way that he can both share in the romantic point of view of his heroine and separate himself from it by taking an objective view of it.¹

Chase extends tendencies of the book in the direction of a structure that would sustain novelistic integrity. For this to be true would require a narratorial standpoint critical of Isabel. Such narratorial presence is downplayed rather than accentuated. Nonetheless, Chase poses the central problem: the conflict between an ingenuous notion of social categories, which pertains to romance, and a realist vision.

■

As the novel begins, the narrator is a well bred gentleman intimately acquainted with the pleasures of English high society. His characteristic narrative gesture is that of the insider: he presents the situation as a whole, like an old familiar scene whose nuances he will teach us to appreciate by pointing out a few details. The scene is visualized as a unity of atmosphere, and requires synthetic apprehension more than understanding. The acceptance of the whole, which is necessary for the comprehension of details, is not up for discussion; the gesture allows no room for critical distance. Neither do we

take any, since its generously aristocratic presuppositions prompt complicity. We too are subtle, and require no tiresome explanation of what is so obviously in good taste. The seductive capacity of James encounters comic testimony in his critics, who soon enough abandon prose for coloratura.

“Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea” (1). The sentence is a gesture whose content is more or less indifferent; its importance is in the lifestyle it presents and in the relation it establishes with the reader. Under certain circumstances (they are particular, but we do not know them and must therefore put our trust in the narrator), there are few hours in life (he assures us of their rarity, suggesting that his judgment has foundations that we do not suspect) more agreeable than the ceremony known as afternoon tea (the name is only a name, a pale evocation through which we enviously view the garden). Though excluded (we don't know a great deal about afternoon tea) we are included (what little has been said we also know). The solution is divisional: included, my neighbor excluded, I find myself an aristocrat. This little masterpiece of seduction, innocent and charming because it speaks of tea, rehearses a procedure that will reveal its shabbiness in the context of more important matters, when a sense of initiated belonging is no substitute for comprehension. The exclusive and flattering gesture of this prose crystalizes in a technique that will be used a great deal in the novel, and criticized to a certain degree: but, as we shall see, in insufficient form.

In his first encounter with Isabel, in Florence, speaking of the girl's American aunt, Osmond says “Oh, she's an old Florentine; I mean literally an old one; not a modern outsider. She's a contemporary of the Medici; she must have been present at the burning of Savonarola, and I'm not sure she didn't throw a handful of chips into the flame.... Indeed I can show you her portrait in a fresco of Ghirlandaio's” (372). Lines later, Osmond will be lamenting the vulgarity of his sister. We have already analyzed this seductive technique, but now we see its potential dishonesty. The strategy embodied in the prose consists in the opposition between initiate and outsider, taste and vulgarity. It invokes a certain moonshine about authenticity, as opposed to modern rootlessness (“literally an old one, not a modern outsider”); it mentions various names, to demonstrate intimacy with the arts and with the spirit of the place; it hints, with gallant doubt, at the vividness of its historical imagination (“I'm not sure she didn't throw a handful of chips into the flame” — a delicate suggestion, something like a dessert). These fancies of Osmond's establish him along with Isabel as a privileged spirit, “one of the cleverest and most agreeable men ... in Europe.” James understands the strategy perfectly well, as he shows in his masterful construction of the reaction of the girl. She fears

exposing — not her ignorance; for that she cared comparatively little
— but her possible grossness of perception. It would have annoyed her

to express a liking for something he, in his superior enlightenment, would think she oughtn't to like; or to pass by something at which the truly initiated mind would arrest itself. She had no wish to fall into that grotesqueness — in which she had seen women (and it was a warning) serenely, yet ignobly, flounder. She was very careful therefore as to what she said, as to what she noticed or failed to notice; more careful than she had ever been before. (379)

Through Isabel, we feel the tyranny of a sense of taste that doesn't condescend to explain itself. There is only one way to avoid disappointing a spirit who deigns to consider us at his level of refinement and good breeding, and that is never to disagree with him. To have good taste is to agree: disagreement would break the intuitive and unquestionable identity accepted as the basis of admission into the elect. The paralysis of judgment that besets Isabel corresponds to the manner in which Osmond affirms himself, to the irrational substance of a superiority that requires either rebuff or unconditional acceptance. Osmond doesn't define himself by this or that positive feature, but only negatively, as not being the usual sort, as an uncommon person (his description says that he is neither this nor that nationality, a rare thing, bears an unusual aspect — distinctions of a purely negative character). This non-identity that does not, because it has no positive content, constitute a determinate difference, is the very structure of snobbism. Its characteristic gesture proposes a fraternity above the existing world, to which it opposes, however, nothing concrete that would permit the comparison. The snob is sterile. As arbiter of taste and of truth he must be unquestioned — and yet he would not know how to respond to any question. Therefore he decries reason as in bad taste. The submission he requires is irrational and total, an exercise in identification in which the structure of the model is reproduced. To recognize the invisible difference is, already, to be among the elect; Isabel senses this. The slightest doubt about the substance of this difference, however, attacks the integrity of the whole. Incapable of demonstration, it can only be affirmed.

Our characterization is directed primarily at Isabel and Osmond, and at the seductive tone of the narration; but it also applies to the logic of *apparent liberty* described above. The pose of privilege, which affirms difference and quality without demonstrating them, both permeates the book and is skeptically illuminated within it. Osmond is criticized for the empty and destructive impact of his style on Isabel. She herself is touched by this critique, as is the general tone of the book — shades of Peeperkorn, promising treasures of naughtiness and complicity, capable of awakening our sense of profundity, but not of satisfying it. It remains to be seen whether the novel manages to absorb what it demonstrates between Osmond and Isabel, whether it comprehends to the root the nature of this gesture of privilege, of snobbism — its theme and its tone — in such a way as to reveal its fatuousness, but also its peculiar validity. Seduction, no matter how duplicitous, depends on anxieties that preexist it.

■

Seated before the fire, already married to Osmond, her spirit alert from the glimpse she had caught of the intimacy between her husband and Madame Merle, Isabel recomposes her past in a long meditation.

She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. ... Osmond's beautiful mind gave [her] neither light nor air... He took himself so seriously; it was something appalling. Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers. She had taken him seriously, but she had not taken him so seriously as that.... She was to think of him as he thought of himself — as the first gentleman in Europe.... It implied a sovereign contempt for every one but some three or four very exalted people whom he envied... But this base, ignoble world, it appeared, was after all what one was to live for; one was to keep it for ever in one's eye, in order not to enlighten or convert or redeem it, but to extract from it some recognition of one's own superiority.... [S]he had never seen any one who thought so much of others.... When she saw this rigid system [Osmond's traditions] close about her, draped though it was in pictured tapestries, that sense of darkness and suffocation of which I have spoken took possession of her; she seemed shut up with an odour of mould and decay. She had resisted of course; at first very humorously, ironically, tenderly; then, as the situation grew more serious, eagerly, passionately, pleadingly. (196-99)

The succession of images that emerge to fix the contours of Isabel's consciousness is very fine. Despite being a great scene on its own, this passage is intended to illuminate the book as a whole. But does it have the power to do so? Isabel reconsiders her husband, whose indifference to the world appears now as carefully studied and ostentatious; the revision is astute, and elucidates the character of Osmond. For the ensemble of problems that the novel puts forth, however, the reach of this evocation is modest. From the standpoint of the book as a whole, it is a great scene of lucidity rather than a scene of great lucidity. The intensity of these passages owes less to the clarifying force of its intuitions than to the distinctness of the emotions that accompany them. We learn little about the relations between beauty, sterility, and oppression, of whose synthesis we get nothing more than a presentiment. Instead of deepening this unity, without which the terror of the novel remains opaque, James composes subtle and convincing images of the states of body and soul that accompany such lucidity. These animic states, promptly recognized, substitute for knowledge, which is promised and withheld. Their physiognomic justice aims only to hit the

mark, not to illuminate. We all feel what it is to be without light nor air; we too find self-seriousness appalling and hidden egoism sinister. We too would flee from the suffocating tapestry of tradition, and we follow Isabel anxiously as she resists “at first very humorously, ironically, tenderly; then, as the situation grew more serious, eagerly, passionately, pleadingly.” Once again, the scene would be a masterpiece on its own. It is full of penetrating details that transmit the nervous, physical quality of human relationships: “Isabel could easily imagine how his ears had scorched on his discovering he had been too confident.” In the context of the novel, however, it is just one more example — probably the best — of the crafty seduction that is James’s technique. Since we feel the scene in our skin, throat, and ears, we do not need to understand. The principle of physiognomic identification — “yes, that’s exactly how it feels” — turns the search for reasons behind the situation superfluous. The effort aims only at mimetic precision. This astonishing precision is, in fact, the great pleasure in reading James.

The value placed on recognition is tied to the novel’s retrospective method. Isabel is engaged in the process of discovering what happened, and her curiosity does not go far beyond establishing a correct picture of what has taken place. She takes stock rather than understands. By way of contrast, consider the realist novel: meaning emerges from the sequence of facts, even if a particular character happens to catch on to it. A movement among possibilities that are given and objective is at the same time a movement from past to future. Hesitating between, for example, honor, money, and love, the hero is defined by the choices he makes; his biography, meanwhile, defines the system within which he is forced to choose. Money, honor and love will have gained meaning in the course of the biography; they will have revealed themselves through what they do to a character. They will not be simply recognized and nothing more. Honor, for example, might show itself to be its own opposite through the economic extortion that it serves, and so on. Only by unifying contradictory possibilities in his life will the character attain the complex destiny, corresponding to the latent complexity of his world, that James aspires to. The individual biography, a singular interiorization of objective and contradictory categories, illuminates its society, which is not a backdrop but the very substance of individual experience. In the realist novel, psychology is immediately social. The categories mobilized in the plot are those that form the basis of the novel itself, which therefore constructs the plot with materials proper to it.

Portrait, on the other hand, principally aims at Isabel’s consciousness. The movement from fantasy to realism that the course of her experience describes might contain a thousand peripeteias, but it remains relatively exterior to its object, to the substance of the conflict. The infinite subtlety with which James composes the stations of Isabel’s consciousness does not require apprehension of her object, since to lose one’s illusions and to comprehend reality are not the same thing. In its essentials, and despite scenes of emerging consciousness, the world of the *Portrait* will remain opaque

to the end; in a moment, Osmond will be our example. If the observer herself, Isabel, is moved by categories — for example, those of self-interested and disinterested life, along with the others mentioned above — that assume concreteness neither in her consciousness nor through her actions, then the complexity of her consciousness cannot save the novel from inadequacy and a certain arbitrariness. Because it doesn't mobilize the categories within which it moves — a mobilization that would necessarily clarify its measure and reach — the complexity becomes somewhat pointless.

The most apposite example is one the critic himself invents for the purpose. Let's imagine a Jamesian story, like the one suggested in his notebooks on the pages dated March 18, 1878. We will see how James's famous method — the point of view of characters as the ultimate instance of reality — favors the concentration on the epiphenomenal.

A subject — The Count G. in Florence (Mme T told me the other night) married an American girl, Miss F., whom he neglected for other women, to whom he was constantly making love. She, very fond of him, tried to console herself by flirting with other men; but she couldn't do it — it was not in her — she broke down in the attempt. This might be related from the point of view of one of the men whom she selects for this purpose and who really cares for her. Her caprices, absences, preoccupations, etc. — her sadness, her mechanical, perfunctory way of doing it — then her suddenly breaking it off and letting him see that she has a horror of him — he meanwhile being very innocent and devoted.²

Before taking up the point of view of the young man who will transmit the story, let us tarry a moment with Miss F., our virtual heroine. Neglected by her husband, whom she loves, she has immediate evidence of the potential mismatch between reciprocal feelings. Being married, however, and seeing in marriage a contract of affective equivalence, she reestablishes equilibrium by flirting as well, in imitation of her husband. Soon enough she will feel the horror of the self-negation implicit in this conventional response. The right to imitate her husband is given from the outside, as a contract, while the evidence of her love for him is interior. Her problem will be intelligible, we suppose, in terms of the opposition between bourgeois convention and immediate sentiment, or some equivalent formulation.

Turning to what the story would be according to James's method, we will imagine narrating it from the perspective and limitation of Miss F.'s young consort. Her inconstancy, as she oscillates between depression and manifest affection, will appear to him temperamental and mysterious. Because he has no access to the motor that drives the situation — the more negligent the husband, the more necessary the flirtation — the boy will see in the violence of these caprices the spontaneous movement of Miss F.'s complex and tortured consciousness. A more or less petty, vengeful tactic is draped

with an air of tragedy. The youth can't understand the girl because he has no access to the categories that unify her comportment, which therefore remains mysterious. His love will be born in the effort to captivate this unpredictable woman. Note, however, that the complexity of the attempt to understand the unpredictable object of his pursuit does not correspond to any complexity in the object; it corresponds only to the unhappy position of the youth. Not even the pursuit can be really complex; any complexity would only be contingent, since rigorous connections among the manifold conditions and entailments of an action can only appear by dint of a rich problem. This possibility is excluded from the outset, since the narrator is defined as simply ill informed. The situation is analogous to Isabel's struggle for truth; the two share a common structure, implicit in the Jamesian limited point of view. The tale concerns itself more with choreography than with comprehension. As we have seen, the reflections of the young man — we are to have nothing other than these — move in a field defined by irrelevance: they say little about their object, to which they are tied by relative ignorance. Nor can the effort of discovery acquire real weight, since it is basically silly in the face of a simple, perfectly soluble situation. Mystery originating in accidental ignorance is material for a comedy. Not for James, who would compose exquisite descriptions of the anguish that accompanies uncertainty. At the end, when the youth discovers that the whole thing was a feint on Miss F.'s part, the inconsequential grand proportions that she had assumed need not be deflated, because his consciousness would have had the opportunity to grow in the process. The lost time becomes a gain. The tendency toward the unimportant would be, thus, integral to James's method.

■

The logic of our argument so far consists in the attempt to explicate the rules of construction underlying the *Portrait*, in order to interrogate their concrete deployment. In James's terms, we have explored the novelist's knowledge of his novel. If the argument has been correct, it has demonstrated that *Portrait* is constructed around a situation that is problematic because it remains untouched by the central development of the book. The scenes of nascent consciousness, beautiful in themselves, don't reach the kernel of the matter on which they feed; the proof of this affirmation must be sought in the form of opaque remnants, central notions that are never clarified.

Osmond is a mystery. As we have seen through Isabel, "under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers." As seen by Ralph, Osmond

always had an eye to effect, and his effects were deeply calculated. They were produced by no vulgar means, but the motive was as vulgar as the art was great. To surround his interior with a sort of invidious sanctity, to tantalise society with a sense of exclusion, to make people believe his

house was different from every other... [U]nder the guise of caring only for intrinsic values Osmond lived exclusively for the world. (144)

How does the crafty derogation of one's fellows comport with good nature and cheerfulness? facility with calculation? culture with vulgarity? disinterest with its opposite? Similarly, the beauty of Osmond's life is associated with emptiness. How are we to understand these contradictions? It would not do justice to our experience of the book to say simply that the bad side counterbalances and annuls the good. Osmond retains his beautiful side, despite what we know of him. If we do not want to reduce him to one side or the other, to good or evil, how do we comprehend his unity? If we remain within the terms established by the novel, this contradiction is the end of the line. There is no explanation; all we can say is that Osmond is just like that. Therefore it must be on his own account that he is stylized and empty, cultivated and narrowminded. If these categories do not appear to be linked by objective necessities, they can only be united by an act of subjective will; we are led to a monstrous subjectivity. To a lesser degree the same takes place with Isabel concerning her intense interest in disinterest; since real reasons do not appear, she would appear to be in the grip of some sort of mania. (When such an excess of will is not intended, as it is not in James, it can be ascribed to the method of omitting the action in favor of the evocation. In an active situation it might be impossible, say, to make money and to have style at the same time; to choose money or style would be to accept as its complement the negation of the other. Meanwhile, for the retrospective vision — which does not take in the necessary mutual exclusion of the alternatives because it does not involve the experience of practical impossibilities — a human being is the ecstatic conjunction of her attributes, which coexist side by side but unattached. Objective conditions are encountered only as incorporated into the subject — the result is a hypertrophy of will). Even Ralph's analyses, the liveliest of the book, only consider Osmond from the subjective side: this is dissimulated, but it is so. Nobody asks after the conditions under which Osmond's comportment makes sense, why his disinterestedness is impossible but desirable. What must be true of the world in which Osmond acts in order for his calculations to have effect?

The cultivation of intrinsic values can tantalize only those who experience their absence as a lack.³ Disinterest can only arouse interest when the world is self-interested. To collect is notable when everyone else both buys and sells. To specialize in conserving integrity makes sense when conserving it has become a specialty. One hastens to add that the question is not one of style in general, since the refined Lord Warburton, Osmond's rival with Isabel, has it by birthright; to count as style, style must be personal. We have arrived, it appears, at the utopian figure of the nineteenth century, the artist: mindful of his individual rights like any other bourgeois, the artist is excused from commercial life. However interested in what he does, he is thought of as disinterested. As the market progressively subsumes social life — as, in ever

more areas of life, value is expressed as extrinsic value, namely money — the artist, a person whose profession it is to preserve fidelity to himself and to “the honour of a thing” (Osmond), becomes ever more a utopian figure. Thus, the more life is subject to the market, the fewer materials it will offer the artist, to whom it remains to express the integrity of his sensibility in the negation of the dishonored world. Flaubert is the exemplar. On the other hand, one cannot forget that the artist also lives in the world and makes himself. If he doesn’t inherit a living or acquire a sinecure, the beauty of his soul is his stock in trade. His reward thus increases with his risk. The wages of authenticity are certainly a privilege, since others spend ten hours of their day negating themselves in work. However, the identity of person and work, privilege of the artist in mercantile society, is also his greater risk. Someone who detests his work can distance himself from it. The artist puts his own person, embodied in his work, on the market. Artistic dishonesty therefore has intrinsic consequences: it transforms the “I” into a mere commodity. Where artisanal rigor can signal distrust for the market, marketable polish will represent itself as integrity — but it is the most radical confirmation of the order it aims to negate. It does not open any prospect. The cunning lies in echoing your audience, in an elegant key no less, before it has even spoken.

These ideas, it appears to me, clarify the figure of Osmond. They establish the intelligible nexus of the mutual exclusion of beauty and social life, of style and work, of interest and integrity. More generically, everything that is marketable, everything that exists without its own immediate reason, appears despicable. Without this commercial context, Isabel’s investment in disinterest would make no sense. Within it, however, it is meaningful through and through. Sophisticated good taste disposes of money as if it were on the same side as merit. In its bad faith lurks a legitimate and utopian element of shame and hope: the desire that things should exist for themselves rather than for the market — a desire for integrity that explains the extraordinary prices fetched by artistic workmanship and hand-finishing. Osmond’s baser side can likewise be understood in terms of the horizon of the market. The profession of disinterest — as hobby or source of income — presupposes a moneyed atmosphere that is both bourgeois and disavowed: that is, a population anxious to soften the proofs of phantasmal impersonality that are its possessions.

Though it emerges from questions suggested by the text, our approach does not correspond to the real development of the novel. If it is indeed the case that only a schema like ours can render intelligible the categories that organize the novel, *Portrait* is not a self-sufficient work. James’s mimetic talent has created a credible surface of great interest and grace, but has proven insufficient in the critical articulation of that surface. Minutely attentive to the timbral quality of his characters, James falls victim to their limitation, which is then revered as a principle of taste and delicacy, as a kind of precept. The maieutic counterweight represented by scenes of emerging consciousness does not cast sufficient light.

Notes

"*Retrato de uma senhora* (o método de Henry James)," in Roberto Schwarz, *A Sereia e o desconfiado* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981) 151-165. The essay was written in 1963, when Schwarz was studying at Yale University. During that period Schwarz wrote his literary studies in English, later "recasting" them in Portuguese for publication. The English originals have been lost. In a prefatory note, Schwarz laments the "plodding cadence" of the recast prose, and indeed these essays lack the spark of the contrast between interpretive seriousness and ironic colloquialism, between long and short sentences, that contribute to Schwarz's characteristic tone. I have not tried to restore that rhythm here, but I have made less of an attempt to follow the swing and resonance of Schwarz's prose than would ordinarily be the case.

1. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1957) 119.
2. *The Notebooks of Henry James*, Ed. F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 14.
3. Cf our description of the narrative gesture: it tantalizes by exclusion and inclusion, by promise of profundity and omission of arguments.

Soviet Literary Theory in Britain: Bukharin, West, Caudwell

Philip Bounds

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) never came close to achieving political power, but its contribution to British society during the seventy-one years of its existence was by no means negligible. Some of its most important achievements occurred in the fields of culture and the arts. From the early 1920s onwards — though especially in the period between the mid-1930s and the late-1950s — the CPGB played host to an array of writers, artists, and musicians whose work has proved of lasting value.¹ One of the Party's particular strengths was in the area of literary and cultural theory. Although a number of writers had adumbrated a Marxist approach to culture in the years before the foundation of the CPGB in 1920, it was only under the influence of Party critics such as Christopher Caudwell, Alick West, and Ralph Fox that Marxism became an accepted tool of literary and cultural analysis in Britain. Moreover, it is now becoming clear that the CPGB's cultural line exerted a seminal influence on some of twentieth-century Britain's most important writers and thinkers. George Orwell, Jacob Bronowski, Raymond Williams, John Berger were among the cultural titans whose work was deeply affected by their early exposure to British communist ideology.

In spite of the efforts of a number of pioneering scholars, British communist criticism has yet to receive the academic attention it deserves. This is partly because of the cultural and political prejudices by which it is still surrounded. Because many British communists were influenced by ideas originating in the USSR, there is still a tendency to dismiss them as "Moscow dupes" whose only contribution to intellectual life was the mindless repetition of Soviet dogmas. If assumptions like these have discouraged many people from examining communist criticism in depth, they have also had a distorting effect on the small body of work that takes it seriously.² Insofar as scholars have tried to defend the British communists against the charge of mindless pro-Sovietism, it has sometimes been at the cost of understating the extent of the Soviet influence. As stimulating as the work of pioneering scholars like Prakash, Paananen, and Behrend undoubtedly is, the impression it creates is that men such as

West, Caudwell, and Fox owed no particular debt to Soviet theory and were usually more responsive to ideas drawn from the Western tradition. The result is a vision of communist intellectual history from which the specter of the USSR has been mysteriously erased.

One of the aims of this article is to suggest an alternative to the two existing positions. Its central assumption is that British communist critics were deeply influenced by Soviet ideas but never enslaved by them. Although the British communists derived their basic intellectual framework from Soviet theory, they often succeeded in extending Soviet ideas in highly innovative and unpredictable ways. Indeed, there were times when the British response to Soviet theory was downright unorthodox. Unwilling to follow the prevailing line too uncritically, British communists sometimes developed ideas that were both deeply inconsistent with Soviet aesthetic orthodoxy and implicitly critical of the CPGB's political perspectives.³ This article seeks to illustrate these ideas by examining communist debates about literary aesthetics in the late 1930s. The first section focuses on the work of the Soviet intellectual Nikolai Bukharin, whose writings on literary aesthetics played a major role in legitimizing the Soviet government's promotion of "Socialist Realism" in the arts. Sections two and three examine the specifically aesthetic element in the work of Alick West and Christopher Caudwell, Bukharin's two most important British interlocutors. My intention is to show that West and Caudwell owed a considerable debt to Bukharin but never even came close to sacrificing their intellectual independence. In the end they should both be regarded as communist dissidents.

Nikolai Bukharin and the Defense of Socialist Realism

The emergence of Marxist literary and cultural criticism in Britain long predated the foundation of the CPGB in 1920. Marxist writers began addressing cultural themes as early as the 1880s and some of their insights — especially those of William Morris, Edward Aveling, and Eleanor Marx — retain their importance more than a hundred years later.⁴ Nevertheless, it was only in the second half of the 1930s that Marxist cultural theory in Britain acquired real intellectual weight. The single most galvanizing influence on the new cohort of CPGB thinkers was the aesthetic ideology explored at the famous Soviet Writers' Congress in August 1934. In many respects the Congress was the culmination of the extraordinary cultural debates which had occurred in the USSR in the seventeen years since the October Revolution. As soon as Lenin and the Bolshevik Party took power in 1917, a bewildering variety of artistic groups, engaged intellectuals, and culturally minded politicians rushed to express their ideas about the role of the arts in the emerging socialist society. The debate was characterized by an unusual degree of fervor from the very beginning. On the one hand, spokesmen for a variety of modernist tendencies — notably Futurism, Constructivism, and the so-called montage cinema — insisted that only the most uncompromising avant-gardism was equal to the task of reflecting and shaping

life in the post-capitalist era. By contrast, naturalist groups such as the AkhRR and RAPP claimed that revolutionaries would struggle to find a mass audience unless they employed techniques of a more traditionalist vintage. The influential Proletcult group around A.A. Bogdanov even went so far as to advocate the complete abandonment of all existing artistic traditions, insisting — much to Lenin's chagrin — that an authentic socialist culture would have to be built from the ground up by working people.

The Soviet government's attitude towards the competing artistic trends was at first a comparatively liberal one. No movements or individuals were suppressed in the early years of the revolution unless they were perceived as explicitly counter-revolutionary. However, the state's efforts to extend its influence over the arts began to gather pace shortly after Lenin's death. The first sign that Soviet politicians were swinging behind the traditionalist, realist, and anti-modernist camp came in 1925 when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) issued a resolution entitled *On the Party's Policy in the Field of Literature*. At the heart of the resolution was the demand that politically conscious artists should "make use of all the technical achievements of the old masters to work out an appropriate form, intelligible to the masses."⁵ It was now only a matter of time until the state sought to bring Soviet artists under complete control. State-run organizations to oversee the production of new work in each of the arts were eventually set up in 1932. Two years later, during the tumultuous debates at the Writers' Congress in Moscow, Stalin's hired intellectuals finally clarified the aesthetic ideology to which Soviet writers and artists were expected to adhere. The core of this ideology was the instruction that communist cultural workers should eschew modernist experimentation and observe the conventions of "Socialist Realism."⁶ The most important speeches at the congress — those by A.A. Zhdanov, Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukhari, and A.I. Stetsky — were subsequently translated into a number of different languages and published in book form throughout the world. The English translation of the speeches can reasonably be regarded as the single biggest influence on British communist criticism in the 1930s.⁷ When critics such as West, Caudwell and Fox wrote about the arts, they developed their ideas within a conceptual framework established by their Soviet counterparts. As innovative and unorthodox as they could frequently be, they took it for granted that their main duty was to tease out the significance of Soviet criticism's defining shibboleths.

The overriding purpose of the congress was a prescriptive one. Zhdanov, Gorky, and the other keynote speakers all had a hand in stipulating what a work of Socialist Realism should look like. Zhdanov came closest to encapsulating the new form in a single sentence when he said that Socialist Realism "means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, not to depict it in a dead, scholastic way, not simply as "objective reality," but to depict reality in its revolutionary development."⁸ Soviet writers were given precise instructions as to how they should shape their work at the level of both form and content. They were told, in the first place, to turn

their backs on modernist experimentation and to employ only traditional forms — linear narrative in the novel, rhyme and rhythm in poetry, Renaissance perspective in painting, and so on. They were also told that a meritorious work of Socialist Realism should strike a balance between illuminating the present and prefiguring the utopian promise of the communist future. On the one hand, guided by the materialist conception of history, revolutionary writers should sharpen their audience's understanding of contemporary affairs by laying bare their "essence." This could only be done by portraying society as synoptically as possible and by rigorously adhering to the principles of *klassovost* (the idea that the working class has the main responsibility for changing society), *partiinnost* (the idea that the Communist Party must lead the working class in its revolutionary activity), and *ideinnost* (the idea that Marxism alone provides an adequate means of interpreting human affairs). On the other hand, a work of Socialist Realism should also look beyond the limits of the present towards the glories of a fully realized communist society, bathing reality in a romantic hue and sketching "positive heroes" who foreshadowed the well-nigh superhuman citizens of the future. Speakers like Zhdanov and Gorky made it perfectly clear that the age of aesthetic autonomy was over. Artists could only produce meaningful work in the modern world if they submitted to the will of the Communist Party.

Although the main goal of the congress was to give Soviet writers a clear understanding of the sort of work they were expected to produce, the main speakers did not confine themselves to issuing instructions. They also floated ideas of a broad-ranging kind whose purpose was to provide Socialist Realism with a measure of intellectual justification. Some of these ideas were primarily historical, rooted in the claim that there was a tradition of "critical realism" in world culture to which the new Soviet art could legitimately be regarded as the successor. Others were of a more comparative nature, seeking to prove that art and culture were infinitely healthier in the Soviet Union than in the "decadent" capitalist world. (As is well known, modernism came in for particularly virulent criticism at the congress.)⁹ Of greater intellectual consequence was what could perhaps be called the aesthetic or philosophical element in Soviet criticism, exemplified by the work of Nikolai Bukharin.¹⁰ In a lengthy speech entitled "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR," Bukharin outlined a series of ideas about the ultimate nature of art which proved — or at least purported to prove — that Socialist Realism possessed all the characteristics that make artistic greatness possible. Ostensibly concerned only with poetry, Bukharin in fact raised ideas that were relevant to the arts as a whole.¹¹ As we shall see, his theory served as a starting point for British communism's most talented cultural critics.

The first element in Bukharin's aesthetic theory concerns the relationship between literature and doctrine. Aware that Socialist Realism was intended more than anything else to serve as an instrument of political education, Bukharin rejects the claim that works of art are inefficient at conveying ideas. Instead he argues that art is

distinguished from other forms of discourse by its ability to fuse thought and feeling. His case rests on what he calls a “dialectical” theory of perception. Strictly speaking there are only two ways of engaging with the external world, or so Bukharin insists. One is through sense impressions and the other is through concepts. To engage with the world through sense impressions is to stick to the surface of things and to feel an emotional response to whatever one encounters, even if the extent of one’s emotions varies from the intense to the barely noticeable. To engage with the world through concepts is to transcend the surface of things and to understand reality in terms of linked generalizations. However, the distinction between the emotional and the conceptual poles of perception is by no means watertight. In practice the two ways of understanding reality tend to interpenetrate with each other, creating a situation in which “the stream of experience is integral and undivided.”¹² Bukharin’s point about art is that it takes this dialectical fusion of thought and feeling to new heights. The artist does not trade in concepts but his work always expresses a particular view of the world. In effect she works by transforming sense impressions into symbols of thought. By condensing her experience of the world into a handful of images and by linking the images together in a rigorously ordered sequence — she imbues sense impressions with the capacity to generalize about reality and thereby to stand in for concepts:

The type of thinking here is not the same as in logical thought. Here generalization is achieved not by extinguishing the sensory, but by substituting one complex of sense symbols for a great multitude of other complexes. This “substitute” becomes a “symbol,” an “image,” a type, an emotionally colored unity, behind which and in the folds of whose garments thousands of other sensory elements are concealed.¹³

Bukharin’s faith in the capacity of art to reconcile thought and feeling was by no means new. Its roots in the work of Lessing and Hegel would have been clear to at least some of his listeners. Nevertheless, it had a central role to play in shoring up the idea of Socialist Realism. One of the complaints most frequently made about political art is that it vulgarizes aesthetic expression by focusing too closely on ideas. When Bukharin argued that ideas can sometimes be expressed through the medium of concrete particulars, he implicitly defended Soviet writers against the charge that they were polluting their art with propaganda. Having emphasized the sensory, emotional, and particularized nature of art’s engagement with thought, he then goes on to investigate the type of emotion to which art gives expression. Here his argument takes the form of an exasperated attack on what he calls a “highly ridiculous” trend in modern Western philosophy. Since the end of the eighteenth century — a period in which aesthetic considerations moved to the heart of Western thought — many philosophers laid special emphasis on the “disinterested” nature of the aesthetic gaze.

In their different ways Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche had all argued that art's evocation of reality somehow transcends self-interest and eschews all reference to "desire or will."¹⁴ Unlike the scientist or the *homme moyen sensuel*, the artist surveys and recreates the world around her in a spirit of pure objectivity. Bukharin was having none of these Idealist verities: "All this is utter nonsense."¹⁵ Instead he goes to the opposite extreme and emphasizes the strongly self-interested nature of the arts. Mindful of Socialist Realism's efforts to whip up enthusiasm for the communist experiment, he argues that art's main function is to bind its audience to a particular vision of society by stimulating their most powerful desires. Its emotional currency is not Kantian self-abnegation but "active militant force."¹⁶ Like many other Marxist critics, Bukharin seeks support for his particular understanding of art by referring to the early history of Western culture. Noting that the works of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and the other great playwrights of democratic Athens were replete with politically charged emotions, he effectively claims that Socialist Realism takes up where the peerless culture of the ancient world left off. He also implies that art's emotionalism can ultimately be traced to its plebeian roots. In ancient Greece there were frequent "poetic contests" in which "the poets were awarded crowns by the crowd."¹⁷ It was precisely the need to win over the crowds which ensured that artists in the Western tradition had valued strong emotions more than anything else.

The other crucial element in Bukharin's aesthetic theory is a consideration of the relationship between form and content. Once again he chooses to articulate his views through an attack on a non-Marxist school of thought, in this case that of Russian Formalism. Associated with the likes of Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, and Boris Eichenbaum, Russian Formalism had emerged in the years leading up to the October Revolution and enjoyed considerable prestige in revolutionary Moscow. (Bukharin paid special attention to the work of Victor Zhirmunsky, a now largely forgotten figure.) At the heart of its account of how literature works is an emphasis on the priority of form over content. Seeking to explain how literature "defamiliarizes" human experience — how it banishes sensory torpor and revitalizes our responses to the world — Shklovsky and his co-thinkers argue that literary works should ultimately be regarded as an autonomous "heap of devices."¹⁸ By employing a style that differs radically from the language of everyday life, writers impede their readers' capacity to engage with a work's content by focusing their attention on such things as rhyme, rhythm or narrative structure. In so doing they force them to make a special effort to understand what a work is seeking to represent, freeing them from the jaded forms of perception that dominate everyday life. Although Bukharin takes ideas such as these seriously, he also finds them unpersuasive. His first and most predictable reason for doing so is that Russian Formalism takes no account of literature's historical genesis: in ascribing so much importance to form and so little to content, Shklovsky, Zhirmunsky, and their ilk fail to identify the socio-economic circumstances in which individual works have their roots.¹⁹ More important from the perspective of

Soviet cultural policy is the related claim that Formalism fundamentally inverts the relationship between form and content. In opposition to the idea that form somehow floats free from content and in so doing serves to defamiliarize it, Bukharin harks back to Hegelian and Marxist orthodoxy by claiming that authentic art is always characterized by the unity of form and content: “Every poetical work is an integral unity, in which sound, ideas, imagery, etc., are component parts synthetically united.”²⁰ Two aspects of this unified relationship are especially important, or so Bukharin implies. The first is the capacity of content to determine form. In the final analysis, in spite of the endless complexities governing the relationship between the “what” and the “how” of art, the things that a work says always shape the way in which it says them. Moreover — and crucially — an authentic work of art always seeks to represent its content as transparently as possible. The idea that an artist should go out of her way to draw attention to her chosen forms is not an admissible aesthetic principle. Any work that interposes its form between its audience and its content — any work that fails to give its audience a clear and immediate sense of what it is about — is guilty of needless obscurantism.

Bukharin’s attack on writers like Shklovsky and Zhirmunsky was directly related to his defense of Soviet cultural policy, even though its significance may not have been immediately clear to all his listeners. In questioning Formalism’s emphasis on the autonomy of form, Bukharin is launching a sort of proxy raid on modernism — or what he chooses to call “formalism in art.”²¹ In the early-twentieth century it was very common for modernism to be accused of stylistic ostentatiousness. Discontinuous composition in literature, atonalism in music and the abandonment of linear perspective in painting were widely dismissed as symptoms of aesthetic nihilism, intended only to confuse audiences and obscure whatever it was an artist had to say. When Bukharin upbraids the Formalists for arguing that form ultimately has priority over content, his central objective is to reinforce the Soviet attack on modernism by demolishing a theory that appears to offer support to the most experimental trends in modern culture. By the same token his own arguments about the relationship between form and content are clearly intended to buttress the case for Socialist Realism. If authentic works of art always value clarity more than anything else — if the things they say and the way they say them are always “synthetically united” — it follows that revolutionary artists will have an instinctive preference for the traditional forms endorsed by the Soviet state. Bukharin adds extra weight to his attack on modernism by making some grim predictions about its future. Given the modernists’ obsession with stylistic innovation and their relative indifference to content, it is only a matter of time until they start creating works from which every last trace of meaning has been expunged. This exercise in aesthetic “self-emasculatation” will perfectly reflect the individualism, solipsism, and irrationalism which disfigure bourgeois culture in the modern age. For him, modernism begins with a massive overestimation of the importance of form and ends with the “suicide of the given form of art.”²²

Alick West on the Unity of Form and Content

Bukharin's paper on the aesthetics of poetry was more sophisticated than any of the other contributions to the Soviet Writers' Congress, but its central ideas were by no means purely academic. In seeking to define poetry in terms of such things as emotional force, accessibility, and the synthesis of thought and feeling, Bukharin set out to provide historical and philosophical justification for the work of the Socialist Realists. However, his support for state-sponsored art in the USSR was somewhat weakened by a conspicuous gap in his argument. Although he took it for granted that contemporary literature could only be worthwhile if it expressed a socialist perspective, he made no real attempt to explain why this should be the case. Bukharin gave his listeners good reasons for supposing that the arts could play an important role in changing the world. What he failed to do was justify the proposition that the politically conscious artist should be a Marxist as opposed to a liberal, a conservative or even a fascist. Undoubtedly sincere in his commitment to the idea of Socialist Realism, he elided the issue of why communists and communists alone could now be relied upon to carry forward the great realistic heritage of Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens, or Leo Tolstoy.

It is in this context that the work of Alick West acquires its significance.²³ In his path-breaking book *Crisis and Criticism* (1937), West extends Bukharin's ideas in such a way as to justify the claim that literary excellence can only result from a Marxist or *Marxisant* approach to contemporary affairs. At the core of the book is an ingenious reworking of Bukharin's doctrine of the unity of form and content. Working backwards from form to content, West argues that the aesthetic integrity of a work of literature is wholly bound up with the depth of its author's understanding of material production. Since literary form is ultimately rooted in production, it follows that a work can only realize its formal possibilities if it evokes the most progressive elements in contemporary economic life. In the modern world this means that the writer who aspires to greatness has no choice but to describe — and in some senses to support — the economic forces transforming capitalism into socialism.

Stated in brief, West's theory seems impossibly vague and dogmatic. The skill with which it reworks Bukharin's ideas only becomes apparent when it is examined in more detail. Its understanding of the relationship between form and content rests on a startling hypothesis about the origins of literary inspiration. According to West, the greatest artists in human history have acquired the urge to create through identifying with the majesty of the economic process. Deeply though perhaps unconsciously inspired by humanity's efforts to impose its will on nature, writers experience a quickening of their inner lives and a corresponding invigoration of their responses to the external world. These experiences demand expression in formally sophisticated language:

The good writer does not take for granted. In some way, of which at present we know very little, he actively feels the productive energy of society and identifies himself with it...With this sense in his body of the productive energy that alone continues the existence of us and our world, the writer's language is quickened. His whole writing expresses that participation in social energy through which he feels the life of the world.²⁴

Having identified the economic roots of creativity, West goes on to portray the literary work as a sort of compacted verbal replica of economic activity. *Crisis and Criticism* moves far beyond the common or garden Marxist assumption that writers are influenced by and somehow “reflect” the prevailing mode of production. Its more precise argument is that a literary work achieves aesthetic significance not merely by reproducing but also transfiguring the most important subjective and objective elements in economic life. West's efforts to pin down what he means begins with a discussion of literary form, which he sees — in line with the precepts of what was becoming known as “Cambridge English” — as the force most directly responsible for adding aesthetic luster to a work's content. His essential point is that literary forms grow directly out of the experience of work. Insisting that the subjective aspects of work have been much the same throughout history, West argues that laboring men and women necessarily suffer from a species of emotional self-division. Eager at times to work hard in pursuit of common objectives, they also feel a continual temptation to shirk their responsibilities and live off the labor of others. This tension between “energy and stasis” corresponds to a broader tension between “inclusion and exclusion.” During the periods in which they contribute most enthusiastically to the labor process, men and women feel fully integrated into the society of which they form a part. By contrast, they are inclined to feel isolated from their fellows when the urge to withdraw from labor takes hold. The secret of literature's capacity to vitalize our experience is that it takes these and other experiences and models its forms on them. Literature's emotional structure is linked to the subjective experiences of the individual worker by a direct relationship of cause and effect. Deviating between emotional extremes — reproducing and compressing the sense of self-division that has always characterized the labor process — literature “show[s]” its content “in relation to succeeding or mingled feelings of activity or inertia, hope or fear, courage or despondency.”²⁵ The result is what the Russian Formalists might have called a “defamiliarization” of our habits of perception. Under the influence of literary form we once again experience the world in its full majesty.

West is not simply concerned with the emotional aspects of the labor process when he describes the parallels between literature and work. His discussion of literary form also addresses the cognitive element in economic activity, while acknowledging that literature's other stylistic debts to human labor are “subtle, intricate, and various.”²⁶ Nevertheless, his single most celebrated statement about form is primarily concerned

with the emotional impact of great works. Rejecting the idea that literature simply reproduces the experience of work without at the same time embellishing it, West argues that one of the great virtues of literary form is that it “gives the sensation of a more harmonized organism than the social organism actually is.”²⁷ Whereas everyday work is always tainted by the sort of emotional self-division to which *Crisis and Criticism* draws attention, literature makes its mark by bringing a measure of unity to apparently disparate feelings. Evoking the gnawing tensions that do so much to impede economic efficiency — tensions between energy and stasis, inclusion and exclusion and so on — it works tirelessly to rob them of their sting by melding the sharply opposed emotions that define them into a sort of continuum. In the work of a great writer there is ultimately no such thing as a prolonged emotional conflict. The overriding objective of a Shakespeare or a Milton is take unreconciled feelings and make them seem continuous with each other. In so doing they hold out a deeply inspiring vision of emotional unity — so inspiring, in fact, that it often encourages people to return to their work with renewed enthusiasm. One way of defining literature is simply to say that it “organiz[es] social energy in a particular activity.”²⁸

West’s remarks about the capacity of literature to reconcile opposites hint at the diversity of his theoretical influences. At one level reminiscent of Bukharin’s analysis of the relationship between thought and feeling in poetry, they also point towards his preoccupation with the work of I.A. Richards. In the theoretical writings which laid the foundations of the academic study of English Literature in the inter-war period, Richards famously argued that the defining characteristic of literature is its ability to promote the “resolution, inter-animation, and balancing of impulses.”²⁹ By replacing the emphasis on “impulses” with an emphasis on emotions generated during work, West was clearly trying to recalibrate Richards’s argument so that it applied more to the sphere of social organization than to the sphere of individual psychology.³⁰ His subtle efforts to balance Soviet and English influences also shaped his comments on the relationship between form and content. As a critic working in Richards’s shadow, West took it for granted that a persuasive theory of literature had to explain form’s capacity to confer aesthetic power on what a poem, novel or play seeks to represent. Yet what distinguished *Crisis and Criticism* from Richards’s work was the use it made of Bukharin’s emphasis on the continuity between form and content. If we accept that literary form mimics the states of mind that characterize productive activity, or so West argues, we have to assume that its aesthetic power can only be unleashed by works depicting the most progressive elements in the existing economic conjuncture. Any work that aspires to artistic greatness must somehow evoke two related aspects of its contemporary scene. The first are those developments in the means of production which point the way towards a new form of economic organization. The second is the process of class struggle which determines whether a new form of economic organization actually comes to pass. Moreover, literature can only be successful if it not merely evokes these things but actively approves of them: “Social movement

only becomes an impulse to literature when the individual actively feels it, when... the individual in his own activity experiences the strain between the new productive forces and the old productive relations."³¹ The writer who fails to identify with the forces of economic progress of necessity produces work of little value.

The political corollary of West's observations about form and content could scarcely have been clearer. Taking it for granted that the most progressive elements in modern economic life expose the obsolescence of capitalism, West effectively argues that contemporary literature must lay bare the need for socialism or be condemned to irrelevance. But this is not to say that his theory is as crudely partisan as it at first appears. He makes no attempt to claim that great literature must *directly* reflect the prevailing economic realities — on the contrary, he recognizes that most works evoke "new productive forces and class-war" in purely symbolic form. Nor does he deny that certain writers can produce great works in the modern age without necessarily being socialists. As much as his theory is intended to undergird the doctrine of Socialist Realism, West happily echoes Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Lukács in arguing that some works can have progressive consequences in spite of their authors' political beliefs. If the work of a self-confessed conservative vividly evokes the technological changes and class struggles that define the age, its ability to radicalize the minds of its readers can often be greater than that of more dogmatically left-wing writing: "Though literature is propaganda, its value... does not depend on its manifest program."³² West then goes on to speculate about the precise means by which a work encourages its readers to identify with the progressive elements in modern life. In a suggestive but slightly vague passage on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he implies that great works are usually characterized by their balanced and even-handed depiction of social change. A writer like Milton starts out by evoking the progressive and reactionary elements in life without undue partisanship, leaving it until relatively late to guide the reader towards an identification with the forces of social transformation. There is a sense in which Milton was simultaneously "on both sides" when he first described the battles between Satan and God, finally siding with God (and the bourgeois realities he symbolized) only towards the end of the poem. The great artist's strategy of even-handedness is closely related to his handling of emotion. While West agrees with Bukharin that literature seeks to revolutionize consciousness by stirring up strong feelings, he openly challenges his rejection of the Kantian doctrine of disinterestedness. Drawing a clever analogy between the experience of reading a work of literature and the experience of watching a tube train arrive at a station, he affirms that Bukharin was right to question orthodox Kantianism while at the same time insisting that the notion of disinterestedness is not "utter nonsense":

if, instead of merely waiting for the train to come, as trains always do come, we look down the tunnel, feel the wind begin to blow out of it, then see the gleam from the approaching train, the sense of excitement may

make us momentarily forget whether we are waiting for a Highgate or a Golders Green train. In that sense, we are disinterested. The train is not a given object, by which we travel to Highgate, which we consume. We look at it without reference to our desire to get to a particular station. But it is untrue to say that it exists for us only in an intellectual way, without desire or will. We see it with a sense of exhilaration that there should be any trains at all, with a feeling of the social energy that has created them. We do not want only to use trains, but to take part, in our field, in the activity that produces them. The element of truth in Hegel's [and Kant's] idea is that in an aesthetic experience we do not desire as mere consumers; but we do desire as producers, and this desire, though not necessarily the only one, is dominant.³³

The implications of this highly evocative passage are worth considering. In seeking to modify Bukharin's argument about the role of emotion in literature, West is doing a lot more than simply registering a minor theoretical disagreement. He is also hinting at something curiously ambivalent in his attitude towards communist politics. As we have seen, Bukharin believes that art's function is to bind people to a particular social order or political project through the expression of powerful emotions. The role of the Socialist Realist is to inspire people into embracing revolutionary politics by stimulating their most urgent desires. West's inspired comparison between a tube train and a work of literature suggests that his attitude to the issue of emotion is a lot less emphatic. Summarizing his understanding of how great art evokes the progressive or emergent elements in society, he seems to imply that the highest function of art is to induce a mood of cautious enthusiasm rather than fervor. The traveler who gazes out at the train for Golders Green (here symbolizing the progressive thrust of technology and class struggle) is neither desperate to clamber aboard nor overcome by feeling. Instead his attitude is one of quiet and dignified appreciation. Although he is deeply moved by the train's grandeur and everything it implies about human capacities, he retains enough distance from the spectacle to ensure that his emotions do not get the better of him: "In that sense, [he is] disinterested."³⁴ The implications of all this for contemporary politics are surely clear enough. Respectful of Bukharin's anti-Kantianism but unpersuaded by his relish for "active militant force," West gestures towards the idea that a virtuous communist is one for whom high-minded engagement always takes precedence over the perfervid certainties of the mob. The trustworthy revolutionary is never so enthused by the spectacle of change that he cannot distance himself from his feelings if circumstances make it necessary. A measure of ambivalence is always a good thing, or so West seems to imply.

West was writing in a period when left-wingers held their beliefs with ferocious passion — a period defined by the rise of fascism, the persistence of economic chaos on a global scale and the threat of war. What can have stimulated one of Britain's most

gifted communists to enter an (admittedly indirect) plea for emotional moderation at the very moment when many of his comrades were at their most fervent? West hinted at the answer to that question in his great autobiography *One Man in His Time* (1969), published more than thirty years after the appearance of *Crisis and Criticism*. What the book proved was that West had always been slightly detached in his attitude towards the CPGB, not least because he believed that the Party had not always lived up to its cultural ambitions.³⁵ Born into a sober middleclass family in the last decade of the nineteenth century, West portrayed himself in *One Man in His Time* as someone who converted to communism because of his hatred of individualism. Deeply alienated by the “separating silence” that characterized bourgeois culture in England, he joined the CPGB because he believed that a socialist society would be one in which a communitarian ethos might once again flourish. The thing that most distressed him about the Party was that its loyalty to the idea of community was at best half-hearted. Taxing British communists with a tendency to prioritize short-term reforms over the struggle for a new society, West believed that the CPGB had lost touch with its communitarian roots and in so doing had lost sight of what socialism was ultimately all about. At the time he wrote *Crisis and Criticism* he was especially worried about the political and cultural implications of the CPGB’s Popular Front policy.³⁶ His particular concern was that the goal of constructing anti-fascist alliances with left-wing reformists, liberals and even moderate conservatives effectively committed the Party to the continuation of capitalism, notwithstanding the fact that market institutions perpetuated the individualism he had come to loathe:

“We communists,” the [Communist] Manifesto said, “scorn to conceal our aims.” We conceal ours for the sake of unity, and all we achieve is a false unity with Gollancz and the Left Book Club; and by that compromise we take away from our own aim its power to inspire real unity.³⁷

West did not raise his doubts about the Popular Front policy in public, though many of his shorter writings in the 1930s were highly critical of the political and cultural movements with which the CPGB was seeking to establish an alliance.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is easy to see how his anxieties about the policy might have fed through into his analysis of literature in *Crisis and Criticism*. Unable to give the new line his wholehearted support — concerned that it would weaken the Party’s commitment to communitarian politics — West portrayed the virtuous revolutionary as someone whose immersion in the political struggle was always tempered by a measure of distance. Indeed, there is even a case for saying that hostility to the Popular Front shaped the overarching arguments of *Crisis and Criticism*. As we have seen, West’s main innovation in the book was to advance the proposition that great art necessarily endorses the progressive elements in contemporary life. Although his goal was undoubtedly to plug

a theoretical gap in the Soviet orthodoxy, he may also have been issuing a tacit warning to those of his comrades who believed that the politics of anti-capitalism could be set aside for strategic reasons. In the final analysis, or so West seemed to be arguing, politics and literature have one thing in common: They can only flourish by hastening the overthrow of the existing order. Compromises with the status quo will not do.

Christopher Caudwell on Poetry and the Instincts

The international communist movement was famous for expecting its members to meet extremely rigorous standards of self-education. Perhaps the most erudite autodidact among recruits to the CPGB was the literary theorist Christopher Caudwell, whose gift for forging interdisciplinary connections was prodigious even by Marxist standards.³⁹ Despite leaving his public school at the age of fifteen because his family could no longer afford to pay the fees, Caudwell had mastered the essentials of a dozen different subjects by the time he wrote his books of Marxist criticism in his late twenties. There is a sense, however, in which the sheer extent of his learning has had a distorting effect on our understanding of his work. Most Caudwell scholars have chosen to trace his debt to the scores of Western thinkers whose ideas he synthesized so creatively. Although much of this work has been extremely important and suggestive, it has tended to obscure one of the most important things about Caudwell's intellectual career — the fact that his writings on literature represented a sustained and often deeply unorthodox response to Soviet cultural theory. This is particularly true of his theory of poetry, expounded in great detail in *Illusion and Reality* (1937).⁴⁰ Caudwell's ideas about poetry cannot be fully understood without reference to Bukharin's emphasis on the role of "active militant force" in art. No other communist critic pursued the anti-Kantian line quite so dramatically. Whereas Alick West had tried to qualify Bukharin's disdain for the idea of aesthetic disinterestedness, Caudwell took it to extremes. At the core of his work is the claim that human beings possess a cluster of anarchic desires or "instincts" which have to be tamed before life in society can begin. The function of poetry is to project these desires onto the material world, in so doing helping to sublimate them. Without poetry there can be no such thing as civilization.

The starting point of Caudwell's theory is a striking account of humanity's biological inheritance. Drawing on ideas from psychoanalysis, behavioral psychology, and anthropology, Caudwell argues that human beings enter the world as "genotypes" — that is, wholly unsocialized individuals who possess a "more or less common set of instincts."⁴¹ These instincts have been shaped by the immemorial processes of human evolution but they do not endow the individual with much sense of how to survive in a particular material environment. The genotype's urgent desires for food, shelter, physical gratification and so on are not matched by any innate understanding of how

they can be acquired. Indeed, if the newly born child were left to fester in a state of nature it “might grow up into something like a dumb brute.”⁴² Society’s basic function can thus be regarded as what Caudwell calls an “adaptive” one. Its role is to take the genotype’s raw desires and make them compatible with the material environment into which it is born. Although the child initially makes grossly unrealistic demands on the world, it is transformed by the process of socialization into someone whose desires more precisely match the limits of its environment, whose knowledge of external reality is extensive and who is able to defer gratification long enough to acquire the things it needs. Unlike Freud and some of the other psychoanalytic thinkers who influenced him, Caudwell does not portray this process of instinctual adaptation in especially pessimistic terms. There was a part of Freud’s mind which always assumed that the suppression of natural desires permanently compromises human happiness. By contrast, Caudwell argues that the modification of the instincts produces men and women whose capacities for self-realization greatly outstrip those of the genotype: “The consciousness made possible by the development of society is not by its nature coercive; on the contrary this consciousness, expressed in science and art, is the means whereby man attains freedom.”⁴³

Society has many ways of aligning the instincts with the demands of the material environment. Caudwell’s rather startling argument is that poetry is one of the most important of them. Concerned primarily with feelings or what Caudwell insists on calling “affects,” poetry transforms the inner world of men and women as surely as science transforms external reality:

The other world [of poetry], of organized emotion attached to experience... makes available for the individual a whole new universe of inner feeling and desire. It exposes the endless potentiality of the instincts and the “heart” by revealing the various ways in which they may adapt themselves to experiences. It plays on the inner world of emotion as on a stringed instrument. It changes the emotional content of his consciousness so that he can react more subtly and deeply to the world.⁴⁴

The means by which poetry achieves these ends do not vary much from one period to another. The poet’s basic strategy is to conjure a vision of what objective reality would be like if it corresponded to our instincts. There is nothing “symbolic” about the world we encounter in poems — on the contrary, aesthetic reality differs in the most fundamental ways from the real world existing independently of our senses. A successful poem is “irrational” to its core, seeking to remake the environment in the image of our deepest desires. Temporarily rejecting the idea that the mind cannot exercise direct control over matter, poets use their instincts to sketch a picture of “the world as they long for it to be.”⁴⁵ It is precisely this exercise in constructive fantasy which enables poetry to play a role in socializing the individual. By projecting her

instincts onto the world around him — by breaking down the barriers between her desires and her environment — the poet encourages men and women to temper their instincts so that objective reality can be explored. Nowhere else in the history of British Marxist criticism does Bukharin's emphasis on "active militant force" receive quite so dramatic a twist. Caudwell is not simply saying that poetry uses strong emotions to bind its audience to a particular social vision. His point is that poetry's "condensed affects" play a central role in making social organization possible.

Why is the attempt to remake the environment in the image of the instincts so important a part of poetry? The pages in which Caudwell tries to answer that question are among his most ingenious.⁴⁶ Drawing obliquely on an argument first advanced by I.A. Richards, Caudwell insists that poetry brings the instincts to the forefront of the mind through its use of rhythmic language.⁴⁷ The most important aspect of poetic rhythm is that it loosely parallels the "natural periodicities" of the body. The beat of the heart, the in-and-out pattern of respiration, and the distribution of stresses in a verse of poetry are all characterized by a sort of hypnotic regularity. This means that poetry tends to give rise to what Caudwell calls "emotional introversion." When poets use rhythmic language, they begin to look inwards towards the biological realities that unite them with the rest of humanity. Transported in an instant to an emotional landscape that predates their socialization — temporarily liberated from civilization's most strenuous emotional taboos — they find their minds being flooded by all the instincts they must otherwise seek to suppress. They also find themselves in the grip of a powerful sense of community consciousness. Because the instincts are more or less the same in all men and women at all stages of history, it is virtually impossible for the individual to be reminded of them for any length of time without feeling a deep sense of kinship with her fellow humans. This explains why poetry is not simply concerned with a purely introspective exploration of the instincts. During the process of composition, the poet is so overwhelmed by feelings of collective power — so convinced that men and women can achieve anything when they choose to work in unison — that she invariably projects her instincts onto everything in the real world that she wishes to represent. The result is the enchanted alternative realities which enable poetry to discharge its adaptive function.

Although Caudwell ascribes the highest importance to the element of illusion in poetry, he is at pains to deny that it induces a mood of credulity in its audience. Throughout history the consumption of poetry has always been characterized by what Coleridge famously called the "willing suspension of disbelief."⁴⁸ In his account, everyone from the primitive tribesman to the modern literary scholar knows perfectly well that the poet's vision of reality has been distorted beyond recognition by his emotions. Indeed, poetry's capacity to socialize the individual is entirely dependent on its illusory status being recognized. If people made the mistake of confusing poetry's enchanted landscapes with reality, they would simply overlook the tension between their emotions and their environment. It is only by drawing attention to its illusory

status that poetry encourages people to adopt a new attitude to reality. By making it clear that her vision of the world is rooted in the instincts — by confessing that there is nothing in the slightest bit realistic about her rendering of the physical environment — the poet equips her audience with an inspiring fantasy whose ultimate effect is to engender an “appetitive attitude.”⁴⁹ The most important way in which poetry lays bare its illusory status is by emphasizing its expressive elements and downplaying its referential dimension. Like all other forms of language, poetry refers to something in the external world while simultaneously registering an emotional response to it — or, to use Caudwell’s slightly grandiloquent vocabulary, it invokes the “Common Perceptual World” and the “Common Affective World” at one and the same time.⁵⁰ What distinguishes poetry from other forms of language is that its emotional dimension impinges on our awareness far more powerfully than the things to which it refers. To read or hear a poem is to be immersed in a world of strong emotions, only dimly perceiving the aspects of external reality to which the emotions are attached: “Thus the world of external reality recedes, and the world of instinct, the affective emotional linkage behind the words, rises to the view and becomes the world of reality.”⁵¹

Caudwell’s point is simple enough. By elevating its expressive dimension over its referential dimension, poetry advertises its status as an illusion by underscoring the fact that its vision of reality is ultimately rooted in emotion. But how exactly does poetry create the thick emotional textures that define it? Here Caudwell falls back on a theory of poetic form clearly indebted to what David Lodge has called “modern symbolist poetics.”⁵² There are two ways in which a word can engender an emotional response, or so Caudwell argues. Either it can refer to an emotionally significant aspect of reality or else its “affective associations” can somehow be embodied in its sound.⁵³ Poetry works primarily with words of the latter type, reinforcing the emotional charge lying dormant on their surfaces by combining them with words that vibrate at a similar emotional frequency:

In a simple word like “spring” there are hundreds of them [i.e. emotional associations]; of greenness, of youth, of fountains, of jumping; every word drags behind it a vast bag and baggage of emotional associations... It is these associations that provided the latent content of affect which is the poem. Not the ideas of “greenness,” “youth,” but the affective cord linking the ideas of “greenness” and “youth” to the word “spring,” constitutes the raw material of poetry.⁵⁴

Caudwell’s theory of poetic form does more than anything else to throw his unorthodoxy into relief. Although his ideas about poetry and the instincts can certainly be seen as an extension of Bukharin’s endorsement of strong feeling in art, there is no way of making his theory of form and content seem consistent with the received Soviet wisdom. Whereas Bukharin argues that the first duty of form is to communicate a

work's content as clearly as possible, Caudwell insists that the language of a good poem invariably works to obscure its content. As I have tried to show elsewhere, Caudwell's unorthodoxy can perhaps be seen as an expression of his autodidacticism.⁵⁵ Like many autodidacts, Caudwell had a great love of intellectual drama. Much of his work suggests that his first requirement when assessing an idea was that it should be exciting rather than merely persuasive. Since Bukharin's impassioned account of the role of strong feeling in art was nothing if not dramatic, it is hardly surprising that Caudwell should have been attracted to it. Nor is it surprising that he tried to augment its drama by arguing that the strong feelings expressed in poetry were ultimately those of the instincts. There is also a sense in which Caudwell's work typifies the autodidactic mind by displaying a marked tendency towards intellectual obsessiveness. Having formulated the idea of poetry as a species of instinctual expression, he ascribed so much importance to it that it effectively dominated all other aspects of his literary aesthetics. For example, Caudwell's thesis that poetry's evocation of the instincts tends to obscure its references to external reality is not entirely persuasive. What makes it interesting is the sense that Caudwell is determined to keep his central insight about poetry at the front of his readers' minds at all time, even if this involves distorting the true nature of the relationship between form and content. At the same time, it is worth situating Caudwell's aesthetic unorthodoxy against the backdrop of the world communist movement's political history. In putting so much emphasis on the role of the instincts — and by portraying the instincts as both historically fixed and incompatible with civilized life — Caudwell broke with the Panglossian social constructionism of his communist contemporaries, most of whom cleaved to the simple-minded Enlightenment assumption that human nature would be purged of its impurities once socialism had been established. (His alleged pessimism about human nature was one of the main reasons why "orthodox" communists denounced him so ferociously during the famous "Caudwell Discussion" in the early 1950s.)⁵⁶ What I want to suggest is that Caudwell's emphasis on the instincts was perhaps intended as a tacit warning to his more credulous colleagues. Valuing freedom above all else and secretly despising the barbarism of Stalin's Russia,⁵⁷ Caudwell indirectly criticized the Stalinist counter-revolution by reminding his readers that there was something permanently dark at the heart of the human condition. In spite of his optimism about the possibilities of socialism, he knew very well that the battle for human liberation would not be over simply because the means of production had been socialized. The good society could only be achieved if men and women engaged in a continuous struggle to tame the evil in their own hearts. Illusion and Reality took its lead from Soviet theory but it was scarcely the work of a bland conformist. One of its main targets was the dictator in the Kremlin.

Bookish to the Root

The relationship between Soviet literary intellectuals and their British counterparts

throws one of the international communist movement's most fascinating paradoxes into vivid relief. By the time of the Writers' Congress in 1934, the USSR had long since become what its Trotskyist critics called a "degenerated workers' state." Power had been concentrated in the hands of a vast and essentially terroristic bureaucracy, socialist legality had broken down and the last vestiges of political opposition were in the process of being destroyed. Nevertheless, the suppression of basic democratic rights had not entirely adulterated the quality of Soviet intellectual life. Although Soviet intellectuals were always in danger of disappearing into the Gulag — and although their ideological horizons were necessarily rather narrow — their culture was often a lively, productive and surprisingly disputatious one. This was partly a consequence of the extraordinary head of intellectual energy which Marxism had built up in the decades before the October Revolution. The fact that the Marxist wing of the international socialist movement had always been "bookish to the root" — the phrase is George Steiner's — meant that its cerebral impulses were able to sustain themselves even during the long Stalinist night.⁵⁸ The Writers' Congress illustrates this as well as anything. By no means all the ideas explored at the Congress can be dismissed as crude reflexes of the Stalinist mind. For every Zhdanov or Radek peddling a toxic mixture of vapid slogans and veiled threats, there was a Bukharin or a Gorky making a serious and pioneering effort to forge a genuine Marxist aesthetic. There is even a sense in which Soviet literary culture in the Stalin period allowed for a modicum of open debate. This is well symbolized by the presence in Moscow of the great Georg Lukács, whose path-breaking theory of realism paid careful tribute to the Soviet orthodoxy while breaking with it in a number of decisive ways. The British literary communists may have lacked Lukács's genius but they shared his independence of mind. Happy to take Soviet cultural theory as their starting point, West, Caudwell and their peers never shrank from testing its limits and subverting its central principles. The result is a body of work which repays study even today. Out of the Stalinist nightmare came ideas that have lasted.

Notes

1. For a fascinating collection of essays on the CPGB's contribution to British culture, see *A Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain*, ed. Andy Croft (London: Pluto Press, 1998).
2. For overviews of British communist criticism, see, David Margolies, "Left Review and Left Literary Theory," *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties*, eds. David Margolies, Margot Heinemann, John Clarke, and Carole Snee (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979); Hanna Behrend, "An Intellectual Irrelevance? Marxist Literary Criticism in the 1930s," *A Weapon in the Struggle* Croft; Anand Prakash, *Marxism and Literary Theory* (Delhi: Academic Foundation, 1994); Victor Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000). I am not suggesting that these and other writers entirely overlook the impact of Soviet ideas on British criticism, but they do tend to underplay it.
3. For an attempt to apply these arguments to the entire history of British Marxist criticism in the 1930s, see Philip Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature, 1928-1939* (London: Merlin Press, 2012). See also Philip Bounds, *Orwell and Marxism: The Political and Cultural Thinking of George Orwell* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).
4. See William Morris, *Selected Writings and Designs*, ed. Asa Briggs (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1968); Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, *Shelley's Socialism* (London: Journeyman Press, 1979).
5. Quoted in Dave Laing, *The Marxist Theory of Art: An Introductory Survey* (Brighton: Harvester, 1978) 34.
6. The emergence of Socialist Realism is often seen as a sign that Russian aesthetic traditionalism won a more or less total victory against its modernist rival. However, some recent writers have argued that traditionalism's victory was never quite as decisive as it seemed. Although Soviet artists were certainly expected to employ traditional forms, there is a case for saying that Socialist Realism's messianic faith in the capacity of art to transform everyday life owed more to modernism than to anything else. This argument has been advanced with particular cogency by Boris Groys in *The Total Art of Stalinism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). It also needs to be remembered that Soviet modernists were never entirely vanquished in the crucial area of cinema. Sergei Eisenstein and other exponents of the montage cinema continued to produce films well into the 1930s.
7. See Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin, Andrey Zhdanov, and others, *Problems of Soviet Literature* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1935). This book was republished by Lawrence and Wishart in 1977 under the title *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism*. In this chapter I refer to the later edition.
8. A.A. Zhdanov, "Soviet Literature — The Richest in Ideas. The Most Advanced Literature" Maxim Gorky, Karl Radek, Nikolai Bukharin, Andrey Zhdanov and others, *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977) 21.
9. Karl Radek was especially critical of modernism, famously describing Joyce's *Ulysses* as "A heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema apparatus through a microscope." See Radek, "World Literature," *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977) 153.
10. For a detailed examination of the historical, comparative and aesthetic elements of Soviet criticism, see Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature*.

11. Since Bukharin clearly believes that his ideas about poetry also apply to the other arts, I have usually referred to art rather than simply to poetry in my exposition of his work.
12. Nikolai Bukharin, "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR," *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977) 191.
13. Bukharin, "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 192.
14. The phrase "desire or will" is Hegel's, quoted in "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 197.
15. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 197.
16. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 197.
17. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 197.
18. The best introduction to Russian Formalism by one of its own representatives is Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, eds. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).
19. Bukharin's handling of this theme was clearly influenced by the earlier anti-formalist writings of Leon Trotsky. It goes without saying that Bukharin made no attempt to acknowledge his debt to Trotsky. See Leon Trotsky, "The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism," *Literature and Revolution* (London: RedWords, 1992).
20. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 208. Bukharin refers not only to the unity but also to the "contrariety" of form and content, but his real emphasis is on the former.
21. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 204.
22. "Poetry, Poetics and the Problems of Poetry in the USSR" 206. Bukharin is anxious to make it clear that his opposition to "formalism in theory" and "formalism in literary criticism" does not entail opposition to the study of literary form. Indeed, he emphasizes the point that revolutionary writers will have to undertake a careful study of literary techniques if their work is to flourish.
23. For overviews of West's critical writings, see Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature*; Prakash, *Marxism and Literary Theory*. See also the important annotated bibliography of West's work in Paananen, *British Marxist Criticism*.
24. Alick West, *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975) 86-87.
25. West, *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 87.
26. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 87-88. In his comments on literature's relationship to the cognitive aspects of production, West argues that humanity's efforts to uncover the structures of the natural world are characterized by two main intellectual procedures. On one hand, human beings can only identify patterns of cause and effect if they purge their minds of subjective distortions and relate to nature as objectively and dispassionately as possible. On the other hand, they can only make use of what they discover if they speculate about how the external world can be reordered in conformity with their own wishes. West's argument is that literary form often mirrors this oscillation between objective and subjective perspectives, mixing strictly neutral descriptions of external reality with descriptions in which the real and the imaginative combine.
27. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 89.
28. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 85.
29. I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924) 112. Quoted

- in René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1780-1950*, Vol. 5 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986) 222. Richards's term for the capacity of literature to reconcile opposed impulses was "coenaesthesia."
30. One writer has gone so far as to argue that "*Crisis and Criticism* is clearly a reply to [Richards's] *Principles of Literary Criticism*." See Christopher Pawling, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) 28.
 31. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 95.
 32. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 99.
 33. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 92.
 34. *Crisis and Criticism and Literary Essays* 92. West seems to be harking back here to the ideas of Friedrich Schiller, who famously claimed that art's synthesis of thought and feeling encourages people to immerse themselves in the world around them while maintaining an empowering distance from it. See Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (New York: Dover Publications, 2004 [1795]).
 35. For an account of *One Man in His Time* and its relevance to an understanding of West's critical writings, see Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature*.
 36. The Popular Front policy had of course been adopted by the CPGB at the behest of the Communist International. West clearly believed that the political deficiencies he ascribed to the CPGB could also be ascribed to the international communist movement as a whole.
 37. Alick West, *One Man in His Time: An Autobiography* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969) 173.
 38. See the following works by Alick West: "A Reply to Eric Gill," *Left Review* 1:10 (July 1935): 410-411; "Communism and Christianity," *Left Review* 2:4 (January 1936): 174-176; "Surréalisme in Literature," *Left Review* 2:10 (July 1936): vi-viii; "Ben Jonson was No Sentimentalist," *Left Review* 3:8, (September 1937): 468-475; "Wild Goose Chase," *Left Review* 3:10 (November 1937): 630-631. These articles contain attacks on radical Christians, surrealists, left-wing Leavisites and members of the Auden group.
 39. Caudwell is the only British communist critic of the 1930s whose work has given rise to a substantial secondary literature. The most important works are the following full-length monographs: Robert Sullivan, *Christopher Caudwell* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Christopher Pawling, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). Perhaps the most useful of the many shorter studies is Francis Mulhern, "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell," *New Left Review*, 85 (May/June 1974): 37-58.
 40. There is no room in this article to examine the fascinating theory of the novel which Caudwell sketched out in *Romance and Realism: A Study in English Bourgeois Literature*, ed. Samuel Hynes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). There is an especially illuminating discussion of Caudwell's writings on the novel in Pawling, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature*.
 41. Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977 [1937]) 140.
 42. Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality* 153.
 43. *Illusion and Reality* 26.
 44. *Illusion and Reality* 174.
 45. The phrase quoted here is that of the great Caudwellian scholar George Thomson, who applied Caudwell's ideas about poetry to the history of ancient Greek literature. See George Thomson,

- Marxism and Poetry* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1945) 13.
46. *Illusion and Reality* 139-142.
 47. For a discussion of the parallels between Richards's and Caudwell's ideas about rhythm, see Pawling, *Christopher Caudwell: Towards a Dialectical Theory of Literature* 101f.
 48. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: J.M. Dent, 1991) 169.
 49. The phrase "appetitive attitude" is Francis Mulhern's. See "The Marxist Aesthetics of Christopher Caudwell," *New Left Review* I.85 (May-June 1974) 47.
 50. For Caudwell's analysis of the relationship between poetry and other forms of language, see *Illusion and Reality* 159f.
 51. *Illusion and Reality* 222.
 52. *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972).
 53. Caudwell is not arguing that there is something intrinsically emotive about the sound of words. Certain words acquire their emotional charge as a result of "the thousands of different circumstances in which [they are] used." See Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality* 236.
 54. *Illusion and Reality* 236.
 55. See Bounds, *British Communism and the Politics of Literature*.
 56. The Caudwell Discussion was conducted in *The Modern Quarterly* and began in 1950. The single most vituperative contribution was Maurice Cornforth, "Caudwell and Marxism," *The Modern Quarterly* 6:1 (Winter 1950-51): 16-33. Caudwell was defended by admirers such as Alick West and George Thomson.
 57. The claim I am making here is a speculative one, but it is worth noting that, unlike most of his communist contemporaries, Caudwell never went in for extolling Stalin's virtues in print. His preoccupation with the nature of human freedom was most in evidence in *Studies in a Dying Culture* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1938) and *Further Studies in a Dying Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1949).
 58. George Steiner, "Text and Context," *On Difficulty and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) 5.

Reading Backward with "The Forgotten Man of History": George Padmore's Revolutionary Theory of Class and Race

Jessica Manry

In 1959, the year Trinidadian activist and theorist George Padmore died, his friend and comrade C.L.R. James memorialized him in "Notes on the Life of George Padmore" for *The Nation*. James's "Notes" does more for the late Padmore, however, than summarize his accomplishments in an obituary. Instead, it serves as perhaps the earliest reminder of Padmore's critical influence in the decolonizing movement, offering a bold declaration about the Trinidadian thinker: "Padmore had more knowledge of African political movements and more personal contacts and relations with African politicians than any man living."¹ In James's tribute we can begin to discern two crucial insights regarding the legacy of George Padmore. First, the theoretical and practical importance of his work to the twentieth century, especially regarding his role as an orchestrating mentor and strategist in African diasporic independence movements. Second, he was a figure whose critical work might be — and for some time has been — largely forgotten by history.²

Studies of Padmore, especially when compared with his contemporaries C.L.R. James and Frantz Fanon, remain few and far between. Recently, Lester Lewis and Cameron James have taken up the charge to "remember" Padmore not only by citing him as a vital theorist in the decolonizing movement — with Lewis labeling him the "forgotten man of history" — but also by reinstating James's call to recognize him as one of the founding figures of Pan-Africanism.³ Hakim Adi, Susan D. Pennybacker, Minkah Makalani, Leslie James, and Jeffrey S. Ahlman provide nuanced accounts of his complex and shifting relationship with the Communist Party and his critique of the Party's treatment and analysis of racial inequality in particular.⁴ These criticisms would eventually contribute to his infamous disavowal of the Communist Party and with it, some accounts go on to suggest, his commitment to Marxism.⁵

There is certainly reason to question the extent to which his later Pan-African writings incorporate historical and dialectical materialism to engage the question

of black liberation. If we return to James's tribute, we find a claim that emphasizes the ambivalent influence Marxism exercised in Padmore's thought after his dramatic break with the Comintern in the mid-1930s. "[Padmore] was a Marxist and a revolutionary," James writes, "and for thirty years this West Indian had one main purpose in life — the emancipation of Africa from foreign domination."⁶ James's labeling of Padmore as a Marxist without comment offers a definitive stance on Padmore's theoretical and political praxis, when the story surrounding both is much less conclusive.⁷ More to the point, and perhaps owing to his own Marxist commitments, James elides the complicated relationship Padmore articulated between Marxism and the emancipation of Africa.

We know from Padmore's writings that "doctrinaire Marxism," or Marxist theory that did not address the predicament of colonization and racial inequality under capitalism, haunted but also guided his intellectual work.⁸ From Padmore's perspective, his break with the Comintern was the result of the Soviet and American Communist parties' failure to adequately deal with the issue of race, particularly the persistent and extreme exploitation of disproportionate numbers of black peoples under capitalism. For scholars following James, the answers to questions about Padmore's engagement with Marxism and communism in his writing and politics after the break with the Comintern are opaque.⁹ Where, for instance, Adi finds reasons to laud much of the work done by Padmore, he also questions the validity of the theorist's critiques of the Communist Party. In opposition to Adi, Pennybacker argues that the "Marxist movement was integral to the person [Padmore] was in the twenties and early thirties, and his later evolution rested upon the realization of that movement's failings in the 1930s."¹⁰

As Leslie James summarizes, this has tended to obfuscate the complexity of Padmore's work:

During his lifetime, there was a tendency for colonial authorities to portray Padmore as a doctrinaire figure — a man who held only one position (a position which they rightly understood was in essence always against their own position of power) and who pressed that position upon the susceptible minds of young colonial nationalists. A rigid interpretation of Padmore and his politics has until recently also persisted in the few studies of Padmore that do exist...leaving little room for ambiguity, flexibility, or adaptability in his thinking. In these accounts, Padmore either "left behind" his earlier, "youthful" communist flirtation for his true position as a pan-Africanist, or he remained a committed Marxist who for decades "continued to think in terms of Comintern categories."¹¹

To take seriously the question of Padmore's Marxism, and different from the accounts above, I focus almost exclusively on textual analysis of the content of his work. By

doing this, I hope to more concretely discuss the obvious, hidden, and even absent threads of Marxist thought across important selections from his canon. Rather than fault Padmore for his break with Communism, I instead figure him as a radical thinker whose later work articulates a frustration, and even exhaustion, with the search for real, tenable solutions for the liberation of black peoples around the world. This, I argue, sometimes comes at the expense of a historical and dialectical materialism with the potential to synthesize and push his ideas further. I want to highlight, however, that this later tendency stands in stark contrast with his earlier use of the dialectic. In its most far-reaching insights, Padmore's work speaks to the capacity of Marxism to articulate the connection between class and race, while the limitations of his later works forewarn us of the theoretical consequences of accepting any compromise with the capitalist economic system, especially as neoliberalism makes calls for "equality" of a different sort.

In what follows, I discuss George Padmore's contributions to a critique of capitalism at the same time that I account for his contentious relationships with traditional Marxist theory in the later Pan-African political positions and writings. To do this, I travel backward through his canon in detailed selections from three works — *Pan-Africanism*, *How Britain Rules Africa*, and *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* — as a means of recovering Padmore for studies of Marxism and race in the twenty-first century.¹² The process of reading backward places both his early work, *Toilers* (1931), and later work, *Pan-Africanism* (1956) in relation to one another. Particularly, when read together the work from the 1930s makes clear the possibilities foreclosed upon in the work from the 1950s. In this way, I account for the specific, textual details of Padmore's work in the 1950s, a decade during which he focused more narrowly on Pan-Africanism and African independence, as well as his work in the 1930s, a time during which he more pointedly applied a materialist dialectic to the analysis of class and race together.

Different from previous critics, reading backward leads me to Padmore's most salient critique of capitalism — the "twofold burden [of] class and race" for an international black working class — in *Britain* (1936). The theoretical success of *Britain* is, on one hand, partly to do with the radical energy of the historical moment itself, which was a banner time for communist thought around the world. On the other hand, it is crucial to recognize that *Britain* was published after Padmore's break with the Communist Party, at a time when he was committed to Marxist analysis but not to what he saw as an inflexible and flawed praxis regarding race. Put differently, it becomes clear that if we only read Padmore linearly, he seems to focus more and more narrowly on the emancipation of black peoples without considering their place as part of a larger, international working class. By instead reading backward, we can understand Padmore's break with Communism proper as productively harnessed in *Britain*. There, we find him using the dialectic as it was intended — as a way to recognize the inability of reconciling unequal class and race relations under

capitalism, and to rather place the two in productive and relentless tension with one another as a means of overcoming both. In what follows, then, I read Padmore's contribution as a whole to be an enigmatic but critical negotiation at the juncture of class and race under capitalism.

In this way, Padmore offers a revolutionary lesson for twenty-first century Marxist conceptions of class and race about the necessity to recognize anew the particular forms exploitation and suffering take in any and every historical moment. If we hope to accommodate the myriad effects of capitalism in the twenty-first century, we need to continuously consider how to adapt a Marxist dialectic to speak meaningfully to an analysis of race. Our failure to contend with this in our current moment is perhaps why we see mounting critiques of racial inequality alongside, but not yet fully in dialectical conversation with, those of economic disparity. As the productive back and forth between Adolph Reed and Ellen Meiksins Wood as well as Asad Haider, Ta'Nehisi Coates, and Mark Lilla have shown us, the relationship between class and race remains one of the central issues for Marxists as we critique neoliberal notions of "equality."¹³ More specifically, capitalism reveals itself to be increasingly capable of incorporating the idea of equality for individual identities at the same time that it diminishes the actual capacity for what Haider calls the "possibility of collective self-organization."¹⁴ This should tell us how important the connection between class and race is for Marxists going forward in the era of neoliberalism.

It is insufficient, then, to claim that race is "extra-economic."¹⁵ Our task is instead to hold class and race in dialectical tension with one another even as we understand the former to be the root of universal inequality. For this reason, we must take seriously the lesson of Padmore and resist any accommodations of or capitulations to neoliberal iterations of capitalist ideology, however momentary or strategic. Moving forward, we should commit to a constant, dialectical critique of capital that also keeps at the forefront of our minds the social relationships that are only made possible with the full liberation of the entire international working class. If we fail in this, we will continue to suffer, perhaps as farce, the burden of history handed to us by capitalism.

Pan-Africanism as a Mode of Frustrated Production

To begin reading near the end of Padmore's life is to treat with some seriousness Marx's own lesson on history — the notion of the present inheriting the past. The past, of course, comes with potential gains and losses, but the losses compound if we forget this inheritance. Bertell Ollman writes that history in Marxism is,

the story of the past, and like any story it begins in the past and proceeds forward to the present or however near the present one wants to take it. This is how it happened. This is also the order in which this story is usually told. It doesn't follow, however, that this is the ideal order for studying the meaning of the story, especially as regards its final outcome. Marx,

for one, believed that we could best approach how the past developed into the present by adopting the vantage point of the present to view the conditions that gave rise to it — in other words, if we studied history backward.¹⁶

For Marx, and thinkers following him, materialist history necessitates recognizing the particular conditions that have led to and shape the moment from which one reflects — a reading “backward” from the purview of the present. History, with an eye toward the development of capitalism in the twentieth century, reads as an intensification of offenses and expropriation, especially for peoples and lands occupied by imperial nations (even after, of course, decolonization).

The Cold War and decolonizing era is, of course, rife with contradictions. For many decolonizing theorists, colonized peoples, and black workers, the period directly before and continuing through WWII (or the Second War of European Imperialism, as it was known in decolonizing circles) produced drastic changes in the shape of radicalism.¹⁷ Specifically, in the aftermath of what Padmore and others saw as the broken promises of the Communist Party regarding race in the time leading up to and after WWII, the potential solidarity that had seemed possible in the 1920s and early 1930s appeared to many as significantly less possible.¹⁸ The post-WWII era must be read in the context of the 1930s, a time when the Communist Party, on which many black peoples had hinged their anti-imperialist hopes, had begun to engage in what many saw as conciliatory compromises. This was also the time when Padmore was removed from the Comintern and lambasted in Party publications and public speeches, leaving him (once the head of the “Negro Bureau” of the Profintern), and many black workers, looking for answers elsewhere.¹⁹

In the years following the break with the Comintern, “elsewhere” for Padmore meant many locations and roles. When *Pan-Africanism or Communism* was released, Padmore was acting as an advisor and organizer for the Gold Coast independence movement that would, in 1957, result in the creation of the nation of Ghana. It is difficult to summarize the importance Padmore played in contributing ideas, writings, and, as Jeffrey Ahlman describes it, providing “tutelage” to Kwame Nkrumah, who would become prime minister and then president of Ghana.²⁰ Given Padmore’s own history as well as the fact that the world-historical revolution never produced the liberation of black people around the world, it is in some ways no surprise that certain sections of *Pan-Africanism or Communism* are dedicated to maligning the shortcomings of communism, and by extension Marxist theory, in favor of Pan-Africanism.²¹

The title itself poses an immediate dichotomy, that might register as an ultimatum by juxtaposing Pan-Africanism *against* communism; the ‘or’ establishing a distance between the two.²² In its considerations of communism, *Pan-Africanism* specifically cites the problems of “doctrinaire Marxism,” which “has no particular appeal for colonial nationalists.”²³ Notably, the most articulate and successful of Padmore’s

critiques, laid out in chapter XVI, “Communism and Black Nationalism,” focuses on the hypocrisy of Soviet and American Communism related to black lived experience. There, Padmore takes the opportunity to charge the Party with “opportunistic and cynical behavior,” specifically with regard to what he saw as their disingenuous incorporation of blacks into the Party. This he links to “ever-changing tactics of Soviet foreign policy rather than...altruistic motives.”²⁴ In certain moments, Padmore provides a strong case for a break with Soviet Communism from this perspective, as he cites the collusion on the part of the Soviets with “the [American] southern ruling class which they so delight to lambast,” a collusion that discredited Soviet praxis for black peoples.²⁵

Another key issue concerned Soviet support for military alliances and arms in the 1930s and 1940s, sometimes against colonized countries like Ethiopia. This perceived hypocrisy was especially painful, Padmore suggests, because the American Communist Party simultaneously demanded sacrifices of black Americans during WWII: “the Communists had the effrontery,” he writes, “to appeal to the Negroes to suspend their agitation for employment in war industries, the principle of equal pay for equal work, and abolition of racial segregation in the armed forces.”²⁶ Those who refused these demands “were denounced as ‘sabotaging the war effort’; ‘aiding the Axis enemy’; and endangering the ‘unity of the American people,’” all of which added unwanted complications to America’s fight with “fascism.”²⁷ Ultimately, the Party’s refusal to forge solidarity across racial lines meant that “the expected revolution... failed to materialize [in Europe].”²⁸ That “failure of the Western proletariat to come to the aid of the Soviet Republic” was, according to Padmore, ultimately due to racial divisions among an international working class.²⁹ From Padmore’s perspective, the Party demonstrated a willingness to exploit subjugated peoples in favor of the immediate — frequently financial — interests of white workers. In other words, the Party neglected black Party members and did not actively encourage the white arm of the Western proletariat to create deeper solidarity with black members.

While the critique has some grounding, the book abandons radical energy as it moves forward. Near the end of the work, Padmore offers what ultimately serves as his thesis: that Europeans “of the left or right” inevitably fail “to realize that one of the first reactions of politically awakened self-respecting colored peoples is the desire to be mentally free from the dictation of Europeans, regardless of their ideology.”³⁰ The idea, it seems, is to reject any Western-associated idea as complicit with imperialism. Among his critiques, Padmore maligns the Western tendency toward binary thought and action: “[the idea that] one must either be a Communist or an anti-Communist... is typical white man’s thinking.”³¹ The observation represents, at one level, a fair critique and rejection of hegemonic Western notions of thought. But if, as the title of the piece suggests, Africans and colonial peoples must “choose” a side — Pan-Africanism or communism — Padmore seems to have forgotten that this choice relies on a strategy he has decried only moments before, one with the potential to

further limit the freedoms of colonized peoples. In the most glaring of these amnesiac moments, Padmore seems to ignore the early and continued complicity of racism with capital, and the fact that capitalism is the ultimate ill behind Africans' and Africa's exploitation and suffering.

As a way of introducing a Pan-Africanist approach to the colonial question, for instance, Padmore invokes the "adaptations" of Lenin, in what initially appears to be a poignant revelation about the capacity of Marxism. "Marxism is not," he clarifies, "a dogma to be mechanically applied, but a guide to action, according to local circumstances and the political development of a people."³² Yet the inherent malleability Padmore intends to develop leads him to pacifying rationales. "The only force capable of containing Communism in Asia and Africa," he writes at one point, "is dynamic nationalism based upon a socialist program of industrialization and cooperative methods of agricultural production."³³ While the notion could perhaps be understood as an initial step toward something resembling international unity within the diaspora and working class, the logic ultimately lies in propitiation.

The first of the steps, nationalism, Padmore traces back to Soviet Russia rather than burgeoning independence movements. Despite his supposed suspicion of Soviet methods, Africans should adopt the Soviet model of nationalism, Padmore reasons, because

putting the interest of a foreign power first and that of one's own country last is most unlike that of Russian Communists. They are the most patriotic and nationalist-minded people... Until African Communists learn to love their country in the same way...they deserve to be treated with contempt by their fellow-countrymen.³⁴

Despite his differences with the Party, Padmore manages here to recognize successful strategies used by Soviets, but his analysis stalls at the step of replicating the Soviet policy of "nationalism" to undergird, or justify, a policy of African nationalism.³⁵ The cultivation of a small conglomerate of people, bound by the geo-political understanding of nation seems to be, as Padmore sees it, a practical and manageable tactic. Yet the most striking critique of this can be found in Padmore's own work from the 1930s (a more thorough analysis of which I turn to in the next sections) where he argues against nationalism. Particularly, Padmore is adamant in his rejection of Garveyism at that time, pointing out that resting on nationalist ideology without also articulating a movement toward internationalism, necessarily introduces limitations to universal liberation. The appeal to nationalism is most troublingly born out, however, in his attempt to locate solutions in relationships with entities such as the United Nations and by in his citation of the United States as a model for change.

In the most striking example of capitulation, Padmore's vision for Pan-Africanism — the last topic in the book — welcomes rather than rejects the nation-state structure

of the United States. In one sweeping passage, Padmore heralds the U.S. as an example to aspire to rather than as a challenge to structuring of African federations under a meritocratic system:

Pan-Africanism looks above the narrow confines of class, race, tribe and religion. In other words, it wants equal opportunity for all. Talent to be rewarded on the basis of merit. Its vision stretches beyond the limited frontiers of the nation-state. Its perspective embraces the federation of regional self-governing countries and their ultimate amalgamation into a *United States of Africa*.

In such a Commonwealth, all men, regardless of tribe, race, color or creed, shall be free and equal. And all the national units comprising the regional federations shall be autonomous in all matters regional, yet united in all matters of common interest to the African Union. This is our vision of the Africa of Tomorrow — the goal of Pan-Africanism.³⁶

Despite descriptions that seem to champion equality, rewarding talent “on the basis of merit” introduces deeper issues for the election of officials or positions of consequence in an African Union. More particularly, Padmore advocates for individualized notions of talent and merit, concepts that historically perpetuated oppression even as the tenets of democratic universalism rang across the world. Given the realities of the system in which Africa (and the world) found itself at the time of Padmore’s writing, such a philosophy automatically privileges those with the wealth and power to access “talent.” Without a substantial economic overhaul of this system, rewarding talent and merit would almost inevitably privilege those willing to subscribe to European imposed criterion for merit. In other words, a meritocracy would disproportionately recognize those already in positions of power (or those with extensive training in the cultivation of “talent” within colonial systems).

Just as important, the allusion to the United States — and a “United States of Africa” — suggests that an African Union would produce autonomous but united nation-states. The idea does not reflect on the ways that a United States of Africa and a “Commonwealth” might reproduce rather than challenge the logic of imperialism. As it moves forward, Padmore’s vision for Pan-Africanism continues to expose the contradictions of a United States of Africa. This is particularly glaring given Padmore’s earlier critiques of nation-states within capitalism — specifically the Soviet Union’s actions preceding WWII — as the reason he cited for breaking with the Communist Party.³⁷ Padmore claims that Pan-Africanism will move beyond the mistakes of the Soviet Union — namely the appearance of participation in capitalist imperialism — at the same time that it will concretely incorporate African federations, or nations, into a world (and therefore capitalist) economy.

In passages surrounding this, *Pan-Africanism* removes virtually all traces of the

idea that Africans reject Western thinking, a special irony given Padmore's bitter assessment of Soviet complicity with the policies of the American South. Citing the need for the "younger generation of Africans" to enact change, Padmore clarifies that this generation will take its cues from "under the stimulus of Western political ideas and technocracy."³⁸ Rather than championing the potential of a truly international working class, Padmore's method defers to capitalism: African peoples will find emancipation by adopting political ideas and technology from an exploitative world economic system. Ultimately, his invitation for collaboration is extended not to workers, but rather to their *nations*, and thus the ruling class. Appealing to "progressive forces in Britain," Padmore requests "'know-how' missionaries — men and women with technical knowledge and skills who are willing to go out and help the Africans... and help to raise their standards of living."³⁹ This moment might, on one hand, act as a step toward African peoples taking ownership of the means of production, which would be an emancipatory gesture. Yet, on the other hand, the notion of "help" fails to fully acknowledge the economic reality of a capitalist mode of production — and the critical role Western missionaries played in disguising expropriation as aid.

Even as *Pan-Africanism* promotes "looking above the narrow confines of race" in its consideration of colonial capitalism and uneven development, the articulated goal in 1956 is myopic. More specifically, the very real lived experiences of inequity in capitalism foreclose on the idea that racial unification will end universal suffering. In short, local solutions, however rooted in praxis and flexibility, will remain local because they fail to emphasize connections to future stages.

Following *Pan-Africanism*, and as a part of his work in the Ghanaian decolonizing and independence movement, Padmore continued to organize coalitions of theorists and activists both internationally and within the continent of Africa. These conferences served as a sounding board for his theory of Pan-Africanism, particularly in response to criticism he received from many in the decolonizing movement. While some found the theory too focused on internationalism, others thought the idea of "federations" too narrow. As a way to consider these criticisms, Padmore, along with Kwame Nkrumah, tried to reimagine Pan-Africanism in collaboration with others. Perhaps the most famous example is the Conference of Independent African States and the All African People's Conference of 1958. There, we find evidence for Padmore's willingness to adapt Pan-Africanism in the resolutions that were adopted at the end of the All-African Conference.⁴⁰

While Padmore and Nkrumah began the All African Conference with a "provisional agenda" that was reminiscent of Padmore's 1956 text, the resolutions reflect the challenges the conference attendees raised to the theory. For this reason, the resolutions are staunchly more radical than *Pan-Africanism* and the logic set forth by the "provisional agenda." Indeed, the ten resolutions open with an explicit condemnation of "colonialism and imperialism" and move on to eschew "political and

economic exploitations of Africans by imperialist Europeans.”⁴¹ The resolutions go on to explicitly state that “African States should pursue in their international policy principles which will expedite and accelerate the independence and sovereignty of all dependent and colonial African territories.”⁴² Among the most important resolutions was a change to Nkrumah’s policy of non-violence at the urging of a young Frantz Fanon, who cited the inevitable and ethical battles fought by colonized peoples for their independence.⁴³ St. Clare Drake also notes at the conference there was “a big map of Africa” superimposed over “a picture... of a very strong black man breaking his chains,” underneath which Padmore and the other Conference organizers “had paraphrased Marx and Engels, ‘You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have the continent to regain.’”⁴⁴ We might cite the revisions as well as the presence of the map as evidence for Padmore’s renewed focus on an international, as opposed to national, program. In this vein, it is also worth recognizing that Padmore and Nkrumah did eventually espouse the idea that “any talking about small federations” was “a continuation of colonial balkanization.”⁴⁵

On one hand, then, the resolutions adopted at the end of Conference suggest that Padmore did not envision the kind of compromise suggested by the idea of a “United States of Africa.” On the other, the allusion to a United States of Africa during and after the Conference reveals a theoretical contradiction that is difficult to square for Marxists.⁴⁶ Such “contradictions and complexities” formed, as his biographer Leslie James puts it, Padmore’s intellectual and theoretical process, which were “constantly being reformed by contemporary events.”⁴⁷ These contradictions are perhaps best encapsulated by the fact that, near the end of his life, Padmore was working on a book on “tribalism.” The project fell under the larger umbrella of Pan-Africanism and emphasized “the bitter internal struggles he himself underwent in thinking through African nationalism” as well as “a confrontation between metropolitan organizer-intellectuals and colonial nationalist politics.”⁴⁸ The historical context of the Cold War contributed, no doubt, to the immensity of the problems he engaged and the propensity of those problems to appear to change shape frequently.

Yet, as James describes, Padmore had tried to directly confront, in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, “the history of communism within black nationalist movements” and had “roundly rejected any serious threat of communism as a political force not only in Africa, but in the Caribbean and United States.”⁴⁹ More important, according to James, Padmore imagined that “Pan-Africanism... offered an ‘ideological alternative’... to Communism.”⁵⁰ Much like Padmore, James does not always distinguish between the theory of communism as an economic alternative to capitalism and the policies and actions of the American and Soviet Communist Parties. At the end of Padmore’s life, then, we are left to wonder to what extent he envisioned Pan-Africanism as an alternative to communism itself. We do not need to speculate, of course, on the viability of Marxism without international communism.

Padmore addresses what we might call a productive next step 25 years prior,

interestingly enough, in *Negro Toilers*. In that work, as well as in *How Britain Rules Africa*, Padmore lays out a program of change and analysis that gets much closer to something like the transformation of capitalism in conversation with black liberation. Reading backward to his work from the 1930s, then, helps to highlight the later theory's movement away from imagining a worldwide revolution.

Toiling Toward Revolution

Negro Toilers from 1931 and *How Britain Rules Africa* from 1936 are the energetic and inspired products of contradiction and crisis in a decade of economic devastation. The environment into which they were released indicates an intellectual and political milieu desirous for points of entry into the colonial question. In the period, the issues of racial inequity and suffering are addressed from a range of radical stances, most notably in the international Communist Party.⁵¹ In particular, thousands of black intellectuals found potential in the Party as it took up an international dialogue on class and race. In an article published the same year as *Britain*, for instance, the leader of the Black Communist Party of America, James W. Ford, clearly outlines an international emergency: "The world is caught in the middle of a great crisis," he writes, in which "masses of people" are "on the brink of starvation."⁵² "Present day capitalism," Ford writes, "has not been able to satisfy these needs and is less and less able to do so. There are those who say that by reforming capitalism it can be made to fill the needs of the masses. We shall show that this is impossible."⁵³ Ford's unambiguous description, and the direct identification of the increasing exploitation of black peoples under capitalism, broadens the scope of concern beyond the United States and to the wider world. Just as important, Ford connects suffering in the Great Depression and suffering in the colonies, suggesting that capitalist exploitation produces swathes of starving, laboring people around the world. The article's clear explanation of exploitation not only establishes a clear vision of what was at issue economically, but also speaks to the radical potential contained in that decade.

It is in this spirit of connectivity and solidarity that *Toilers* sets out a project for "the workers of the metropolitan countries."⁵⁴ Padmore identifies the strategic goal of educating workers inside the cores of capitalism on "the methods which the capitalists of the 'mother' countries adopt to enslave the black colonial and semi-colonial peoples."⁵⁵ *Toilers* urges readers, themselves workers, to "understand that it is only through the exploiting of the colonial workers... that the imperialists are able to bribe the reformist and social-fascist trade union bureaucrats and thereby enable them to betray the struggles of the workers."⁵⁶ The explicit goal is one of encouragement for workers across the world to "join forces... against the common enemy — World Capitalism."⁵⁷ Padmore echoes Lenin when he claims that the situation of workers and colonized peoples within capitalist imperialism can be traced to "the acute rivalry among the imperialist nations in their struggle for the re-division of the world."⁵⁸ The effects of the "imperialist war," he argues, materialize concretely — and not

abstractly — for workers rather than capitalists, and still more so for the “Negro masses.”⁵⁹ Particularly, Padmore opines, capitalists “create and foster artificial racial differences among the toiling masses, and by doing so divide the workers and thereby exploit all of them more effectively.”⁶⁰ In this analysis, then, race is a mechanism that uses divisions within the working class to strengthen the exploitations of capitalist imperialism.

Padmore’s critique is salient and sophisticated, even by current academic standards. The “pamphlet” as he calls it, works to demystify the international division of labor in capitalist imperialism. Recently, Adolph Reed has suggested that this is precisely the goal of Marxism in conversation with race today:

A Marxist perspective can be most helpful for understanding race and racism insofar as it perceives capitalism dialectically, as a social totality that includes modes of production, relations of production, and the pragmatically evolving ensemble of institutions and ideologies that lubricate and propel its reproduction. From this perspective, Marxism’s most important contribution to making sense of race and racism...may be demystification. A historical materialist perspective should stress that “race” — which includes “racism,” as one is unthinkable without the other — is a historically specific ideology that emerged, took shape, and has evolved as a constitutive element within a definite set of social relations anchored to a particular system of production.⁶¹

Toilers is broadly congruent with Reed’s version of Marxism, elucidating as it does the ways capitalist imperialism benefits from the division of workers across racial lines. Effectively, the concept of the race — and the juridical implementations of racism with it — does some of the work of alienating workers for capitalism. With a commitment to examining the ideological contradictions that arose with imperialism, Padmore gives specific consideration to race as a real and lived experience of inequality. At the same time, he suggests that race and racism would easily lose their power if the social relations which foster them were absent. Padmore’s explanation clarifies the means by which race as a concept moves around and outside the consciousness of the people, on whom it depends for momentum.

The rivalry between imperialist nations, Padmore suggests, speaks to a crisis in capitalism, the burden of which is often placed on black colonial peoples. Padmore delineates the expansion of capitalism:

the imperialists, whether American, English, French, Belgian, etc., etc., are frantically trying to find a way out of their difficulties. In order to do so, they are not only intensifying the exploitation of the white workers in the various imperialist countries by launching an offensive through means

of rationalization, wage cuts, abolition of insurance, unemployment, etc., but they are turning their attention more and more towards African and other black semi-colonies... In this way the bourgeoisie hope to unload the major burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the black colonial and semi-colonial masses.⁶²

Here, race fulfills a sinister function in twentieth-century capitalist imperialism. Particularly, capitalist imperialism surplus by reducing costs and further expanding into a racialized periphery. Padmore's critique of race as a categorization under capitalism speaks to the need for solidarity across racial divides. At the same time, Padmore acknowledges the ways racialized peoples endure different forms of oppression in the uneven capitalist world system, going on to expand the concept of the nation.

In the following line, we can nearly detect a connection to Pan-Africanism in what Padmore calls a "national race." "The oppression of Negroes," he writes, "assumes two distinct forms: on the one hand they are oppressed as a class, and on the other as a nation. This national (race) oppression has its basis in the social-economic relation of the negro under capitalism."⁶³ However, in the next sentence, Padmore clarifies: "National (race) oppression assumes its most pronounced forms in the United States of America, especially in the Black Belt of the Southern States... and in the Union of South Africa."⁶⁴ Here, Padmore specifies that the imposition of national boundaries is the work of capitalism, both within and across these geopolitical spaces. What is more, capitalist nations engender and encourage racial divisions within working-class movements, a fact that impedes unity while also serving the purpose of allowing white workers to imagine themselves as somehow "above" working-class blacks.

The section from *Toilers*, "Black Slaves in the New World," elaborates that even black peoples in the Northern United States are subject to these divisions. As a result, "we find that the less class-conscious white workers, like the capitalists, have the tendency to consider the Negro workers as social outcasts — members of a pariah race."⁶⁵ In these analyses, Padmore asserts that race must be a consideration if capitalist imperialism is to be understood fully. To do this, he carefully links race to economic inequity, and to the ideas of uneven development, accumulation by dispossession, and the subsidizing of a capitalist class by a toiling mass. And in these moments, the precise means by which race relates to the broader working class begins to materialize.

Padmore makes an effort, in the final pages of this first work, to articulate the necessity of economic analysis and class unity across national borders. To incorporate race into the analysis, he advocates that white workers recognize the difficulties of their black counterparts:

the white workers must realize that in the present condition of world capitalism one of the aims of the imperialists is to find a way out of their

difficulties by using the Negro workers... to worsen the already low standards of the white workers. Because of this the struggles of the Negro workers against the capitalist offensive must be made part and parcel of the common struggle against imperialism.⁶⁶

Padmore here synthesizes the relation between race and class under capitalism: the capitalist economic mode of production underlies the difficulties of both black and white workers; the conditions of the workers are related and mutually dependent; and the nation is a crucial mechanism by which we can understand the exploitation of racialized peoples.

Near the end of *Toilers*, Padmore takes to task trade unions and reformists, as well as Garveyism, for their myopic views on class and race, respectively. The trade unions set as their “chief task,” he says, the betrayal of “the struggles of the Negroes on the economic front.”⁶⁷ Garveyism, for its part, is indicted for attempting to isolate race as the primary concern for black workers. More particularly, “black landlords and capitalists who support Garveyism,” Padmore warns, “are merely trying to mobilize the Negro workers and peasants to support them in establishing a Negro Republic in Africa, where they [the former] would be able to set themselves up as the rulers in order to continue the exploitation of the toilers of their race, free from white imperialist competition.”⁶⁸ It is this moment, as I mentioned above, which allows us to critique Padmore in *Pan-Africanism* for ideas quite similar to Garveyism in spirit. The slogans “A Negro Republic in Africa” and “Back to Africa” are seen here, in *Toilers*, as tied to the capitalist system.

In *Toilers*, Padmore recognizes the ways that this might easily privilege trained, educated, and elite black leaders while neglecting to change the foundation of capitalism. We see here also the potential critique of meritocracy, which is likely to develop at the expense of those who do not receive a Western-dictated education or those, perhaps more crucially, who live outside Anglophone colonies. As an answer to *Pan-Africanism*, *Toilers* sets right many of the questions and problematic positions outlined in the former’s efforts to combat racial equity around the world. As Padmore frames it in the final lines of *Toilers*: “[The Negro Workers] must realize that the only way in which they can win their freedom and emancipation is by organizing their forces millions strong, and in alliance with the class-conscious white workers in the imperialist countries, as well as the oppressed masses of China, India, Latin America and other colonial and semi-colonial countries, deliver a final blow to world imperialism.”⁶⁹

As a further development of this, *Britain* offers a still more sophisticated and detailed analysis for understanding race and Marxism, with relevance for our present. In the final selection from Padmore, I highlight the unique theoretical insights of *Britain* in his canon. Appearing soon after Padmore’s break with the Communist Party over the issue of race, *Britain* represents a thesis on the bridge between Marxism and

analyses of racial inequality in the context of capitalist imperialism. It is Padmore's frustration with what he saw as insufficient analysis of race, I argue, that enables him to confront the contradictions of race within capitalism from a Marxist perspective. As a result, he offers his sharpest dialectical consideration of race and class.

How *Britain* Advances a Revolutionary Theory

How Britain Rules Africa provides a mediating point in the complicated relationship between Marxist class and race analysis in the twenty-first century. Like *Toilers*, *Britain* is the product of a deep dialectical engagement with these issues in the middle of the 1930s. Because *Britain* considers capitalist imperialism to be the explicit target of its critique, I believe it provides a crucial key for a Marxist theory of race today. Particularly, *Britain* includes in its critique an elaborate analysis of the lived experiences of black workers and colonial peoples, realities that are today often distorted by the politics of neoliberalism.

Padmore acknowledges, much like Asad Haider has in recent years, the historical realities of racial inequality that have accompanied the capitalist mode of production. In this way, *Britain* pushes past the idea that identity politics will provide meaningful change under capitalism. Rather, the text sees capitalism as colluding with racist policy when such collusion is convenient, allowing it to also incorporate lived experience into a sophisticated, structural analysis of exploitation.

Written only five years after *Toilers*, but also after Padmore's break with the Party in 1933-34, *How Britain Rules Africa* represents an intellectual feat for the theorist. Padmore's critical insight on Party politics in the 1930s enables, in a culminating moment for his work, a productive dialectical mediation between race and class. Here, Padmore outlines a salient, applicable theory of race and class in the era of capitalist imperialism, which functions as an economic righting of Party politics. At the outset of *Britain*, Padmore describes in detail the particular ways Africa serves British imperialism: "as an agrarian hinterland for the industrialized West, a source of supply for raw materials, a market for manufactured commodities, an outlet for the investment of surplus financial-capital in exploiting... and last but not least, Africa provides an outlet for European settlers."⁷⁰ Padmore then isolates his analysis to those "territories which form a part of the British Empire."⁷¹ These early clarifications make possible both precision and historical specificity, while placing British imperial history in the broader totality of capitalism.

In particular, *Britain* makes clear the geopolitical logic undergirding social relations by emphasizing racialized organizations of national and political power. These organizations of power, he suggests, distract from a direct engagement with capitalist imperialism in the twentieth century.⁷² *Britain's* first chapter discusses the intervention of capitalism in African history, providing a Marxist understanding of imperialism and race as they were developed through colonial violence. Padmore divides this history into two historical periods: "the Slave Trade Period, from the

fifteenth to the nineteenth century” and “the Post-Slave Trade Period, from the eighties of the nineteenth century to the end of the World War.”⁷³ A third, marginal period referred to as the “age of free trade” is included, with a quick summary that explains the transition from slavery to wage labor as one that was economically motivated.

The abolition of slavery, Padmore elaborates, corresponds with “the Industrial Revolution,” which saw slavery become “less and less profitable owing to technological changes in production.”⁷⁴ While Padmore does not explicitly detail a “materialist” approach, this is clearly the place from which his thinking springs. Specifically, he describes how “the tremendous profits derived from the slave trade... provided much of the primitive accumulation of capital for the development and expansion of British industrial capitalism.”⁷⁵ He ends the chapter by observing: “the conquest of Africa reflects the whole trend of the development of economic imperialism.”⁷⁶ To attempt to understand a part of capitalism, Padmore surmises, is to attempt to understand the whole. Capitalism is never isolated and must expand to exist, and so it depends on a class of workers for whom existence is merely subsistence. Supposed evolutions in the social and political status of formerly enslaved black peoples — across the historical “periods” of imperialism, or before and after the slave trade — are tempered by the continued experience of race exploitation.

Race, as Padmore writes it in *Britain*, functions in a variety of ways, all of which he traces to capitalism because it is the mode of production through which the particular inequalities he analyzes come to be. In essence, “imperialist oppression and exploitation” are “allied with racial ignorance and arrogance.”⁷⁷ As a result of this alliance, “Blacks carry a twofold burden — class and race.”⁷⁸ The connection that Padmore notices, then, makes possible a more specific historical and materialist analysis of race than is possible with Pan-Africanism. Unlike the conclusion of the 1956 text, which emphasizes racial unification, *Britain* incorporates an explicit awareness of historical and “present conditions”: “the ideology known as race-prejudice or white-chauvinism, is part and parcel of the capitalist system, and can only be eradicated by a fundamental change in the present social system.”⁷⁹ More specifically, a mere acceptance of democratic republics, an African Union or any other conciliatory geo-political pacifism, Padmore goes on, will only to perpetuate the problem. This is because the problem is, at its base, capitalism.

As a means of approaching these issues, Padmore suggests that oppressed peoples think in terms of “Africa for Africans,” a request that perhaps appears limited in its view of the world-historical economic system of capitalism.⁸⁰ However, Padmore states that this is an “immediate task” and one “most appropriate... under present conditions.”⁸¹ Padmore’s approach in *Britain*, then, offers concrete incremental steps on which a unified working class might build. Padmore pays specific attention to the present situation as it has been shaped in the past and as it exists now. In essence, the work of socialism cannot stop, Padmore suggests, at the level of the nation. Rather,

Padmore argues for “socially progressive” nationalism in the colonies, a means of organizing which, because it does not wield hegemonic power and privilege, is both distinct from the nationalism of imperial nations and can expand beyond the strategic confines of the nation or even continent.⁸²

Unequivocally, Padmore clarifies that resting contentedly at nationalism, democracy or peaceful co-operation within a capitalist world system necessarily creates reactionary and regressive politics. The later concessions of *Pan-Africanism* here bear the full weight of a Marxist critique, but from Padmore himself. *Britain* expresses confidence that “the struggle will assume the form of an Anti-Imperialist Peoples’ Democratic Movement of the now subject races against the dominant and privileged minority.”⁸³ The movement Padmore envisions cannot “stop only at what Marx called the ‘bourgeois-democratic stage.’”⁸⁴ Padmore invokes a Bantu nationalist journal to highlight the problems with stopping at democracy: “Modern democracy,” the journal asserts, “is a democracy only of the white skin peoples of the world, and its philosophy is that of brazen spoilation, and the violation of human rights of all whose color is black.”⁸⁵ Equivocal or ambiguous positions in the struggle against imperialism — especially with regard to the position of race — run the risk of concessional change. Put differently, the continuation of a status quo will continue to kill millions of people of color, as it has in the past; democracy under capitalism occasions white-dominated enterprises. Extending “democratic” projects and nations, the logic follows, will necessarily extend racial oppression and exploitation.

According to Padmore, moving beyond white democracy and privilege requires education in the form of “the development of labor technique, for the more advanced forms of production... the more it becomes necessary to raise the education level of the people.”⁸⁶ We can directly juxtapose this with Padmore’s notion of a meritocracy from *Pan-Africanism*. For the people to have any control over their own situation, Padmore reasons, they must break with a capitalist system that fundamentally exploits their work by divorcing them from the ownership of the means of production — a “socially backward system.”⁸⁷ With the goal of “throw[ing] light into dark places” representing all corners of a capitalist world, Padmore states definitively: “as long as capitalism exists, it will make no fundamental difference whether or not Africans are being exploited in a mine or on a plantation owned by British capitalists on the one hand, or by a joint-stock company... on the other hand. Capitalism is capitalism, regardless of how it tries to disguise itself.”⁸⁸ Padmore goes on to connect the critique to a broader international working-class solidarity, wherein he includes “British workers — the rank and file of the trade unions and the Labour Party,” who he hopes “will repudiate any... attempt to get them to endorse” what he calls “pseudo-socialistic” plans.⁸⁹

If the end of capitalism requires thinking about labor techniques and the end of class and race distinctions, it also necessarily means refusing to cooperate in a system maintained by either of these things. Padmore’s position in 1936, then, sounds not unlike the position of Marx himself. What Padmore adds, of course, is a

specific consideration of race that Marx could only begin to glimpse in his historical moment. Padmore asserts that without the sweeping away of the capitalist mode of production, class antagonisms — including those that have been transposed onto racial distinctions — will fail to disappear. The later logic of *Pan-Africanism*, or a meritocratic United States of Africa, hardly allows for the destruction of class — and cannot, therefore, allow for the destruction of racialized forms of class relationships. Padmore's canon allows us to see concretely that the struggle against racial oppression must always be understood in relation to a struggle against the capitalist economic mode of production and its particular social relations. This was a fact that Padmore seemed to accept before the temptation of localized solutions rooted in immediate praxis became too great.

Padmore Today

One of the most complex contradictions of existence in the neoliberal era of capitalism is, as Imre Szeman frames it, “conscience,” particularly our exposure to “a deliberate political program of neoliberal moral education in the language of the market.”⁹⁰ In other words, neoliberalism teaches us to recognize an ostensibly increasing equality for marginalized identities by appealing to equitable representation in and access to the market, in the spheres of production and consumption. At the same time, neoliberalism masks the relative stagnation of, and decrease in, worker wages and the widening gap between the working and capitalist classes that results from it. In our responses to the trap of neoliberalism, then, Marxists risk occupying a position that appears antithetical to equality. Rather than suggest, as neoliberalism does, that racial inequality can and will be solved with more time and progress, Marxism must offer a viable response to such claims. To do this, we should consider the precise ways that neoliberalism accommodates and even encourages individual rights as a way of subverting collective action. This demands a real recognition that suffering and exploitation in our world are and have been racialized much of the time. We must emphasize this reality as a part of the mechanism of capitalism, or the way that neoliberalism has evolved to perpetuate class division at the same time that it calls for equality in an economic system that we know to be unequal in its very foundation.

Marxist discussions of the relationship between race and class in the twenty-first century have a storied history, even when we limit that discussion to the United States in the past 10 or so years. According to Ellen Meiksins Wood's “Class, Race, and Capitalism,” racial hierarchy currently operating in the United States does not directly correlate with class relations, but instead represents a substitute for previous models of civic status hierarchies in non-capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of society. In effect, Wood argues that the era of capitalism necessarily ushers in civic equality, while revealing such gains to be insufficient for dealing with class inequity. To the extent that we focus on civic status and racial hierarchy, she points out, we will obscure our consideration of class relations, the true source and site of reproducing

inequality. Among the most salient and insightful of her claims is the articulation of the overlap and simultaneous difference between race and class inequality:

While the eradication of class would have a profoundly transformative effect on racial divisions, the eradication of racial hierarchies would not fundamentally transform the nature of capitalist class relations, even though it would, in the U.S. in particular, deprive capitalism of one of its most useful mechanisms of reproduction. Capitalism will always have a working class, and it will always produce underclasses, whatever their extra-economic identity. It can adapt to changing conditions by changing the meaning of race and ethnicity, so that one group can displace another at the bottom of the ladder (as Hispanic groups have in some cases replaced African-Americans); or the boundaries of racial categories can, if necessary, be redrawn. It could even survive the eradication of racial, or any other “civic” categories altogether.⁹¹

Wood’s insight regarding the inequity produced by class — as distinct from race — touches on a fundamental truth in capitalism: the resolution of racial inequality would nevertheless allow class inequality to persist. Indeed, as Wood says, “The relation between capital and labour is, juridically, a relation between free and equal individuals, who (at least in ‘liberal democracies’) share every legal and political right,” while “the division of the working class by means of race serves the interests of capital.”⁹²

We find moments, however, where Wood moves on too quickly from the complexity of the experience of race in late capitalism:

However disproportionately African-Americans may be represented in the working class, and especially in its lowest ranks, they do not constitute the whole of that class; and their “extra-economic” racial status cannot define the category “working class”, as civic status once defined serfs and slaves.⁹³

To fully unpack Wood’s passage, returning to Padmore is helpful. The strength of *Britain’s* analysis comes from its frustration with the shortcomings of the Party in its consideration of race. *Britain* is the product of Padmore’s deep belief in Marxism’s ability to accommodate the complicated experience of race. His attempt to see Marxism accomplish this shortly after his break with the Party, I have argued, engenders a dialectical mediation of this historical and lived experience, while ultimately recognizing class as the foundation of inequality. No doubt Padmore’s early commitment to Marxism allowed him to acknowledge that while black peoples carry a “twofold burden,” this cannot be resolved through the institution of political equality.

As Padmore puts it in a passage from *Britain* I quote above, “as long as capitalism exists, it will make no fundamental difference whether or not Africans are being exploited in a mine or on a plantation owned by British capitalists.”

Despite their agreements on class relations, the juxtaposition of *Britain's* carefully and inclusively phrased mediation with Wood's short passage above permits us to see what are often the objects of critique aimed at Marxists' analyses of the “twofold burden” of race and class in capitalism. Phrases like “however disproportionately” and “extra-economic,” particularly, appear to dismiss the preponderance of black Americans in the working class, “especially in its lowest ranks.” The discussion, too, of working-class difficulty juxtaposed with pre- and post-civic status designations is unfortunate, as it fails to consider fully how black Americans continued to experience the inherited historical, political, and economic complications of exploitation from enslaved ancestors whose descendants continue to be colonized around the world long after serfdom and slavery ended.

In his “Rejoinder” to Wood, Adolph Reed contrasts “individual prejudice, bigotry and stereotyping — symbolized famously in Cornel West's and other prominent black people's difficulties in getting cabs in Manhattan — to labor market segmentation, anti-immigrant agitation, redlining, racial profiling, gerrymandering, coded attacks on the poor and the public sector, the corporate glass ceiling and police brutality.”⁹⁴ What a consideration of class and race must do, Reed ultimately argues, is to “[make] sense of these different relations and [seek] to understand how they operate concretely to shape and reproduce capitalist political economies,” particularly in “a society such as the United States in which racial stratification emerged as a mutually constitutive element of capitalist institutions and evolved and became institutionalized in tight, practically indissoluble connection with them.”⁹⁵

We would do well to pause with the Wood and Reed debate, alongside Padmore, to wonder at the inevitable effects of twenty-first-century capitalism, and by extension neoliberalism, on Marxist analyses. That is, it is by virtue of a great deception on the part of capitalist ideology that Marxist analyses often offer caveats when they acknowledge race, or the forms of suffering and exploitation experienced by millions of people of color under capitalism. This tendency of Marxists to justify considerations of racialized suffering arises counterintuitively, I argue, from our failure to question the successful campaign of neoliberal logic — a fundamental championing of the individual, tied to an abstract equality, codified alongside “monetarism, deregulation, and market-based reforms.”⁹⁶

In his discussion of class and race, Asad Haider advocates embracing a real discussion of the concerns addressed by identity politics while recognizing their grounding in individualism. His responses to Ta'Neheisi Coates and Mark Lilla's analyses of the election of Donald Trump eschew looking to the past for a better liberalism, as Lilla does, or relying on identity politics to explain the predicament of inequality in the twenty-first century, as Coates does. Instead, Haider argues, we

should understand identity politics, on their own, to reinforce structural oppression:

In its contemporary form, rather than its initial form as a theorization of a revolutionary political practice, identity politics is an individualist method. It is based on the individual's demand for recognition, and it takes that individual's identity as its starting point. It takes this identity for granted and suppresses the fact that all identities are socially constructed. And because all of us necessarily have an identity that is different from everyone else's, it undermines the possibility of collective self-organization. The framework of identity reduces politics to who you are as an individual and to gaining recognition as an individual, rather than your membership in a collectivity and the collective struggle against an oppressive social structure. As a result, identity politics paradoxically ends up reinforcing the very norms it set out to criticize.⁹⁷

He describes Lilla and Coates's methods as "ultimately mirror images of each other, in their failure to recognize that overcoming white supremacy is not an 'identity' issue, one which is restricted to the interests of a particular racial group, but rather at the center of a universal program for emancipation."⁹⁸

What makes Haider's arguments particularly compelling is his refusal to abandon the radical principles from the past, particularly what he calls "insurgent universality" in distinction to "juridical universalism." To exemplify this, he returns to the critical moment of the French and Haitian Revolution, citing the latter's introduction of insurgent universality to the former's juridical universality. With these historical coordinates in mind for our work in the present, Haider looks to the future: "It is still possible to claim the legacy of this insurgent universality, which says that we are not passive victims but active agents of a politics that demands freedom for everyone."⁹⁹ "Universality," Haider claims, "equally refuses to freeze the oppressed in a status of victimhood that requires protection from above; it insists that emancipation is self-emancipation."¹⁰⁰ It is ultimately in this spirit that I read Padmore's *Britain*, and also why I advocate reading backward to the historical moment when he saw class and race in tension with one another in communist circles. In *Britain*, it is through an application of Marxist theory that he harnesses the dialectical potential of this tension.

If we read through Padmore's canon linearly, we see his thinking shift from an emphasis on black toilers "join[ing] forces with their white brothers against the common enemy" of world capitalism, to something further and further toward the maintenance of the capitalist system.¹⁰¹ Put differently, we can read the trajectory of Padmore's work over the course of 25 years — from Marxist in 1931's *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* to African unionist in 1956's *Pan-Africanism or Communism* — as not only representing his disillusionment with Communism and its inability

to deal with the “colonial question” but taking up an increasingly localized and concessional view of change. We can also read, however, dialectically — or against the development of capitalism — Padmore’s lesson for the present. The unevenness of his work is productive for our understanding of not just the ideological contradictions of his historical moment, but our own. More particularly, in much the same way that *Britain* provides answers in 1936 to questions raised by *Pan-Africanism* in 1956, we are reminded that without addressing the economic and social set of pressures laid out by history, it is impossible to change the nature of capitalist exploitation in the present and future. Reading backward through Padmore allows us to see that the burden of history weighs heavy, particularly on the living.

Notes

1. C.L.R. James, "Notes on the Life of George Padmore," *The C.L.R. James Reader*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992) 288.
2. See Paul Trehwela, "A Critique: Pan-Africanism or Marxisms?" *Searchlight South Africa* 1.1, (September 1988). There South African critic Paul Trehwela describes the complexity of Padmore's legacy, even for Pan Africanism: "Among members of the Pan Africanist Congress, George Padmore has been rewarded as "the leading theoretician of Pan Africanism" and as "the Father of African Emancipation" (42). However, Trehwela also describes a general failure to recognize Padmore's importance, no doubt a historical and political problem stemming from Apartheid in the case of South Africa: "It is characteristic of the mental poverty of existing political tendencies in South Africa that Padmore is so little read, even by his co-thinkers among the Pan Africanists" (42).
3. See Cameron Duodu, "The Father of African Emancipation," *New African* 488 (September 2009); Cameron Duodu, "The Grandfather of African Liberation," *New African* 496, (June 2010); and Lester Lewis "George Padmore — 'The Forgotten Man of History,'" *New African* 408 (June 2002): 48.
4. See Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora 1919-1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013); Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2009); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Jeffrey S. Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2017).
5. Minkah Makalani's *In the Cause of Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) makes an interesting case for what he calls "a new crop of scholars who do not argue for two Padmores — the Padmore who pushed Comintern policies and the later Padmore who broke with the Comintern to take up pan-Africanist causes" (9). Among the many issues with this way of thinking, according to Makalani, is that "Padmore left the Comintern because he believed it had abandoned the cause of African liberation from British and French imperialism, a cause he had pursued through the ITUCNW. Rather than marking a turn to pan-Africanism, his break with the Comintern reflected a long-standing concern with pan-African liberation that took on a different valence in his writings but that had informed his activism well before 1933" (9). Makalani's description emphasizes Padmore's continued commitment to Pan-African liberation, a fact borne out by his work. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Padmore's break with the Comintern not only represents a break with the Communist Party, but also historical materialism in certain instances. My reading of the sometimes nationalist impulse in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* here attempts to address the complexities of this.
6. James, "Notes on the Life of George Padmore" 288.
7. See St. Clare Drake's comments in his lecture (co-edited with George Shepperson), "The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945 and the All African People's Congress, 1958," *Contributions in Black Studies* 8.5 (September 2008). There, Drake cites not only Padmore's turn away from "the Communist movement" (54) after a clash with the Soviet Party in 1933-1934, but also teases that Padmore,

who “had once been a revolutionary,” sometimes “slipped back into his old communist way of thinking” (44). See also Pennybacker *From Scottsboro to Munich*. Pennybacker usefully summarizes that Padmore “did not immediately gravitate to those more politically moderate than he,” (79) suggesting that Padmore did move to more moderate political positions later in life.

8. See James George Padmore and *Decolonization from Below* and Drake “The Fifth Pan-African Congress.” According to both Leslie James and St. Clare Drake, Padmore maintained a fraught relationship with Marxist theory throughout his life. As James describes it in his biography, “Padmore worked to rehabilitate his political career outside the bounds of the international communist movement. The complexity of Padmore’s engagement with Marxism and his commitment to Comintern thinking... belie any single conclusion because they stood the test of time in varied ways and in unforeseen moments” (35). Drake notes Padmore’s complicated understanding of the need to forge black solidarity before larger class solidarity as follows: “This was always Padmore’s kind of prediction: ‘You’ve got a chance to drive them to the left but they ain’t going to put down their tools to free you.’ The last time I saw Padmore was in 1959, just before he died, and he was still handling this same line. I think he died with this line.” Drake goes on to argue that “If you read *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* he’s still carrying a kind of anti-Soviet line in that book, but what he’s saying is he thinks you can be a Marxist-Socialist without necessarily carrying the line of any European or Asian Communist Party” (56).
9. Like that of Makalani, the diligent work of Adi, Pennybacker, James, and Ahlman on Padmore’s relationship with the Communist Party and his connection to Marxism is indispensable for any study of Pan-Africanism and the decolonizing movement more broadly. Adi’s historical accounts of the details and development of Pan-Africanism and its overlaps with communism, as well as the ITUCNW, while invaluable to this study, occasionally seem most intent on discrediting Padmore’s critiques of the Communist Party. The introduction to the book, for instance, begins with the claim that Padmore’s complaints against the Party “were easily dismissed” (*Pan Africanism* xiv). This is, in some ways, offset and even overcompensated for by Pennybacker when she emphasizes that Padmore’s participation in “later life in a propaganda-group” was the result of his “understanding of what global revolutionary politics required” and goes so far as to tell us that his “talents would readily have been appropriated by other movements...had his vision been weaker than his ambition. His wit and brilliance...alone would have made him a ready contender for celebrity” (*Scottsboro* 102). James and Ahlman, for their parts, offer excellent recovery projects on Padmore’s life and place in African liberation movements, with Ahlman focusing on Padmore’s time in the Ghana independence movement and his advising relationship with Kwame Nkrumah.
10. To her credit, Pennybacker’s linking of the particular decisions of the Communist Party in the 1930s with Marxism thinking and praxis aptly highlights the conflation of Communism and Marxism in not only Padmore’s critiques, but also in the intellectual and political imaginary of Marxists and non-Marxists alike.
11. James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 16.
12. It is important to note that Padmore wrote the three pieces I engage here for different purposes: *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* was a pamphlet commissioned by the Comintern, written for an audience of workers, black and white, around the world; *How Britain rules Africa* was written

particularly for British workers, in an attempt to provide information as well as create solidarity with black workers; *Pan-Africanism or Communism* was intended in much the same way as *Britain*, but for an American audience. Despite the different rhetorical intentions and audiences of these pieces, they each represent an important theoretical contribution in Padmore's canon, which now extends beyond their original design.

13. The lively and important debates from late 2017 between Asad Haider, Mark Lilla, and Ta'Neheisi Coates focus on the election of Donald Trump and the underlying connection to class and race, often understood by the latter two in terms of liberalism or identity politics, as crucial to any analysis of formal or political equality. Adolph Reed and Ellen Meiksins Wood's famous debate — which also featured Maurice Zeitlin and Steven Gregory — explores the extent to which unequal race relations are the product of the capitalist economic system.
14. Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (Verso, 2018) 24.
15. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Class, Race, and Capitalism," *Political Power and Social Theory* 15 (2002): 282.
16. Bertell Ollman, "Studying History Backward: A Neglected Feature of Marx's Materialist Conception of History," *The Writings of Bertell Ollman* (2013). http://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/di_cho8.php.
17. See Makalani's *In the Cause of Freedom*. There, Makalani frames the issue: "[Black radicals] confronted a U.S. Communist Party leadership that repeatedly proved either indifferent to questions of race or openly hostile to black radicals' organizing initiatives and ideas" (5).
18. See Kurt B. Young's "Towards an 8th Pan-African Congress: The Evolution of the Race-Class Debate," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16.2 (16 June 2011): 145-167. Young provides a useful summary of twentieth-century developments in what he calls "Black Marxism." He writes: "by the early part of the decade, leaders, activists, scholars and others representing various regions throughout the African world began to construct an alternative view of their post-WWI condition, the forces responsible for it, and the mechanisms for transforming their political and economic oppression... This alternative view concretized throughout the middle of the 20th century into a more mature set of statements about the nature of the Black experience. It became a type of 'Black Marxism'... an 'ideology which adapts the tenets of Marxism to the situation of African Americans'.... However, the regions of the African Diaspora that gravitated to one form of Marxism or another during this era were somewhat small such that by the 1940s, that energy seemed to decline" (150). Even in the instances where nationalist movements depended upon elements of Marxist theory, it should be noted that these movements emphasized much less than historical predecessors a class-based approach to understanding race and colonization.
19. See "An Open Letter to Earl Browder," *The Crisis* 42.10 (October 1935). Padmore articulates the reasons he believes he was ousted from the Party in the public forum of *The Crisis*, taking the opportunity to challenge the prevailing narrative. In "An Open Letter to Earl Browder," Padmore directly addresses the general secretary and chief executive of the American Communist Party to hold him accountable for the "lies and slanders" perpetrated against him, particularly the accusation that he had supported the "bourgeoisie of Liberia" (302). Padmore ends the piece with the biting criticism: "I can understand political differences between us, but when you accuse me of being a police agent this is going beyond all sense of decency and fair play. But I leave you in the hands of

the Negro masses. From now on there can be no more compromises; even the imperialists never dared to slander me in this way” (315). It is worth stating definitively that the anti-racist and anti-imperialist legacy of the Communist Party is still underemphasized if not blatantly ignored in historical annals. Despite this, the Communist Party made many complicated political partnerships following the Popular Front era. Among these were the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (as well as the subsequent German-Soviet Frontier Treaty), compromises with imperial countries, and problematic American political endorsements. These partnerships collectively resulted in some black Party members expressing distrust of and, in many cases, formal resignation from the Communist Party, which they had previously lauded for its anti-racism and anti-imperialism work. For more on the break of many black members from the Party during the 1930s, see Paul D. Amato “The Communist Party and Black Liberation in the 1930s,” *International Socialist Review* 01, (Summer 1997) <https://isreview.org/issue/1/communist-party-and-black-liberation-1930s>. Amato captures the sense of confusion and even contradiction surrounding black membership in the Communist Party in the late 1930s forward, a change he associates with Stalin: “In Harlem, the CP was instrumental in organizing a 25,000-strong demonstration of Blacks and Italian-Americans against Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia at a time when anti-Italian sentiment was high in the Black community. The CP’s anti-imperialism, however, was tarnished when the *New York Times* revealed that Stalin was selling oil and other material to Mussolini’s government. A number of Blacks defected from the CP as a result of this revelation.”

20. Jeffrey S. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2017) 30.
21. *Pan-Africanism* appears a year after the Bandung Conference of 1955. Bandung was the first “intercontinental conference of colored peoples, so-called colored peoples,” as President Sukarno of host country Indonesia would quip in his opening remarks. Bandung was notable for its open discussion of colonial influence and the practical ends to it. Padmore’s last work, then, appears in a time when Pan-Africanist thought was part of a larger, international tide toward decolonization.
22. See John D. Hargreaves, “Review of *Pan-Africanism or Communism* by George Padmore,” *African Studies Review* 15:3 (December 1972): 519. There he highlights the Cold War context of the piece, suggesting that Padmore intentionally framed the title as a choice, because “while colonial governments, in West Africa at least, had by 1956 begun to distinguish Pan-Africanism from Communism with more success than at the time of the 1948 Accra riots, influential sections of the European (and still more of the American) public... still needed to be taught the difference, if they were to acquiesce in the early transfer of power for which Africans were now suddenly able to hope.” See also Kivin P. Tunteng, “George Padmore’s Impact on Africa: A Critical Appraisal,” *Phylon* 35:1 (March 1974): 33-44.
23. George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: The Coming Struggle for Africa*, (Dodson, 1956) 317.
24. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 268.
25. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 285. Padmore relies, interestingly, on a direct quote from an editorial “Disturbing ‘Good’ Race Relations,” published in the October 1935 edition of *The Crisis*, in which an anonymous black author (perhaps Padmore himself) goes into great depth regarding the relationship between the Soviets and the ruling class of the Southern United States. The author fumes about the Soviet Communists: “They are always ranting about capitalist exploitation and

robbery and drawing themselves up in their holier-than-thou attitude, but whenever opportunity presents itself they are in the midst of the arms and munitions races, military alliances and the garnering of profits. All of which makes *The Crisis* continue to look with jaundiced eye upon the 'Self-Determination for the Black Belt' proposal of American communists...we maintain that the mere existence of the proposal proves that the idea of separateness is uppermost in the minds of the Red brain trust and not the idea of oneness. And in advancing this theory of separation Communists are hand in hand with the southern ruling class which they so delight to lambast" (305). While the quote from *Crisis* advocates a seemingly similar agenda to that offered by Padmore in the later analysis, as he continues in *Pan-Africanism*, his logic grows increasingly accommodationist.

26. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 290.
27. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 311.
28. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 290.
29. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 272.
30. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 342.
31. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 320. See also Peggy Ochoa's "The Historical Moments of Postcolonial Writing: Beyond Colonialism's Binary," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 15.2 (Fall 1996): 221. "If we accept the descriptions of colonialism and its effects offered by writers such as Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Abdul JanMohamed," she writes, "we will conclude that colonialism fosters dualistic, Manichean thinking." Ochoa continues, "the antithetical pairs advanced by colonial discourse do not allow for a record of alternative thinking because one of the most powerful distinctions between colonizer and colonized is the emphatic difference between a speaker with agency and the figure of the silent or silenced."
32. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 323.
33. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 316.
34. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 349.
35. For more on Padmore's ambivalence regarding the Soviet Union at this time, see Leslie James's *George Padmore* 97.
36. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 356.
37. Pennybacker writes, "Padmore placed weight upon both Soviet entry into the League of Nations in 1934 and Soviet oil sales to Mussolini in 1935, consistent with his earlier writings on Abyssinia" (101).
38. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 350.
39. *Pan-Africanism or Communism* 351.
40. St. Clare Drake describes Padmore's attempts to address the critiques of *Pan-Africanism* at the conferences: "It was organizing the two conferences that led Nkrumah and Padmore to a new Pan-African perspective. In the 1955 book regional federations had been visualized as first steps toward All-African unity, but organizing a conference that had people coming from Ethiopia as well as North Africa as well as other parts of Africa led to the proclamation of another slogan: 'The Sahara no longer divides us, it unites us...They were now talking about a united political entity as large as the U.S.A., the Soviet Union, or China...The perspective at this Pan-African conference...and its aftermath was not fifty African states, it was continental government of the continent'" ("The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945" 49-50).

41. "All-African People's Conference News Bulletin," *Resolution on Imperialism and Colonialism*, 1.4 (1959) 1-2.
42. "All-African People's Conference News Bulletin" 2.
43. Shepperson and Drake, "The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945" 50. At the Conference, Fanon "made a speech in French denouncing the whole conference call about non-violence, saying that this was a betrayal of his brothers who were dying for African freedom here today."
44. "The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945" 50.
45. "The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945" 50.
46. James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 143: Padmore's "demand for national parties, and his support for Nkrumah's nation-building projects, sat uneasily with his transnational, modern vision of postcolonial Africa." This results in a complicated theory of federations that often does not fully translate to an international (as opposed to transnational) vision.
47. *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 2.
48. *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 143.
49. *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 143.
50. *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below* 143.
51. My description of possibility and energy includes the capacity for disagreement regarding concepts, as well. In note 26 above, *The Crisis* engages a critique of Soviet and American communism, while also adhering to the principles of theoretical communism. We might think of both James W. Ford's piece "The Communist's Way Out for the Negro," and *The Crisis* editorial, then, as engaging a conversation with the aim of keeping alive radical potential.
52. James W. Ford "The Communist's Way Out for the Negro," *The Journal of Negro Education* 5.1 (1936): 88.
53. Ford "The Communist's Way Out for the Negro" 88.
54. George Padmore, *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* (Moscow: R.I.L.U. 1931) 6.
55. Padmore, *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 6.
56. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 6.
57. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 7.
58. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 111.
59. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 111.
60. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 68.
61. Adolph Reed, "Marx, Race, And Neoliberalism," *New Labor Forum* 22.1 (2013): 49.
62. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 5-6.
63. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 5.
64. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 5.
65. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 55.
66. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 124.
67. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 124.
68. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 126.
69. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 126.
70. George Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1936) I.
71. Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* I.

72. See “Book Notes,” *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 18.3 (December 1937): 293-296. *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*’s review of Padmore’s book highlights the economic foundation Padmore tracks in his work. See also R.J. Bunche’s “Review: *How Britain Rules Africa* by George Padmore,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 6.1 (1937). There, Bunche describes *Britain* as “lack[ing] nothing in terms of honest, frank (brutal, at times) appraisal, and pungent criticism. The perspective is definitely that of the African subject peoples, and their case is ably defended with historical, political, statistical, and human analysis” (75). Bunche continues, “The Africans, Mr. Padmore states, are proletariats” and their “burden he finds to be two-fold — class and race” (75).
73. *How Britain Rules Africa* 19.
74. *How Britain Rules Africa* 23.
75. *How Britain Rules Africa* 24.
76. *How Britain Rules Africa* 32.
77. *How Britain Rules Africa* 3.
78. *How Britain Rules Africa* 7.
79. *How Britain Rules Africa* 333.
80. *How Britain Rules Africa* 333.
81. *How Britain Rules Africa* 333.
82. *How Britain Rules Africa* 333. Here, Padmore argues that while “‘Colonial-nationalism’ cannot be put on the same plane with ‘imperialist-nationalism,’” nationalism movements must also consider the different forms of “indigenous capitalist classes” as well as the “homogenous” versus “developed” class divisions within less developed and more industrialized colonies, respectively.
83. *How Britain Rules Africa* 332.
84. *How Britain Rules Africa* 332.
85. *How Britain Rules Africa* 391.
86. *How Britain Rules Africa* 388.
87. *How Britain Rules Africa* 387.
88. *How Britain Rules Africa* 394.
89. *How Britain Rules Africa* 394.
90. Imre Szeman, “Conscience and the Common,” *Mediations: Before and After Neoliberalism* 26.1-2 (2012). <https://www.mediationsjournal.org/articles/conscience-and-the-common>.
91. Wood, “Class, Race, and Capitalism” 282.
92. “Class, Race, and Capitalism” 278.
93. “Class, Race, and Capitalism” 280.
94. Adolph Reed, “Rejoinder,” *Political Power and Social Theory* Vol. 15 (2002) 310.
95. Reed, “Rejoinder” 310.
96. Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and The Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2012) 150.
97. *Mistaken* 23-24.
98. Asad Haider, “Idylls of the Liberal: The American Dreams of Mark Lilla and Ta’Nehisi Coates,” *Viewpoint Magazine* (September 11, 2017). <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/09/11/idylls-of-the-liberal-the-american-dreams-of-mark-lilla-and-ta-nehisi-coates/>.

99. Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (Verso 2018) 109.
100. Haider, *Mistaken Identity* 113.
101. *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* 7.

Towards a Renewal of Israeli Marxism, or Peace as a Vanishing Mediator

Oded Nir

The Israeli political left has been in deep crisis for over a decade, shrinking by now to virtual non-existence.¹ The onset of this crisis is usually traced back to the eruption of the second *intifada*, or armed Palestinian resistance, which signaled the unofficial end of 1990s peace-making era, dragging into deep existential crisis a political left for which "peace" named not only a historical goal but also an intricate utopian imaginary. Former Israeli Prime minister Ehud Barak's declaration following the 2000 Camp David talks that "there is no partner for peace" seems from today's vantage point to have performatively buried peace as a political goal. No matter what one thinks about it today — that Israel was never serious about achieving it; that it is still being pursued by one or both sides; that it was never achievable in the first place — it is clear that peace has disappeared from the landscape of Israeli politics as a goal behind which a left could unite, or as a concept flexible enough to accommodate many Israelis' hopes. Instead, peace has become a permanent feature of the Israeli political system, to which all Israeli political parties are in principle committed, a kind of permanent spot at one's political peripheral vision to which not much attention is given anymore. The grand historical goal and its accompanying temporality and utopian horizon have been replaced by a kind of permanent securitization, the constant terrorizing or pacification of the Palestinians by Israel, the horrors of which are explored extensively in, for example, Eyal Weizman's writing.² The resulting temporality of Israeli reality can be characterized as what Eric Cazdyn calls "chronic time," from which the possibility not only of cure but that of death itself have been removed, generating a homogeneous, predictable, alternative-less present.³

It is this vanishing of peace as an effective goal from the landscape of Israeli politics that will concern me in this essay. The renewal of the Israeli Left stands or falls precisely with the way we narrate this disappearance of peace, to which we have already mentioned a number of unsatisfactory responses: to argue that Israel never truly pursued it; to abandon it as an unachievable dream; and to ignore it

altogether, focusing instead on “social” issues. To these we can add now another more recent response, which seems to characterize some of the Marxist or socialist viewpoints. Namely, that the pursuit of peace was only a convenient illusion, under whose cover Israeli society was thoroughly neoliberalized, with very little resistance. The privatization of previously state-owned or controlled institutions, including education, health, communication and others had massively accelerated in Israel in the late 1980s, only a few years before the Peace Process started, and it has continued uninterrupted throughout the 1990s.⁴ Excellent commentators such as Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan, Dani Gutwein, and more recently Eran Kaplan, have tended to see the peace process as nothing but a convenient front for dismantling the Israeli welfare state.⁵ In Gutwein’s account, on which I will have more to say in what follows, peace as a political project ends up simply being a cover for pursuing material middle-class interests, which for him align with neoliberalization.

This last approach to peace as a political goal has the merit of situating the Peace Process within a larger process social transformation. However, the resulting narrative seems to be that which critics usually denounce as so-called vulgar Marxism, in which superstructural tendencies are seen as mere reflections or expressions of the truly determining instance — the economic base or infrastructure. Nor is this foray into vulgar Marxism new to the Israeli Marxist thought. Another clear case is Tamar Gozansky’s *The Formation of Capitalism in Palestine* (1986), one of the most important Hebrew sources (if not the most important) for anyone who wishes to understand the historical emergence of capitalism in the area. In the book, Gozansky takes a similar stance with regards to the pre-state collectivist Zionist settlements — treating their revolutionary pathos and imaginary as nothing but petite-bourgeois ideological cover for the hidden, real economic process, namely the establishment of the conditions for capitalist accumulation.⁶ Gozansky’s account here finds an unlikely ally in non-Marxist analyses of Zionism from the 1980s and 1990s, such as Zeev Sternhell’s, in which Zionist socialist aspirations are seen as convenient cover for colonialist nation-building.⁷ We will touch further on the interpretation of Zionism much more extensively in what follows. For now, it is important only to register that the narrative in which the Peace Process is simply a cover for neoliberalization reduces that process to an agentless reflection of economic processes, and its believers to dupes.

Dissatisfaction with this “vulgar-Marxist” account of the peace process demands that we try to modify it. The first part of this essay constitutes an attempt to suggest one such narrative modification of our account of the emergence and disappearance of peace as a political goal in Israel. But a short note about the explosive issues on which this essay touches is in order at this point. Positions regarding Palestine/Israel tend to be strongly entrenched. As a result, any mention of the subject must conspicuously signal its belonging to this or that camp, or it risks immediately coming under the suspicion of actually belonging to the ranks of the enemy (knowingly or not) and is received with very little patience. This lack of charity is perhaps exacerbated by the

crisis of the humanities and social sciences academia, which tends to form academic subgroups suspicious of each other where once there was a wider collective project. I would therefore like to emphasize that I have no intentions here to rehabilitate Israeli nationalism, or to stage a defense of it, or to deny the oppression of Palestinians at the hands of Zionists and later the state of Israel. So I hope the following can be seen not as a sinister attempt to rehabilitate what we rightly reject, but rather can be considered an earnest attempt to challenge the mainstream Leftist view of Israel and its history. Given the decline of any Leftist project in Israel — compared to the 1990s — I hope such an attempt can be tolerated and deemed acceptable in principle, even if one remains unconvinced of its conclusions. As I hope will become clear, Leftist convictions about the colonial violence that were (and are) an inseparable part of the Israel's history and present, are very much preserved and reaffirmed in this attempt to challenge this mainstream narrative.

And I should use this opportunity also to note the limitations of the following argument. I will here be considering the rise of post-Zionism and the pursuit of peace as political forces within Israeli society. My points of reference — both intellectual and political — will be almost entirely Israeli, and my conclusion about the historical function of these will hold only for that context. The history of Israel considered from an American vantage point, and the international Leftist stance towards Israel, remain outside the scope of this paper. Surely, Israel and its history hold a very different function in the non-Israeli context (one that has to do with an estranged attempt to think our own non-Israeli situation, in a Brechtian or Darko-Suvin-like manner). I will not in this essay be able to explore this more international perspective. That an essay internal to the Israeli imaginary should appear in English and outside Israel is another matter worth discussing at a different opportunity. Another limitation is the narrowing-down of the scope of post-Zionism to positions articulated explicitly in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is a limitation common to many discussions of post-Zionism but that is nonetheless problematic. I will not be able to expand the scope to include positions that echo post-Zionist critiques in areas such as the Mizrachi counter-narrative to Israeli national hegemony (whose most well-known academic representative is perhaps Ella Shohat); or ones centered around a critique of religious identity (as in Daniel Boyarin's writing); or any other post-Zionisms which center on other identity categories. The expansion of the argument below to these other varieties is not difficult to make (for the points of criticism raised hold true in these cases too), but I will not be able to do so explicitly in this essay.

The new narrative will have the advantage of not reducing peace to mere ineffectual illusion, while simultaneously leaving intact its relation to the transformation of Israeli capitalism. It is this modification that will allow me to suggest the contours of a new interpretation of Zionism and Israeli nationalism, one that could prove productive for a renewal of the Israeli political Left (while retaining the urgent goal of Palestinian liberation). The theoretical framework that will help me offer this new

narrative option for the rise and fall of peace is that of the vanishing mediator, first developed by Fredric Jameson in his essay on Max Weber and the rise of Protestantism, generalized and elaborated later by Slavoj Žižek.⁸ Jameson's formulation allows us not only to avoid both the vulgar "materialist" account of historical transformation and the idealist one (namely, that history is simply the realization of certain ideas). It also, as Žižek emphasizes, suggests that the pursuit of the goal that ends up vanishing (in our case, the political pursuit of peace) is a step without which the neoliberalization of Israel could never have been achieved.⁹

What I will try to show is that the pursuit of peace happens to follow the vanishing mediator narrative form. Narratives that unfold according to the vanishing mediator form advance along two axes: means and ends, or infrastructure and superstructure (to use the Marxist vocabulary). The narrative form here has three distinct moments: the first is an explicitization of older ends — ideological goals of the previous system that are suddenly thrown into sharp relief. In the next moment, new means are elaborated in order to achieve this older goal, replacing older means which seem to have failed to serve their purpose. In the last moment, the older goal itself vanishes, leaving us with the new means, a new socio-economic infrastructure. In Jameson's essay, whose subject matter is the rise of Protestantism and its relation to the "infrastructural" formation of capitalism, the first moment is that of Luther (in which the older religious goals are stressed and the existing means condemned); the second one corresponds to Calvin (in which the new rationalization of means is elaborated), and the third — in which religious goals disappear altogether, leaving us with nothing but the new means or infrastructure, capitalist social relations — is simply modern society. It is in these moments of historical transformation that the effectiveness of the superstructure is revealed, or as Jameson puts it: "Thus, the superstructure may be said to find its essential function in the mediation of changes in the infrastructure... and to understand it in this way, as 'vanishing mediator,' is to escape the false problems of priority or of cause and effect in which both vulgar Marxism and the idealist position imprison us."¹⁰

It is important to emphasize that I am not here elaborating some immutable historical law according to which all change takes place. My claim is much more modest: that it is easy to narrate the pursuit of peace in 1990s Israel according to the vanishing mediator schema, and that this narrative option solves all kinds of problems that exist in other narrative options, some of which I discussed above. But the purpose of this essay is not merely to offer a new narrative for the pursuit of peace and its disappearance. Rather, I also aim to show that this new understanding of the peace-making years can transform our understanding of our own present, as I will elaborate later.

The new narrative of the rise of peace that I am suggesting starts with the emergence of peace as a political goal for the Israeli Left. It is important to notice, for our purposes, that "peace" is not a completely new goal to Zionism and Israel.

Rather, it comes up marginally in the history of Israel. We can trace peace as a goal to the peace talks that took place after the 1948 war, and even further back into the pre-statehood years and the different attempts to reach an agreement between Zionists and Palestinians over political control of Palestine and immigration into it (including proposals for the division of Palestine, but also more forgotten ones for establishing a bi-national state).¹¹ And even further back: peace is (imaginarily) achieved in Herzl's 1902 utopian novel *Altneuland* almost as a bi-product of syndicalist or socialist-utopian social form of the new utopian society in Palestine.¹² Crucially, in all of these earlier cases peace was a goal subservient to a larger collective project, and not the primary political aim in its own right.

One can argue that peace reemerges as a leading goal only in the 1980s, with the "Peace Now" movement coming into the center of public consciousness after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon (which culminated in Israeli cultural memory in the mass protests that followed the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps). It is at that moment that the old goal of peace suddenly comes into sharp relief, becoming a collective goal in its own right, a *sine qua non* of achieving any other national goal — in short, an unshakable political prioritization of "choosing the path of peace," as it was put in the officers' letter that founded Peace Now.

This way of narrating the emergence of peace as a political goal in Israel fits perfectly with the first moment of the vanishing mediator narrative structure. To repeat, in this moment, an old peripheral goal is reasserted with greater force, accusing the older way of doing things of not pursuing it efficiently. The Israeli protests following the massacres and the emergence of Peace Now fit the bill perfectly.

The reemergence of peace as a political goal was followed by the invention of new means to achieve this goal, after having denounced older attempts to achieve it as ineffective. This new way of pursuing peace is invented in the late 1980s. What takes place is essentially a denationalization of the way peace is to be pursued: its freeing from what was hitherto seen as "Zionist," ending its mediation by the institutional framework of the state. Denationalization should be taken here as a transcoding term (much like "rationalization" in Jameson's vanishing mediator narrative form), since it operates on two levels simultaneously: first on the level of the purely economic — in which it designates the onset of deregulation, privatization, and the demise of state-led capitalist development in Israel after the 1980s. And secondly on the level of knowledge production—where the older system of national knowledge is to be interrogated and revised (if not altogether exploded) in order to facilitate the production of knowledge that will better facilitate the achievement of peace. It is here that we will have to consider the Israeli intellectual trend usually known by the name "Post-Zionism" as that which forges precisely this kind of new knowledge. Post-Zionism is usually associated with the writing of the so-called Israeli New Historians and critical sociologists, such as Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and Uri Ram. It is in their writing that the Israeli national narrative, or the "Zionist metanarrative" as

Gershon Shaked calls it, comes under scrutiny.¹³ The national interpretation of Israeli past comes under fire here from all directions, as Laurence Silberstein's extensive survey emphasizes: the national story according to which Zionism is a peace-loving liberation movement is replaced by its reading as a colonial enterprise; The oppressive nature of the nation building project—towards Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews, Women, and other groups replaces in their account the myth of the national melting-pot. Most importantly for my purposes, the Post-Zionists insisted on the historical failure to achieve peace by national means, constituting a kind of utilitarian rejection of Zionism which is only later succeeded by condemning Zionism morally, as Silberstein and recently Kaplan emphasize.¹⁴

Benny Morris's 1988 brief essay in *Tikkun*, considered sometimes to be a founding document of the Israeli New Historiography, can be taken as exemplary of this utilitarian condemnation of Zionism and the Israeli nation for their failure to achieve peace. Morris briefly outlines the research programs of the New Historians, emphasizing their explosion of the Israeli national narrative, indicting the national leadership for a "general lack of emphasis on achieving peace" after the 1948 war.¹⁵ Opposite the national narrative, Morris concludes:

The New History is one of the signs of a maturing Israel... What is now being written about Israel's past seems to offer us a more balanced and truthful view of the country's history than what has been offered hitherto. It may in some obscure way serve the purposes of peace and reconciliation between the warring tribes of that land.¹⁶

It is here that Morris enacts a kind of reconciliation of morality — truth-telling and scientific objectivity — with a utilitarianism whose aim is peace. The New History according to Morris both usurps the ethical stance usually claimed by older national historiography, and simultaneously provides us with a narrative that is better at facilitating the achievement of peace.

This denationalization of knowledge for the goal of peace can be detected in many of the writings of the Post-Zionists. In the introduction to their 1994 *Palestinians: The Making of a People*, Israeli sociologists Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal explicitly tie the scholarly purpose of the book — to provide a socio-historical account of the emergence of the Palestinian nation since the early nineteenth-century — to an effort to "view the Palestinians not as anthropological curiosities, but as social group deeply affecting the future of the Jews," the acknowledgment of which has a clear purpose:

Hovering behind all this work has been an awareness that mutual Jewish-Palestinian denial will disappear slowly, if ever. Still, recent events have made one thing clear: The Palestinian dream of self-determination will likely be realized only within the assent of a secure, cohesive Israel, and

the Israeli dream of acceptance throughout the Middle East will likely need Palestinian approval.¹⁷

The reconciliatory purpose of the volume, even if not explicitly stated, is clear, as well as the accusation that previous (national) knowledge or recognition of the Palestinian “other” is tantamount to outright denial of its existence.

With the example of Kimmerling and Migdal’s book we have already imperceptibly moved from a denationalization of knowledge in a more negative sense — the debunking of the national narrative highlighted in Morris’s essay — to a more positive one that involves the production of an alternative form of knowing, one whose making does not occur solely within the confines of national institutions. It is not pointless to note that Kimmerling and Migdal emphasize in their introduction that the book is a result of many years of working alongside Palestinians outside the usual academic institutional setting for Israeli academics; nor is it purely accidental that the work of the prominent New Historians, especially in its early stages, was produced in academic institutions outside Israel, as Silberstein reminds us. The exact point is that the site of peacemaking is not the national institutional framework. Thus the relation to the Palestinian other is no longer to be invented and managed within national institutions (universities being part of that institutional framework). Rather, this mediating structure is to be dissolved and a (seemingly) less mediated, more direct, relation is to be formed. It is not a coincidence that in this period first-hand accounts of interacting with Palestinians, such as David Grossman’s *The Yellow Wind* became huge successes.¹⁸ What Žižek sees as the intensification of the older superstructure in this second moment and what Jameson sees as the freeing of rationalization to take root outside the monasteries everywhere in the social structure under Calvinism is precisely what takes place when peace-making becomes something to be pursued outside the institutions of the Israeli state — which is to say, everywhere.

Inseparable from this denationalization of the means of peacemaking is the transition from a utilitarian approach — seeing the older means as ineffective — to a much more personalized ethical commitment to the production of denationalized knowledge. The imagined relation to the Palestinian other is no longer to be mediated by nationally-produced knowledge; rather, every subject is responsible for producing this knowledge: noticing the everyday repressed expressions of the oppression of Palestinians in Israeli reality; knowing local histories of Palestinian deportation and expropriation alternative; reading the landscape for signs of past Palestinian dwelling — all of these become part of an individualized ethical commitment to peace, which we will not be able to address extensively here. The well-documented debate between Morris and Ilan Pappé revolves precisely around this point. While for Morris the ethical task of the New Historians stands or falls with their adherence to objective positivist truth, for Pappé the acceptance of alternative narratives into one’s own becomes a moral obligation that comes before any objective search for empirical truth

(which is by no means abandoned by Pappé, as others argue).¹⁹ It should be clear how different Pappé's narrative relativism is from that proliferation of narratives whose origin is postmodernism's incredulity towards metanarratives, to adopt Lyotard's terminology: the former is still working in the service of a clear metanarrative. The common association of Post-Zionism with postmodernism is therefore too hasty and inaccurate, as others comment.²⁰ Instead, we should see Post-Zionists' opening up of the field to alternative perspectives as at least somewhat different than the postmodern one, since the former's "relativism" is simply a clearing of the way, the initial action on which the creation of a new historical goal is premised. The postmodern freedom from history or sheer multiplicity of narratives is therefore only a first moment in Pappé's own thinking—exemplified by the linear, closure-producing narrative of books such as *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.²¹ Pappé's position ends up elaborating a whole private ethics, a code of personal conduct, that should be adopted by anyone that shares the goal of peace — an ethical position that is "free" from the mediation of national institutions of knowledge production.

Yet it is not only knowledge production or new personal ethics that constitute this grand denationalization of means. We should also register, however briefly, the ways in which denationalization operates on the level of social form itself. Again — one should not look here for an explicit connection between peace and neoliberal commitments or goals. Rather, what is crucial here is the Post-Zionist assault on anything that has to do with state institutions in the name of peace, which then sets the stage for the private market to take over what was once mediated by the state alone. Important in this regard is the critique of Israeli housing, health, national broadcasting, job placement, education, and all other welfare-state services and determinants of social life. Thus, the connection forged by critical Post-Zionist sociological studies always emphasizes that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not simply an external circumstance or condition to which Israeli society must respond, but that it is rather "constitutive of the Israeli political-social order" itself, to quote Yagil Levy and Yoav Peled, two prominent voices within Post-Zionist sociology.²² Levy and Peled's critique of functionalist Israeli sociology is a thinly-veiled critique of Israeli national sociology:

What Israelis usually refer to as "the conflict" is viewed by functionalist scholars as essentially external to the Israeli social-political order. The conflict is rooted, they believe, in regional international circumstances encountered by the Zionist project, both before and after 1948. Thus they have never undertaken an etiological study of the conflict, which would examine its development in conjunction with the evolution of the Israeli social order, and the mutual conditioning of the two. Rather, what functionalist research has done is look for the effects of the conflict on Israeli society, which is seen as only reacting to it as an external force.²³

To see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the totalizing kernel of all Israeli social reality is therefore the centerpiece of post-Zionist sociology — one through which the failure to treat all social evils can always be related to this conflict, or be its internal social expression. It is on this connection that peace as a utopian imaginary hinges: its achievement becoming a condition for reconciling all other social antagonisms.

Perhaps the most important connection between the conflict and the internal workings of Israeli society is the one that has to do with forging a new conception of the function of the military in Israeli society. Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling's writing on Israeli militarism is of paramount importance. If the Israeli military has been viewed until the post-Zionists as the pinnacle of the national "melting pot," successfully neutralizing previous social contradictions in producing national subjects, Kimmerling reverses the picture. In his account, the militarization of Israeli society means first and foremost that other social problems are left untreated as a result of the army's primacy as social institution. This primacy of the military is naturalized, according to Kimmerling:

The important determinant factor here is whether or not the military mind turns into an organizing principle in ideological, political and institutional state realms, and whether or not strategic considerations (defined as 'necessities' to actual physical survival) become ascendant at the expense of all other considerations — Moshe Dayan summarized this situation with a turn of phrase when he explained at the start of the 1970s that 'it is impossible to bear two banners at the same time' — the reference is to the 'security banner' as opposed to the banner of social-welfare and other societal goals.²⁴

Kimmerling's quick overview of the structuring of Israel's economy predominantly around the military's needs is here meant to drive home his point about the primacy of military interests in Israel's internal social structuring. The military's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict then provides us with the link between internal social strife and the external goal of peace. It is the nation under which this material and social commitment to the military is to be preserved, materially marginalizing all other social problems. National institutions come to signify the reproduction of social suffering, rather than the collective attempt to cure it. As we said before, we should not expect Kimmerling to recommend the privatization of the military, for "privatization" is a term already encoded with a notion of social change oriented towards a different goal. Rather, Kimmerling's conception of the social role of the military — becoming in his account the reproducer of social problems rather than their cure — is a perfect attempt to denationalize the entire field of mediating social relations. Arguing for the need to roll back the state's management of this or that social function, paves the way for pursuing neoliberal reforms with no little or no resistance.

The much later privatization of military functions (that checkpoints between Israel and the West bank are manned by private security, but also increasingly the buying from the outside of many other functions that used to be internal to the military itself) has its origin precisely in this initial drive towards denationalization.

Importantly, we should notice that this denationalization, which follows the emergence of peace as a goal, fits perfectly within the narrative form of the vanishing mediator. As we mentioned initially, the second moment of this narrative form involves the elaboration of new means for achieving the goal that reemerged in the first moment. As I have tried to show, this is precisely what happens in the case of post-Zionism: elaborating denationalized means to achieve the goal of peace. It is here that the narrative I have been elaborating avoids seeing peace as simply a convenient illusion or sinister cover for pursuing privatization. Rather than simply being an illusion used to dupe the masses, the superstructural or ideological drive towards peace plays an effective role in the dismantling of the nationally-planned Israeli economy in accordance with Washington-Consensus neoliberalism — even as the peace movement misrecognizes its historical agency, as in the well-known examples of the Jacobins or Protestantism. As Žižek claims, the superstructural intensification that characterizes the second moment of the vanishing mediator should be seen as itself a result of the contradictions ripping apart the socioeconomic base — an intensification expressive of the fact that the old superstructure can no longer help contain these contradictions. It brings about the destruction of the old system, even as it still operates under its banners.²⁵

The last event of the narrative that I am suggesting is nothing but the disappearance of peace as an effective goal from the landscape of Israeli politics, the narration of which was the goal set in the beginning of this essay. This element also fits nicely with the vanishing mediator narrative form, which ends, as I mentioned above, with the disappearance of the goal. The vanishing of the old goal whose reemergence set things in motion is evidence not of a failure, but of the success of historical agency of those who pursued it, of their effectiveness in enacting the transition to a new system. The disappearance of what Žižek calls (following Badiou) the contingent act that founded the new system — in this context, the political drive towards peace — is the sure sign of that political project's success in exerting historical agency (even if not in the way it had imagined itself to do so).²⁶

We can therefore narrate 1990s Israeli peacemaking as a vanishing mediator for the neoliberalization of Israeli society — the pursuit of an older goal that had been effective in bringing about, unintentionally, the transformation of social relations. This narrative of 1990s peacemaking in Israel is a more satisfying account of it than any of those that we briefly surveyed earlier. For here the pursuit of peace is not denied historical efficacy. Nor is its relation to material transformation denied. Finally, peace's sudden disappearance or ineffectiveness is here admitted and accounted for. Yet this essay will remain somewhat of a sterile intellectual exercise if it ended

here, with the simple demonstration that the pursuit of peace can be narrated along the lines of the vanishing mediator narrative structure. So one should now register that we have, perhaps without noticing it, allowed temporality to inflect what is accepted as a timeless truth by many on the Left: The Post-Zionist view of Zionism as a colonial or otherwise repressive enterprise. In the narrative I suggested above, this timelessness has been questioned. If Post-Zionism is to be viewed as the intellectual “branch” of 1990s Israeli peacemaking, it follows that its interpretation of Zionism had risen to serve the purpose of the peacemaking project. Thus, this post-Zionist narrative might be useless today after peace’s vanishing as a goal. That, then, puts us in a rather uncomfortable position if we continue to deepen and further elaborate the post-Zionist position (which should remind us that all abstract ethics tend to be the feeble remnants of collective projects). To be sure, viewing Zionism as an oppressive colonial force was not invented by Post-Zionist intellectuals. Yet the adoption of this interpretation as the political umbrella under which the Israeli Left is to be united (and that more or less defines how Zionism and Israel are judged by leftists around the world) is traceable to the late-eighties and the rise of Post-Zionism. Seeing the 1990s Peace Process as vanishing mediator makes visible the historical contingency of the interpretation of Zionism that this Leftist project produced, an interpretation whose historical moment has passed. As a consequence, one is freed to construct a new Leftist understanding of Zionism and Israel — and with it a radical reinterpretation of everything that is related to it, just as the Post-Zionists themselves have done.

In the remainder of this essay, I will try to present the contours of a new interpretation of Zionist history. I will periodize the existing understandings of Zionism to have two previous moments. The first I will call the national interpretation, according to which the establishment of Israel is the result of Zionism’s success, the latter considered a collective project aimed at national liberation of Jews. This interpretation was hegemonic since the establishment of Israel until the late-eighties. The second one is the Post-Zionist understanding of Zionism. Here, too, the establishment of Israel is the result of Zionism’s success; yet here Zionism (and the state it has produced) is considered an oppressive collective project.²⁷ In contrast to these, the new interpretation that I will suggest below re-narrates the story as follows: The establishment of Israel was not the outcome of the success of the Zionist collective project, but rather the result of its failure. That both previous readings of Zionism will find their moments of truth in this narrative will become clear in what follows. More importantly, as I try to show, this new reading renders the present once again a space of historical practice, or makes it possible again to view the contemporary condition as an ongoing collective project over which we can collectively exert agency. But one must begin with trying to answer a much more modest question: if the Zionist project is now to be considered a failure, what, exactly, did it fail to achieve?

Borochov, or the Point of View of Totality

The answer to this question will initially seem anything but a new one: Zionism should be thought of as a collective project aimed at providing European Jews with agency over their own lives — agency conceived as a reconstituted collective subjectivity, or self-determination. This does not mean that all Zionists pronounce their goal to be self-determination; rather, their explicit goals can always be seen as forms or thematizations of this deeper goal of self-determination. In this sense, one should distinguish self-determination from its specifically nationalist variant. One should maintain a hermeneutical tension between the explicit, stated goal of this or that variant of Zionism, and self-determination as this stated goal's interpretation — which necessarily remains hidden (much like Freudian dream content). This would mean that even when Zionists explicitly mention self-determination as a goal, they are not referring to what I mean by this term (be it self-determination as cultural autonomy from the Czar, or struggling for self-sufficiency of this or that settlement). In other words, A certain interpretive distance has to be maintained between their use of the term to designate this or that political goal, and my hermeneutical use of it here. These belong to two different registers of the conceptualization of the problem (echoing in this regard that strange Freudian interpretive “rule” according to which everything is about sex, except when sex appears explicitly in the material to be analyzed). This separation of the register of overt content from the hidden one has the following important implication for the argument that I am making. By positing self-determination as the true (hidden) goal of all Zionism, I am not preferring one branch of Zionism (those that emphasized precisely that as a goal) over the others. No, in the interpretation presented here, all Zionists are equally present before us as a thematization of — or a complex figure for — this goal of self-determination, regardless of their usage of the term “self-determination” itself.

My first interpretive scene (and others surely could have been chosen) will take us through an all too brief examination of the writing of one of Zionism's most interesting theoreticians, Ber Borochov. I will focus on the eclectic thinker's more Marxist texts from 1905-1907, the most comprehensive of which is *Our Platform*, written for the Workers of Zion party.²⁸ Generally, Borochov is thought to have “synthesized” historical materialist analysis with Zionism by arguing that Zionist colonization is an inevitable result of capitalist development, an argument on which I will have more to say in what follows. One should briefly mention the way Borochov is usually read in the two previous interpretive traditions that I have mentioned (the national one and the post-Zionist one), if only to make clearer their contrast with the new interpretation I am offering here. The national interpretation of Borochov generally highlights his advocacy of the establishment of a Jewish territorial autonomy in Palestine, minimizing or neutralizing his insistence that “our ultimate goal is socialism,” or his debunking of any notion of national interest that exists separately and beyond class interest.²⁹ Here, to give one example, belongs Gutwein's attempt to

argue that Borochov's "Marxist" period should be chalked up to Borochov's political maneuvering rather than seen as his genuine position at the time.³⁰ Here, too, belongs Matityahu Mintz's detailed exploration of Borochov's position in terms of the political struggles within Zionism, going as far as arguing that Borochov's 1905 essay "Class Moments of the National Question" posits the primacy of national consciousness over class consciousness — in direct contradiction with Borochov's actual argument in the essay.³¹ If the national interpretation downplays Borochov's Marxist commitments and celebrates his national ones, the Post-Zionist one presents us with the diametrically opposed position. Namely, that Borochov's great theoretical contributions to social science should be separated from his arguments for Zionist settlement of Palestine, considered by Yoav Peled — whom I take here to be representative of the Post Zionist position — to be worthless propaganda.³² It is clear why Borochov has never garnered much attention from Post-Zionists: for a "purer" analysis of class and national conflicts one could simply turn to other thinkers.

The symmetrical antagonism between Peled's Post-Zionist position and Gutwein's national one should be evident here: What is significant about Borochov's position for Gutwein (the call to colonize Palestine) becomes merely cynically utilitarian or propagandistic for Peled. What the latter considers worth saving in Borochov (namely, the universal Marxism or social theory) is merely political maneuvering for the former. In this essay, I will not be able to examine each of these positions at any detail, beyond merely noticing the unsurprising centrality of Borochov's view of Jewish national aspirations to the disagreement between them. What my new interpretation will suggest in this regard is that one should try to refrain from reading the category of "nation" in Borochov's writing from within our set of cultural attitudes — in which the failures of the Israeli nation-state tend to make us suspicious of any support of the nation. Rather, one should notice that from Borochov's perspective, particularly that of 1905-7, Jewish territorial autonomy was very much a site of imaginary speculation, of utopian construction and remote possibility, rather than a concrete historical entity.

It therefore becomes more pressing to suggest a different interpretation for this central category of Borochov's thought. I would like here to propose that one read Borochov's usage of "nation" as what produces a movement of thought the appropriate term for which will only become important within Marxism in the writing of Georg Lukács, namely, the thinking process that tries to achieve "the point of view of totality."³³ What hides behind "nation" is no other than the working of the capitalist system is precisely what Borochov hints at when he argues that

The relationship between a specific oppressor and a specific oppressed person does not play an important role in national conflict: the personal character of national clashes is here bound in immediacy with the impersonal nature of national oppression. While the anonymous,

systemic nature of class exploitation is revealed only after a lengthy inquiry, national oppression exhibits its impersonal nature immediately. Thus, the oppressed Jew does not blame the single non-Jew that stands before him for his troubles; No, he is oppressed by a whole social group, and initially he cannot fathom his social relation to this group.³⁴

It is important that we notice the double meaning of “nation” for Borochov. “Nation” is the form of appearance taken by systematicity itself for the individual Jew: national oppression seems immediately impersonal. But, at the same time, the oppressed individual is stuck in this immediacy: she cannot, through the category of the nation itself, understand her social relation to other national groups. It is in this way that “nation” becomes a code or a placeholder for something like the capitalist totality itself: it both signifies immediately the systematic, structurally-causal nature of capitalist oppression while at the same time the category of “nation” itself, *as a placeholder*, stands in the way of mapping one’s insertion into the real social relations of that totality. Obvious here is that “national” oppression does not constitute merely an additional oppressive dimension of Jewish life, one that has to be simply added to the class exploitation and oppression. Rather, national difference is both necessary and something to be overcome: it is necessary since it preserves a sense of systematicity and it needs to be overcome if Jews are to understand their position within that system. It is a matter of course that “Jew” as a signifier stands to lose its sense as this dialectical process unfolds.

It is in this way that “national” considerations are always a starting point (but never an endpoint) that allows Borochov to present a totalizing analysis of Jews’ social position within European class society. Antisemitism is for Borochov not a form of oppression external to capitalism, but a precapitalist social division adapted under capitalism to fuel the competition between workers who have nothing but their labor-power to sell.³⁵ The isolation of Jewish communities and the flourishing of Yiddish are both taken by Borochov as signs not of some Jewish national essence, but precisely the result of the intensification of capitalist social relations. Jews cannot engage in class struggle with capital, according to Borochov, precisely because of their exclusion from primary production, finding themselves instead concentrated in small production of consumer goods — in which the organization of workers is almost impossible and no economic pressure on capitalism can be exerted. More importantly for Borochov, Jewish immigration is not primarily a result of political commitment or willful Zionist (or other) effort, but a result of the intensification of competition among workers and the petite-bourgeoisie. The totalizing kernel here is that rather than seeing Jewish immigration as an abstract solution, a reified positive goal abstracted from social reality, it should be seen as capitalism’s own attempt to “solve” its contradictions through geographical displacements.³⁶

Borochov’s totalizing analysis has one crucial aspect for my purposes, which is that

Jewish workers' historical agency — their “control of their own fate,” as Borochov puts it — will not be achieved through establishing a Jewish political or cultural autonomy in Europe. Nor could it be a direct result of a Jewish colonization effort of Palestine: Borochov emphasizes countless times that the dependency of the colonization effort on capital prevents any true proletarian agency over history or any reconstitution of self-determination. Rather, directing and organizing Jewish immigration into Palestine amounts to no more (but also no less!) than establishing the preconditions for Jewish workers engaging in struggle against capital:

We would consider the Jewish problem completely solved, we would consider the anomalous nature of the Jewish proletariat completely gone (to the degree that it is at all possible within the bourgeois market), were we to obtain a territorial autonomy for the entire Jewish people, if the latter were to be concentrated in its unique territory and would establish there an independent society, a single, whole, economic organism.³⁷

And while a territorial state might be the Jewish bourgeoisie's ultimate goal, it would only constitute for *proletarian* Zionism a “transitional phase on its way to socialism.” And Borochov does not neglect to add that such economic autonomy would only be relative under global capitalism. It should be clear at this point that “national territorial autonomy” for Borochov is primarily a code word for relative economic self-determination — a capitalist contradictory totality. In this way, Jewish immigration into Palestine and the establishment of a “territorial autonomy” — a state — can only in Borochov's analysis set the stage of history, as it were, for Jewish participation in worldwide communist revolution, or for Jewish proletarianization. Immigration and statehood is not in itself part of a revolt against the bourgeoisie, but in fact acting in its interests. Thus, the “national question” or the “Jewish question” names for Borochov the mediated form in which one discusses the way Jews can take part in proletarian class struggle rather than fulfill some ethnic or other essence.

It is precisely for this reason that Borochov objected to the establishment of collectivist settlements as some ultimate horizon of proletarian class-conscious act in Palestine, which brought him into direct confrontation with the majority of socialist Zionists leaders, as Gutwein reminds us.³⁸ The collectivized nature of early agricultural colonies, Borochov insisted, is a necessity for early capitalist development; the ultimate dependence of modern agriculture on the world market — for credit, machinery, and as a market for their products — is what prevents these settlements from constituting directly a communist society, as Borochov argues, even if they can potentially be a breeding ground for socialist tendencies.³⁹ That he later in 1917 ended up retracting his objections and finally supporting the “constructivist” approach (the one that supported cooperating with the bourgeoisie) already foreshadows a historical dilemma that will emerge fully in the next section of this essay.

In this way Borochov's writing becomes an important node or coordinate in my attempt to reinterpret Zionism: if capitalist statehood is by no means the final goal of the Zionist effort, if Zionism as Jewish workers' self-determination, or their reconstituted collective agency, can only be achieved after a prolonged class struggle with the bourgeoisie in the future state, then Zionism has so far failed to achieve its historical goal. Rather than the establishment of the state of Israel signifying the successful completion of Zionism's goals, it can actually now mean the historical expression of Zionism's failure. Both the national and the Post-Zionist views of Zionism find their moment of truth here: the argument presented here fully agrees with the Post-Zionists that Zionism's failure has created an oppressive system, but at the same time it shares with the national interpretation the view that Zionism was aimed at liberation, or at gaining human agency over history. The difference lies in the fact that in this new interpretation, Zionism becomes an unfinished business, a fragment of an incomplete historical process (or, in a more theoretical vein, one of those Benjaminian ruins of history). More importantly, it opens up a way to no longer see Zionism as some kind of out-of-reach museum exhibit, merely panorama to a permanent present. Instead it transforms this present into a space in which the "Zionist" project is still being made by us collectively, consciously or otherwise.

It is crucial to emphasize that reinterpreting Borochov's writing in this way does not mean that one must take his position or necessarily agree with him. The opposite is true: I am here not following the letter of Borochov's words (which would have us again wrestling ethically with his "support of nationalism") but rather recoding his concerns using the hermeneutical apparatus I have tried to develop. It should be clear that Borochov's response to the social contradictions of Jewish existence in Europe is only one among many, and all of these can be interpreted — usually much more easily than Borochov — to be about achieving Jewish self-determination. I have singled out Borochov's writing here for two main reasons: first, it is very easy to show, as I have tried to do, how both national and post-Zionist interpretations of Zionism very crudely appropriate Borochov's thought (as opposed to the writing of Ben Gurion, for which one would have to go through a lengthier historicization in order to revive its original ideological operation of striving for not-necessarily-national self-determination). But the moment one clears away these interpretations, Borochov's writing seems to defy easy interpretation. In this situation a new interpretation of his work becomes a pressing necessity. Secondly, I choose Borochov because his writing helps demonstrate how a new way of interpreting Zionism, such as the one that I am developing here, is sorely needed.

Zionism in the 1920s, or the Dilemma of Autonomy

The Zionist settlement project itself in the 1920s provides a different entry point into the interpretation of Zionism. If Borochov's 1905-1907 writing is more concerned with the transformation of Jewish social and political life in Europe, and consequently

treats the organization of Jewish immigration to Palestine as a speculative exercise, this is not at all the case in the 1920s Jewish political and social field that has meanwhile developed in Palestine (an effort that gained momentum when the British took control of Palestine after WW1). While for Borochov, as I have tried to show, Jewish workers' agency over their lives is relegated to the post-colonization future, the Zionist workers in Palestine can no longer hold revolutionary action at a safe distance from their everyday lives. The view according to which a socialist revolution will only occur after immigration is no longer helpful once one has immigrated. The new interpretation suggested here stands or falls with our ability to provide a new set of coordinates for understanding the actions of Zionist movements in this context, one which would also have to include in a non-trivializing way what we called the national and the Post-Zionist interpretations of this period in the history of Zionism.

One of the central points of contention is the role of new social forms that emerged in Palestine. The national interpretation sees, as can be expected, the 1920s as an uninterrupted link in Zionism's effort to achieve statehood. The 1920s, according to S.N. Eisenstadt — who undoubtedly belongs to the national camp — is the period in which Zionist ideology had finally adapted to the condition in Palestine, producing sustainable collectivized agricultural settlements, supported by a labor organization (the *Histadrut*), that coordinated employment and settlement efforts.⁴⁰ The cooperative nature of the *kibbutz* is hailed as the key to the success of the nation-building effort, and the ideologemes of self-sufficiency and personal sacrifice are amply invoked. Conflicts within the Jewish colonization effort — not only between Jewish and Palestinian workers, but also between different Zionist organizations — are usually omitted or made non-threatening in the national accounts. (see for example Elkana Margalit's or David Zait's accounts of conflicts between different Zionist movements, in which the discord is always staged as a friendly disagreement, one that never threatens a deeper union or alliance).⁴¹

The Post-Zionist interpretation of the same period is the inverse of the national one. According to Gershon Shafir's writing, by 1914 Zionism's socialist aspirations have become just a convenient illusion (or an outright lie), covering up what is essentially an exclusionary colonialist effort of nation-building. The previously-celebrated social form, the *kibbutz*, is revealed to be in Shafir's account nothing but a nationalist solution to the problem posed by competition between Jewish and Palestinian workers in Palestine: the *kibbutz*'s collectivization allowed for lowering the reproduction costs of Jewish labor, making it more competitive with Palestinian laborers and making it possible to keep labor, at least in part of the economy, completely Jewish.⁴² What was previously, in the national account, seen as a social form that led to Jewish emancipation, becomes for Shafir and other Post-Zionists a tool for preserving Jewish ethnic purity or for creating an economic system autonomous from the Palestinian one, as Lockman puts it in his critique of Shafir's work.⁴³

Common to both of these accounts is the reductionism of their account of Zionist

social form. First, it is important to register that the *kibbutz* was by no means the only social innovation in the 1920s. Many other forms of organization of social life were suggested and tried by the different movements of colonists-immigrants (in which the degree of collectivization was not the only variable): self-sufficient single agricultural settlements; small or large networks of settlements — either loosely related or strongly centralized — that support each other economically; networks that included a mixture of urban and rural groups; alternative forms of labor organization that included Palestinians, etc.⁴⁴ To that one must add that the word “*kibbutz*,” which is used in most of these sources to designate a (mobile) group of people who work together, rather than a physical settlement, as we tend to use the word today — a difference that adds another degree of freedom to the different attempts to imagine how the different *kibbutz*-groups should be organized.

These different ways of conceiving of the precise form of social organization go virtually unacknowledged in almost all national or Post-Zionist texts. I suggest that all of these different forms of organization should be seen as different solutions to the Zionist problem of self-determination or historical agency, now posed more concretely than in Borochoy’s speculative texts. Margalit, for one, describes the different social forms that were suggested and tried as constituting different ways of seeking autonomy from the capitalist market itself, as it became clear that the most formidable barrier to exerting greater agency over one’s life was the dependence on the world market.⁴⁵ The incorporation of modern technologies into new agricultural colonization efforts both ensures their dependence on the market (for machinery, credit, etc.) and necessitates local cooperation for the development of infrastructure (road systems, ports, etc.). For this reason, Borochoy had concluded, one should be wary of seeing collectivized settlements as a positive proletarian victory in its class struggle, since it is in fact working to promote capitalist accumulation. When many in the Zionist workers’ movements realized in the 1920s that it was once again private capital taking away any possibility of exerting control over their lives, they sought autonomy from the market itself: “to take our market out of the market” as Tabenkin put it — and here it is important to add that Tabenkin’s comments are aimed against private enterprise, rather than against Palestinians.⁴⁶

For example, one movement’s (The Labor Brigade’s) announcement that the period of workers’ participation in the constructive settlement effort is over, and that the time of revolution has come, should be seen precisely as one attempt to imagine how to reassert the goal of self-determination. Ben Gurion’s repeated assertion that proletarian class interest is identical to the national interest — or that workers should support continued nation-building with private capital (and of course labeling that capital “national” does not change its essential functioning as capital) — is yet another possible solution to the historical contradiction between socialist goal and present conditions. The different debates — for instance, whether or not the General Federation of Labor (the *Histadrut*) should promote proletarian struggle

when it clashes with “national” goals, or whether different networks of agricultural settlements should act autonomously from the main Zionist settlement effort (led by Ben Gurion’s Labor Unity party) driven by capitalist interests — should be seen as again suggesting different solutions to the problem of wresting self-determination from the dictates of capital. A third kind of solution was the stage-ist view that does not make revolution unnecessary, but argues that the time for it has not yet come — which, as I tried to argue, is another imaginary option made available through Borochov’s analysis. One should not underestimate the ferocity of these debates and struggles over the form of organization and course of action that would lead to agency over history — Ben Gurion repeatedly threatened different movements with all kinds of sanctions if they do not toe the line.

Rather than leaving the field in a state of pure difference or multiplicity of Zionist responses or solutions (as one variety of post-Zionism does), I will try to suggest a typology of these. I would like to suggest that the basic opposition structuring the typology should be one contrasting nation-building using private capital on one hand, and a direct attempt to bring about revolution or proletarian control on the other. A Greimassian square is useful in representing the different modalities opened up through this basic opposition:

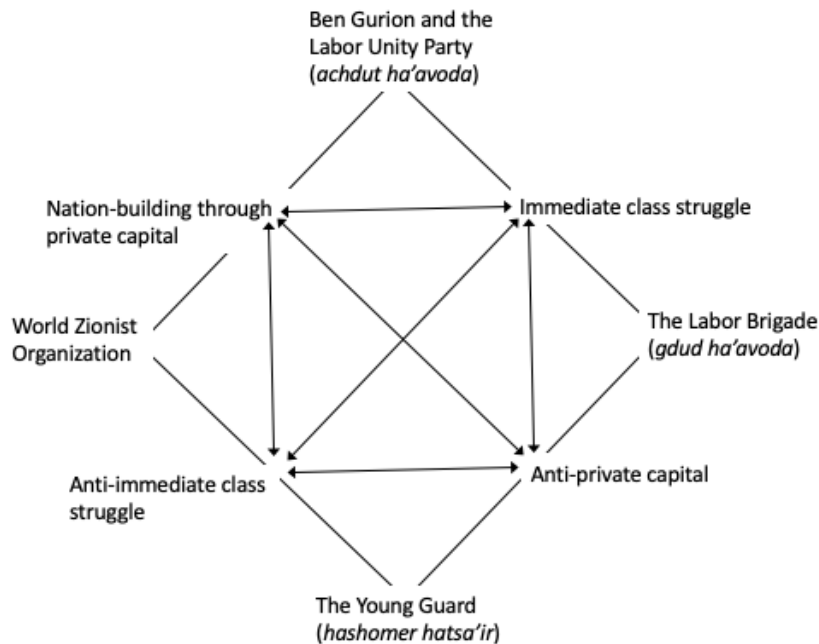


Figure 1. Nation-Building Typology

The specific movements that comprise the outer square are of lesser importance to us in this context. More important is that one notices that each corner of this outer

square represents a possible imaginary and political solution — a Žižekian act that contingently bridges the gap between situation and goal, each producing historicity — that imaginary tying-together of individual action and historical movement. In our upper corner, Ben Gurion's Labor Unity Party reconciles the opposition in what is a textbook example of Althusser's conception of the reconciliatory operation of ideology. "Class interest is the national interest," Ben Gurion and Berl Katznelson constantly argue: "The realization of Zionism does not take place outside the realities of class, and does not erase the antagonistic interests and tendencies, but it necessitates inter-class cooperation," as Katznelson put it, effectively again identifying class interests with national ones.⁴⁷ This solution ended up being the dominant one among Zionists to the problem of achieving self-determination, leading in the end to the Zionist colonial displacement and expropriation of Palestinians. It is here that the post-Zionist narrative is basically preserved in the new narrative that I am suggesting, rather than rejected.⁴⁸ Needless to say, this solution led to the establishment of a capitalist state — which from our vantage point can undoubtedly be judged to be a complete failure in terms of bringing about Israelis' self-determination, not to mention Palestinians'. At the left corner, The Zionist Organization is in the 1920s very anti-proletarian, actively acting to purge the agricultural settlements of socialist ideas.⁴⁹ On the right corner is the Labor Brigade movement, that had decided to stop taking part in building the infrastructure for capitalist accumulation and instead begin acting towards direct proletarian control, arguing that "the time of construction is over, and that of revolution has come."⁵⁰ The Brigade ultimately failed to bring about revolution: working for joint Jewish and Palestinian worker organization and trying to unite urban and rural workers was met with heavy resistance from the Zionist mainstream, and finally condemned the Brigade to dissolution in 1926. These three different types of solutions to the problem posed by Zionism proved, with time, to fail to produce the desired result. But again, it is not their failure which is important to us here, but that all three political and social positions constituted different attempts to solve the common Zionist historical problem of self-determination.

The bottom corner, that of the Young Guard movement, which stands for the negation of both immediate revolution and capitalist development, is the most interesting one — as it captures both the impulse to free oneself of the constraints of capitalist development and also the contradictory impulse to delay active class struggle due to fear of dissolution, or of "liquidationist" tendencies, to use their own terms. I will not be able to trace here the transformations in the movement's positions throughout the 1920s — in which most creative energies go into the attempt to imagine and bring about the effects of the collectivization of desire and spirituality that must, according to the movements' theorists, accompany the material collectivization (a problem that in another context can be considered a problem of cultural revolution — how do we transform social practices after we have taken control?). The relentless criticism leveled by the movement's leaders at Ben Gurion and the actions of the

Zionist mainstream makes it clear that it is precisely the attempt to achieve historical agency that is at stake here. In the words of the Guard's leader, Meir Ya'ari:

The socialist utopia of a worker's society has been dismantled, piece by piece... the means have become ends in themselves, and the socialist goal has as if disappeared... the huge institutions that have been established have gradually come to serve only their self-preservation... the cooperative movement in the construction branch was destroyed. And *Solel Boneh* [Zionist construction company]... with a huge perennial bureaucracy, but employing a multitude of temporary construction workers that come and go... this is how the cooperative element in the housing project is eliminated. The autonomic framework of the Federation of Labor's educational program has eroded away as well.⁵¹

The extraordinary self-documentation of the movement's first utopian settlement, as well as scholarly writing about the movement's travails, captures the tortuous path it has chosen — one that tends to leave painfully open the historical contradiction in which it is found.⁵² On one hand, seeking all manner of autonomous existence after repeatedly rejecting Ben Gurion's unconditional support of capitalist development. On the other hand, refraining from putting their *kibbutzes* ("kibbutz," again, taken here to mean a group of people working together for a common purpose) on too direct of a collision course with the hegemonic Zionist institutions, a confrontation that they feared they would lose. The fact that the early years of the Young Guard movement continue to haunt the Israeli imagination — evident in the 1970s play by Yehoshua Sobol about the Guard's first settlement, all the way up to Yiftach Ashkenazi's reflections on the Guard in his 2014 novel *Fulfillment* — is perhaps the best evidence that a utopian impulse associated with the Guard's refusal still exerts its force on the Israeli collective psyche.⁵³

Yet it is important that one does not become too enamored of one's object: The Young Guard's rejection of both poles in the basic opposition (revolution versus capitalist development) ends up constituting simply another failure in terms of the basic problem posed by Zionism. Much like the other movements or solutions, it failed to generate the much longed-for self-determination, or agency over history. This failure is expressed in the Guard's final degeneration into a domesticated minority opposition to Ben Gurion in the 1940s. No longer threatening politically, it is relegated to stand for some ethical purity instead.

One possible objection to my attempt to chart the different Zionist positions using a Greimassian rectangle is that it is reductive — or that it ignores a much complex multiplicity of Zionist positions. One should however keep in mind that all periodizations are necessarily reductive operations, as Jameson reminds us. It is possible to take both Post-Zionist and Israeli-national interpretations of Zionism as

clear examples of this reductionism: the former demanding that we see the entire historical period in terms of a racist colonial project, while the latter requiring that we see it as dominated by liberating nation-building. The point here is not that both of these are wrong because they are reductive, but that reduction is necessary for periodization and therefore for historicity itself. And this sort of reduction is not limited to history, but has to do with the working of our imagination in general: it is the problem of “cognitive mapping,” and also the problem of imagining the subject of history. But it is also the problem of constructing a figure which can somehow stand for a multiplicity that Freudian dream-work tries to overcome with its condensations and displacement. I suggest that one should view this sort of reduction as a creative solution — one that has its limits, to be sure, but that nonetheless makes possible certain imaginary operations that otherwise remain out of reach.

But to this can be added another, more practical, defense of the Greimassian rectangle: In fact, it leaves much more room for complexity than these other periodizing schemas. Since each of the four positions actually represents a combination of two simpler (non-composite) positions, one can add these four simpler positions to the four, which makes it a total of eight (and this is without counting the relations between many of these eight positions implicit in the square). This is not an empty numerical measurement: a good example of why it is not is the *Brith Shalom* (“Peace Covenant”) movement — a small group of bourgeois intellectuals, a non-entity in terms of real political power, but one which is dear to the heart of the Israeli liberal Left, which can also be mapped using the square. The movement’s ethical rejection of the nation-building project because oppressive towards Palestinians (which it surely was), belongs in the anti-private capital nation-building corner of the inner square (bottom right). That *Brith Shalom* never took a position for or against immediate class struggle distinguished the movement from both the Young Guard (that rejected immediate class struggle) and from the Labor Brigade (who supported it, and for whom a united front with Palestinians was necessitated by this demand for immediate class conflict). It could even be said that the *Brith*’s absence of a clear position regarding immediate class struggle made it relatively unpopular in the first place. When we understand the square in this way, movements such as *Brith Shalom*, which seems at first glance to have very little to do with my concerns, are not here “reduced away,” but can rather still be represented on the Greimassian square, however imperfectly.⁵⁴ This hopefully suffices as a demonstration that the necessary operation of reduction does not threaten to eliminate all complexity or multiplicity from the field, but simply gives this multiplicity an order or a form — even if different than those to which we are accustomed.

It becomes possible now to return to the starting point of this section — the attempt to outline a new interpretation of Zionism according to which the establishment of Israel is a result of the failure of the Zionist project, rather than its success. It is important again to show that both the national interpretation of Zionism and the

Post-Zionist one have their moment of truth in the new narrative suggested here. I have tried to argue that the different attempts in the 1920s to realize the conditions for Jewish workers' historical agency ended up in failure. What distinguishes the Post-Zionist view is precisely its sensitivity to Zionism's failure to produce subjects that are free to determine their own lives — be they Palestinians or Israelis. On the other hand, the national interpretation's insistence on the liberating impulse at work in Zionism also gains a localized validity in this new reading — for this impulse is precisely what animates each of different solutions suggested in the 1920s to the Zionist predicament.

The final point that should be emphasize is that this new interpretation has the potential of making the Israeli present into a space of collective action once again, reviving an imaginary relation between past and future that the Israeli Left has been lacking since the vanishing of peace as a political goal. Seeing Zionism as a failure, as a collective transformative project that has stalled, makes it possible again for us to perceive the Israeli present as a result of Zionism's unfinished business, as some work-in-progress that we are still in the midst of producing, and whose goals it once again becomes possible to take up and make one's own, even if it is of course impossible to be again a Zionist in the older sense. The Zionist project I have been describing was never limited to Jews only. The constant clashes about cooperation with Palestinians, the feminist valences of the Zionist project whose traces one can find in all of the realist literature of the period, and the experimentation with sexuality that were part of the Young Guard's first settlement are all are part of the stalled struggle for self-determination that was Zionism.

It is not the case that a new version of history alone can magically put into motion a renewed historical movement; the latter can only be affected by an actual transformation of social form, an actual social movement or organization whose own actions would somehow have to match a new sense of historicity. From this perspective, the new historical interpretation suggested here is a kind of voluntarist falsehood: an attempt to restart historicity without having a new social form as its base. But this is in a way the only right way to be wrong: yes, it is only a voluntarist illusion that one can simply will oneself out of the postmodern crisis of historicity. But it is the only way of failing-to-have-historicity that might result in movement. In this sense, adopting the historical narrative suggested here could be the beginning of another vanishing mediator: its agents could be wrong, but history can nonetheless take its course through their actions.

The pressing need for such a new narrative could not be clearer. The need for self-determination is surely felt as strongly today — by Israelis radically impoverished by neoliberalization, as well as by Palestinians oppressed by Israel — as it was in the different Leftist Zionist movement. As Gutwein argues, one should think of the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank as a geographical “solution” for the contradictions of capitalism in Israel/Palestine: privatization and the rolling-back of welfare-state

social protections forced impoverished Israelis to look for cheaper housing, which could only be found in West Bank settlements (since real-estate in Israel was becoming an important commodity in the accumulation of capital). Thus, “the universal welfare state that was being dismantled in Israel was reestablished in the occupied territories,” as Gutwein succinctly puts it.⁵⁵ To stop the Israeli settlement operation in the occupied territories, therefore, required fighting neoliberalization, rather than mounting a direct political attack on those displaced by neoliberalism: the inhabitants of the settlements. Just as Zionism, in the new view of it presented here, was an (failed) organized struggle against the contradictions of capitalism that drove Jews to immigrate from Europe, the new struggle is aimed both at freeing Palestinians from Israeli oppression and against the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism that drove Jewish Israelis to the settlements. This is what the new interpretation of Zionism offered here — one that sees it as a failed collective project aimed at self-determination, rather than an ethnic cleansing program — makes thinkable.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Nicholas Brown for his comments on his essay.
2. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007) and Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*, (London: Verso, 2011).
3. Eric Cazdyn, *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012) 6.
4. Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) 3; Michael Shalev, “Have Globalization and Liberalization ‘normalized’ Israel’s Political Economy?” *Israel Affairs* 5.2–3 (1998): 126.
5. Bichler and Nitzan, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* 348; Dani Gutwein, “He’arot al hayesodot hama’amadi’yim shel hakibush [some comments on the class foundations of the occupation],” *Teoriya ubikoret* 24 (2004): 204–5.
6. Tamar Gozansky, *Hitpatkhut hakapitalism bepalestina [The Formation of Capitalism in Palestine]* (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1986) 69–72.
7. Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997).
8. Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008 [1973]) 309–43; Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991) 179–227.
9. Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do* 183.
10. Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* 330–32.
11. For a sympathetic account of Zionist efforts to achieve peace, see Yosef Gorny’s, *Zionism and the*

- Arabs 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). For a critical account see, Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988).
12. Theodore Herzl, *The Old New Land* (Berlin: Seemann Nachf 1902).
 13. Laurence Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (New York: Routledge 1999) 1-4, 89-126.
 14. Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates*, 93-6 and Eran Kaplan, *Beyond Post-Zionism* (New York: SUNY Press, 2015) 4.
 15. Benny Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past," *Tikkun* 3.6 (1988): 105.
 16. Morris, "The New Historiography" 108.
 17. Joel Migdal and Baruch Kimmerling, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (London: The Free Press, 1994) xxix.
 18. To highlight how this moment in the narrative fits within the vanishing mediator narrative form, it is easy to identify this moment with what Žižek sees as the intensification of the older superstructure in this second moment, or what Jameson sees as the freeing of rationalization to take root outside the monasteries everywhere in the social structure under Calvinism — this is precisely what takes place when peace-making becomes something to be pursued outside the institutions of the Israeli state — which is to say, everywhere (see Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* and Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*).
 19. Daniel Gutwein, "Left and Right Post-Zionism and the Privatization of Israeli Memory," *Journal of Israeli History* 20.2-3 (2001): 17 and Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates* 107.
 20. Michael Feige, "'Ze Sipur Al Hamakom Veze Hamakom': Dionysus Basenter Vemabat Nosaf Al Hahistoriographiya Ha'yisraelit," *Teoria Ubikoret* 26 (2005): 205; Laurence Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates*, 125.
 21. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Productions, 2006).
 22. Yagil Levy and Yoav Peled, "The Utopian Crisis of the Israeli State," *Critical Essays on Israeli Social Issues and Scholarship: Books On Israel*, vol. 3, eds. Russell A. Stone and Walter P. Zenner (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994) 202.
 23. Levy and Peled, "The Utopian Crisis of the Israeli State" 209.
 24. Baruch Kimmerling, "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives* 34.2 (1993): 211-12.
 25. *For They Know Not What They Do* 188.
 26. *For They Know Not What They Do* 189.
 27. Among the varieties of post-Zionism not considered here are the more theoretically sophisticated positions of scholars such as Adi Ophir or Hannan Hever. The post-Zionists that we have mentioned above would generally agree the "reduce" Zionism to an (oppressive) nation-building project. To these one could add the writing of studies of the Mizrachi Israeli Jews, such as Ella Shohat, Yossi Yona or Dror Mishani, who also see the state as essentially the uninterrupted continuation of the oppression of Mizrachi Jews by the Ashkenazi Zionists (see Ella Shohat, "Sepharadim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19-20 (1988): 1-35). In contrast, Ophir's and Hever's writing tends to explode any sense of continuity between Zionism and the state of Israel.

Instead they tend to assert, via the writing of Foucault, that it is continuity itself (between Zionism and the state) which is the illusion promoted by national historiography. Against this continuity, Ophir celebrates a discontinuous view of Zionism, in which the latter cannot be “reduced” to a single project, is rather made up of irreducibly multiple antagonistic impulses and projects (In what is a quintessentially 1990s gesture, one of Ophir’s essays incorporates this multiplicity or discontinuity into its very form, “performing” what it detects in Zionism (Adi Ophir, “She’at Ha’efes,” *Teoriya ubikoret* 12-13 (1999): 15-32). The difference between this position and the narrative I have presented here should be clear: While for the Foucauldian Ophir the break between Zionism and the state is a methodological (or more accurately: ideological) necessity and interpretive end-point, this is not at all the case in the narrative presented here. In the narrative that I am proposing, the failure of Zionism was a contingent fact, and therefore the break between Zionism and state is contingent, rather than necessary. Moreover, as I hope to show below, Zionism in my account is interpretively “reduced” to a single project, rather than forever suspended in unrepresentable multiplicity.

28. Ber Borocho, “Haplatforma Shelanu,” *Ktavim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz hame’ukhad; Sifriyat poalim, 1955): 193–310.
29. Borocho, “Haplatforma Shelanu” 261–62.
30. Dani Gutwein, “Borocho, Haborochovism, Vehaborochovistim,” *Ya’ad* 1 (1989): 73–90.
31. Matityahu Mintz, *Ber Borocho: Hama’agal Harishon (1900-1906)* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hame’ukhad, 1976) 189–90.
32. Yoav Peled, “Ber Borocho: Mehoge De’ot Khevrati Le’ideolog Politi,” *Teoria ubikoret* 6 (1995): 77–80.
33. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 21.
34. “Haplatforma Shelanu” 212.
35. One should note in this regard Ernest Mandel’s — writing under the name Ernest Germain — unfortunate overhasty dismissal of Borocho, arguing that the latter saw antisemitism as a fact rather than analyzing its causes, which is patently untrue (Ernest Germain, “A Biographical Sketch of Abram Leon,” in *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*, by Abram Leon (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 16.
36. “Haplatforma Shelanu” 294–95.
37. “Haplatforma Shelanu” 265.
38. Dani Gutwein, “Borocho, Haborochovism, Vehaborochovistim,” *Ya’ad* 1 (1989): 76.
39. “Haplatforma Shelanu” 276–77.
40. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).
41. Elkana Margalit, “Hashomer hatza’ir” — *me’adat ne’urim lemarksizm mahapchani (1913-1936)* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hame’ukhad) 65.
42. Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
43. Zachary Lockman, “Land, Labor and the Logic of Zionism: A Critical Engagement with Gershon Shafir,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2.1 (2012): 16.
44. Margalit, “Hashomer Hatza’ir” 64–74, 130–37, 140.
45. “Hashomer Hatza’ir” 65–75.

46. Quoted in “*Hashomer Hatza’ir*” 67.
47. David Za’it, *Halutzim Bamavoch Hapoliti [Pioneers in the Maze of Politics: The Kibbutz Movement, 1927-1948]* (Jerusalem: Yad ben tzvi, 1993) 62.
48. It is very tempting to say that goal of these dominant Zionists was simply the nation rather than autonomy and that settler colonialism was their means of achieving it (which simply brings us back to the post-Zionist interpretation). It should be again emphasized how *both* of these are true at the same time — that their goal was national construction *and* that it was autonomy. Since “autonomy,” as I argued above, is an interpretive term for us. Yes, the explicit goal of this dominant branch of Zionism was undoubtedly the construction of a nation-state. My suggested interpretation, however, is that we see this explicit goal as an expression of a deeper goal — that of autonomy. Rather than being mutually-exclusive, these two “goals” coexist — since they belong on two different levels of meaning or interpretation.
49. Tamar Gozansky, *Hitpatkhut hakapitalism bepalestina [The Formation of Capitalism in Palestine]* (Haifa: University of Haifa Press, 1986) 108–9.
50. “*Hashomer Hatza’ir*” 178.
51. Za’it, *Halutzim Bamavoch Hapoliti* 64.
52. The 1922 Hebrew account by the movement’s members of the establishment and dissolution of their first settlement is *Kehiliyatenu* (Jerusalem: Yad ben tzvi, 1988 [1922]). Scholarly writing about the movement includes “*Hashomer Hatza’ir*”; *Halutzim Bamavoch Hapoliti [Pioneers in the Maze of Politics: The Kibbutz Movement, 1927-1948]*; David Za’it, “Bein Realism Le’utopia: Konstruktivism, Kolektivizatzia, Vedu-Le’umiyut Behitpatkhut Hashomer Hatsair (1926-1942) [Between Realism and Utopia]” (Tel Aviv: MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 1984); Boaz Neumann, *Tshukat Hahaluzim [Land and Desire in Early Zionism]* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009).
53. Yehoshua Sobol, *Lel Ha’esrim* (Tel Aviv: Bama’agal, 1977); Yiftach Ashkenazi, *Haide lahaqshama* (Tel Aviv: Khargol, Modan 2014).
54. A similar exercise can be done in relation to the rather large movement of Hapo’el Hatza’ir (The Young Worker), who did not see class struggle as a goal at all, and wholeheartedly supported private capital’s nation-building effort. It therefore belongs on the upper-left corner of the inner square.
55. Dani Gutwein, “He’arot al hayesodot hama’amadi’yim shel hakibush [some comments on the class foundations of the occupation],” *Teoriya ubikoret* 24 (2004): 205.

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Rethinking the Shotgun Marriage of Freud and Marx: Monetary Subjects without Money, the Socialization of the Death Drive, and the Terminal Crisis of Capitalism

Deborah Young

Sociology and Psychology

Theodor Adorno opens his seminal 1955 essay "Sociology and Psychology" as follows:

For more than 30 years the tendency has been emerging among the masses of the advanced industrial countries to surrender themselves to the politics of disaster instead of pursuing their rational interests and, chief of all, that of their own survival. While they are promised benefits, the idea of personal happiness is at the same time emphatically replaced by threat and violence; inordinate sacrifices are imposed on them, their existence is directly endangered, and an appeal made to latent death-wishes. Much of this is so obvious to its victims that in endeavoring to understand its workings one finds it difficult to rest content with the decisive task of establishing the objective conditions of mass movements, and not to be tempted into believing that objective laws no longer obtain.¹

This begins to address what is, in essence, the same problematic that I rethink in what follows: If it is manifestly the case that a social form of subjectivity shaped in obedience to the objective social relations of capitalism has tended to "surrender [itself] to the politics of disaster" rather than to pursue — even in the name of its own survival — the rational interests of (say) revolution, does not this in itself already necessitate a mediation such that a Marxian critique of capital's objective laws becomes commensurable with a theory of that same social form of subjectivity — that is, a social psychology?

Adorno, in envisioning such a theory, finds himself on one hand up against both

the positivistic approach of the social sciences (which would artificially unify the rift between the individual subject and society) and, on the other, vulgar materialism's outright dismissal of "the subjective conditions of objective irrationality" (i.e., the dismissal of individual psychology as false consciousness mystifying the real ensemble of class relations).² In contrast to the above approaches which view the capitalist totality positively, Adorno turns the 'false consciousness' of the alienated individual back on itself as also true — as a reflection of the "split between the living subject and an objectivity that governs [reality]" — to posit the individual as itself a manifest social form, "the jarring elements [of which] are invariably also moments of the social totality."³ Adorno's point, then, is that Marx's social individual (perhaps better, or at least more emphatically denoted a social monad) is not merely a reified appearance arising from capitalist social relations. Nor is its psychology, as a consequence, simply a passive reflection of what counts as no more than an instance of false consciousness.⁴ For Adorno, (and in this essay), the social monad is a specific and definite social form historically determined by capitalism — a mediation of capitalism's determinate sociality no less than the commodity and value forms themselves. Adorno, of course, does not employ precisely this terminology, but the theoretical import here is essentially the same, "the commensurability of individuals'" modes of behavior, the actual process of socialization, is based on the fact that as economic subjects they do not relate to one another at all immediately but act according to the dictates of exchange-value."⁵ The fact that they "do not relate to each other at all" necessarily bears not only on the "individuals' modes of behavior" as "economic subjects," but on the form of subjectivity immanent to these individuals, as it is socially constituted by the apparent absence of any social relations. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from this — as Adorno clearly does not — that the psychology belonging to these socially asocial individuals leaves the commodities they exchange to do what appears to be the actual socializing. (For example, Marx's classic characterization of a society made up of dancing tables and other phantasmagoria of the fetishized society of commodities.) Commodity exchange, after all, can break down — as the contradictory union of exchange and use values flowers into a concrete instance of the crisis latent within the commodity form itself.⁶ Then the question clearly must arise as to the effect that the real breakdown of the objective social relations of commodity society has on the form of subjectivity belonging to the social monads who are nothing but the abstract agents of commodity relations. Although Adorno in "Sociology and Psychology" does not quite put it in such terms, it seems clear enough that this is the direction his thinking has begun to take.

A Value-Critical Reading of Capital's Subjective Dimension

My aim in what follows is to contribute to contemporary efforts both to rethink and to theorize accordingly the subjective dimension of capitalism, in such a way as to be commensurate with the dramatic advances made by value-form critique

(*Wertkritik*) in the theorizing of capitalism's objective laws and tendencies.⁸ More specifically, by radically re-thinking the link mediating Marx with an historicized Freud — in a manner adequate to post-Fordist global capitalism — I aim to systematize further a theory of value-form society inclusive of but also emphasizing the subject unconsciously produced by and productive of that same society. In other words, it is precisely the question of what capital has made of us, the subject-form through which capital functions, that this essay seeks to confront, and to do this specifically by historicizing and critically reconstructing modern sociality as it is disclosed in Freudian theory in a way such that it can lend itself — albeit, unknowingly — to a critique of the capitalist subject-form (i.e., Marx's "social individual," or social monad).

Necessarily, then, this thesis relies on demonstrating the social monad to be both the form of appearance of capitalism and — as a more totalizing and fundamental abstraction than that of the highly mediated position of class — a category positing capitalist sociality itself:

Interpreting Marx's analysis as a historically specific critique of labor in capitalism leads to an understanding of capitalist society which is very different from that of traditional Marxist interpretations. It suggests, for example, that the social relations and forms of domination that characterize capitalism, in Marx's analysis, cannot be understood sufficiently in terms of class relations, rooted in property relations and mediated by the market. Rather, his analysis of the commodity and capital — that is, the quasi-objective forms of social mediation constituted by labor in capitalism — should be understood as an analysis of this society's fundamental social relations. These impersonal and abstract social forms do not simply veil what traditionally has been deemed the "real" social relations of capitalism, that is, class relations; they are the real relations of capitalist society, structuring its dynamic trajectory and its form of production.⁹

I intend to show the above by extrapolating from Marx's reconstruction, in *Capital Vol. 1*, of the commodity: That is, the initial "elementary form" that is both the dialectical starting point and that which constitutes, in its immediate appearance, "the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails."¹⁰ In Marx's dialectical reconstruction of it, then, the commodity is revealed as what has itself already posited the value form society: As that which already embodies capital's essential categories and thus capital's structural tendency to "delink, to the greatest possible extent," the accumulation of abstract wealth (exchange value) from its concrete aspect as the material wealth (use value) of society:

The commodity... is the fundamental structuring principle of capitalism, the objectified form of both the relations of people with nature as well as with each other.... It is not a use value that has value but, as the materialized objectification of concrete and abstract labor, it is a use value that is a value and, therefore, has exchange value. ...In its double-sidedness as concrete and abstract, qualitatively particular and qualitatively general-homogeneous, the commodity is the most elementary expression of capitalism's fundamental character. As an object, the commodity has a material form; as a social mediation, it is a social form.¹¹

It is from reconstruction of the commodity form in *Capital Vol. 1* that we can infer that the positing of totality on its subjective side resides — not in the sociological category of class — but in the parallel and elementary subject-form of the monad. As Postone has argued, what is significant about the appearance of capitalist society as “a collection of individuals” is not that it conceals an ensemble of un-alienated, “real” social relations beneath its “made up” character; but rather, that this “decontextualized” character is itself “the form of social contextualization characteristic of capitalism”:

In Marx's analysis... forms of mystification (of what he termed the “fetish”) most definitely are related intrinsically to their “content” — they are treated as necessary forms of appearance of an “essence” they both express and veil. Commodity-determined social relations, for example, necessarily are expressed in fetishized form, according to Marx: social relations appear “as what they are, i.e... as objective [*sachliche*] relations between persons and social relations between objects.” In other words, the quasi-objective, impersonal social forms expressed by categories such as the commodity and value... are [the] “real” social relations [of capitalism].¹²

As such, the subject as social monad is not only the determinate form of appearance of capitalism (as a socialization “captured by the division between subjects” as opposed to their manifest relation).¹³ Moreover, this subject form is itself that which presupposes the existence of a socialization — as capitalism is — that is neither consciously (nor in essence) oriented toward the production of humanity, “where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production.”¹⁴ No less than the commodity, the simultaneously asocial and collectivized form of the monad — itself the embodiment of the all-sided competition of capitalist sociality — is a determinate relation produced and further reproducing a capitalism that in ever larger parts of the world has become virtually synonymous with neo-barbarism, “wherein both the market and the mechanical demiurge of the state have declared the majority of people superfluous,” or “monetary subjects without money.”¹⁵

In order to elaborate further the parallel between the commodity and the monad as both as forms of appearance and as embodiments of capital's essential categories, my central aim will be to show that the categorical antagonisms exposed to view in Freud's late theory of the subject (the antagonism between the libidinal and death drives) are, in fact, the obverse reflection of the categorical antagonisms embodied in the commodity (between material wealth and value).¹⁶ Ultimately, I intend to show that the determinate antagonisms embodied in these elementary forms (the commodity-form and that of the social monad) signal the obverse sides of the same social crisis — a latent contradiction that is actualized in post-Fordist global capital as a crisis of social self-reproduction become social self-destruction. I will elaborate this thesis further by arguing that Freud's superficially mystified and biologized theory of the death drive, once shorn of its falsifying immediacies, can be seen to parallel the objectively social compulsions of valorization. This is a connection that appears latently in the crisis of what Robert Kurz has termed "the Fordist wars" — the two twentieth-century world wars — the first of which was what prompted Freud to revise his earlier theory by positing the presence, alongside the libidinal drives, of an opposing "death drive." But the value-form's activation of the death drive is made fully manifest in the crisis ongoing today: in the sheer pervasiveness of violence engendered as value realizes itself only at the expense of human needs and only through a process of systematic de-socialization. (Or more concretely, value now realizes itself only by declaring a mushrooming, precaritized and racialized population virtually unexploitable and superfluous).¹⁷ As such, the blind compulsion of valorization, engendered by and through the spontaneous actions of the social monad, increasingly realizes itself, in the rush towards terminal crisis, as a diktat of what Ernst Lohoff calls "social suicide."¹⁸

Broadly speaking, I hope that by elaborating the ways capitalist social relations are pathologized what follows might also serve to develop further the economic personifications argument frequently referenced from *Capital* — "the actors on the economic stage are merely personifications of the economic relations between them."¹⁹ In this oft-cited claim, the very fact that Marx's social individuals appear as capital's "actors" — one whose aims appear both universalized and emptied out — signals a critical reversal. Value has become the identical subject/object of history.²⁰ And it is precisely because the twentieth-century onward has emerged as a permanent (if occasionally alleviated) crisis of value that, as I would argue, this peculiar social form of subjectivity requires further systematization — and all the more emphatically today, as the manifold symptoms of what may well be capital's terminal crisis — however prolonged and uneven — becomes more and more palpable, "falling production of surplus value at the same time as growing consumption of resources, overlaid by the prospect of wars over increasingly scarce material resources, squandered in the valorization of capital, and for the chance to valorize the last remains."²¹ Specifically, with the objective tendency of the rate of

profit to fall, the personifications foisted through the value-relation — That is, the rational agent who appears to actively subordinate all external conditions and so maintains a mythical, socially uplifting average rate of profit — no longer coalesce with the contemporary reality of the pathologized subject, in the thrall to ever more irrational aims and completely impotent regarding their effects.²² Indeed, as the possibility of exacting surplus today tends, “like value itself, toward zero” — such that the eventual realization of value projects itself into a fictitious post-crisis capitalist future — capital nevertheless continues to reproduce its economic relations in ever more perverse and barbaric forms via the pathological compulsions by which capital mediates itself through us: for example, the “social psychosis” of a collective subject driven to sacrifice “the life prospects of millions of people... for the sake of a desperate attempt to balance state budgets.”²³

Finally, I want at least to suggest in this analysis that an understanding of the latently pathologized social relations constituted by and through the process of self-valorization — and fully manifest in the current (terminal) crisis unfolding today — in fact hints at the social itself as the standpoint of a more adequate critique of capitalism, the latter now understood as a form of socialization that cannot be progressively affirmed except at the cost, ultimately, of affirming its own self-annihilation — a capitalism that has only itself to lose.

The Significance of *Wertkritik*: A Critique of Exploitation within Capital versus a Critique of the Capitalist Social Form

But why elaborate the above by historicizing Freud? No less, one would be forgiven if they were puzzled by the apparent absence of the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School as an established locus theorizing capital’s subjective dimension. (In this regard, Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* — best summarized in the concept of reification as an attempt to re-elaborate a broader and more flexible form of Marx’s concept of fetishization — really represents the first serious attempt to work out the question that I am now attempting to re-think via both *Wertkritik* and Freud). Since my essay, broadly speaking, hopes to re-elaborate capital’s subjective dimension in a manner adequate to the global crisis currently unfolding, I would suggest that such a project, in its very definition, necessitates a radical rethinking along the lines of contemporary value-form theory (the latter epitomized for me in the Germanophone tradition of *Wertkritik*, which begins by breaking with the limitations of labor movement Marxism or *Arbeiterbewegungsmarxismus*). As I will argue below, such a critique of traditional Marxism is called for not only regarding how it conceives capital’s objective dimension, but additionally, its assumptions regarding capital’s subjective side. Or, in other words, a traditionally inclined critique of capital’s subjective dimension — represented foremost by the Frankfurt school, despite its heterodox standing *vis-a-vis* the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy still ascendant at the time of its founding — cannot simply be incorporated without qualification.

This remainder of this essay will explain the significance of its reinterpretation of the objective dimensions of capitalism, before seeking to extend and extrapolate *Wertkritik* in regard to capitalism's subjective dimension (represented in Frankfurt School). By so doing, I will seek to justify why I have sought to re-elaborate this pathologized form of subjectivity as it is disclosed (if unwitting) in Freudian theory — as well as elaborate the stakes, if we should fail to fully confront such a form of relationality.

The crisis-oriented *Wertkritik* school — taking positions that in part stem from and converge with Moishe Postone (despite the latter's consciously methodological bracketing of crisis theory) — has systematized a critique of the objective side of capitalist socialization, grounded in its immanently contradictory dynamic: as a historically specific form of objective dependence and abstract domination constituted by labor as a (nonconscious) socially mediating activity:

The system constituted by abstract labor embodies a new form of social domination... a form of social compulsion whose impersonal, abstract, and objective character is historically new... this form of domination is not grounded in any person, class, or institution; its ultimate locus is the pervasive structuring social forms of capitalist society that are constituted by determinate forms of social practice.²⁴

By rethinking the structuring categories of capitalism as above (i.e., abstract domination), contemporary schools of Marxian critical theory have sought to realize a more thoroughgoing critique of the capitalist social form. And specifically, by emphasizing how the structuring categories of a traditional Marxian critique (*Arbeiterbewegungsmarxismus* or workers' movement Marxism, to use the term commonly employed by *Wertkritik*) tend to precipitate a more limited critique of exploitation within capitalism (i.e., "class domination").

In essence, *Wertkritik's* position here is that traditional Marxism, in emphasizing "the exploitation of labor" but failing to take into account labor's non-conscious, socially mediating function under capital has tended to bury the more esoteric categories of Marx "beneath a mere redistributionist understanding... imagining a science that would be oriented toward devolving surplus value to the labor that creates it."²⁵ As a socialization constituted by the objective necessity of labor and mediated behind the backs of those reproducing it, capital cannot be fully encompassed by a critique primarily framed in terms of a personalized and quasi-intentional form of domination (class), according to which the material products of labor are unequally distributed:

A characteristic of capitalism is that its essential social relations are social in a peculiar manner. They exist not as overt interpersonal relations but

as quasi-independent set of structures that are opposed to individuals, a sphere of impersonal ‘objective necessity’ and ‘objective dependence’. Consequently, the form of social domination characteristic of capitalism is not overtly social and personal.... Relative to earlier social forms, people appear to be independent, but they are actually subject to a system of domination that seems not social but objective.²⁶

That is, while a critique of exploitation, as such, is socially important, it generally precipitates a focus purely on the level of distribution (i.e., of the products of labor which are unfairly expropriated) — as opposed to a critique of the determinate mode of production, and labor *itself*, as it constitutes the very fabric of society, “the value relation does not constitute itself in contradiction to labor, but rather encompasses labor as precisely another of its forms of appearance — labor is... itself already a ‘real abstraction’ no less than the commodity form.”²⁷ And as such, a critique of distribution does not fully grasp the structuring categories of this social form. Capital, understood via the categorical distribution of value and material wealth, as asocial sociality, precipitates not simply the rationalizable aim for profit, but a contradictory dynamic beyond the conscious control of both capital and labor — as an end-in-itself now itself entirely dissociated from material necessity and the fulfillment of desire.

Thus, in order to fully realize a totalizing critique of capitalist sociality, contemporary value-form theory has sought to demonstrate that social contradiction as it is traditionally conceived via class conflict (the antagonism between private ownership and exploited labor) is a highly mediated expression of capital’s contradiction, one whose presence is substantially eroded with the rise of Fordism (by definition the supersession of “self-regulating” liberal capitalism with state-planned consumption).²⁸ What the juncture of state capitalism must incontrovertibly force us to confront — the flattening of class distinction even as social inequality substantially continues to deepen — are the limits of ‘traditional Marxism’s’ class standpoint as such, the affirmation of labor, against capital.²⁹ Moreover, because Fordism is not a raising of the wage so much as the cheapening of the life means of the worker — there is no Fordism without Taylorism — the latter’s “transformation of worker into machine” ultimately reveals the category of labor as a determinate “source of unfreedom,” rather than a category to be realized or affirmed.³⁰

This position is elaborated in Trenkle’s introductory essay, “Value and Crisis: Basic Questions,” wherein he explains that the category of labor (divided in *Capital Vol. 1* between its abstract and concrete functions and traditionally read — at times by Marx himself — as simply mediating between man and nature) is itself already abstract. That is, even in its concrete form, labor — as the form of work constituted under capital — is not a natural category, but a socially determinate one. Trenkle explains:

What is socially and historically specific about... this form of labor is that in the first instance the fact that work is a separate sphere, cut off from the rest of its social setting... the historical establishment of labor is accompanied by the formation of further separate spheres of society, into which all those dissociated (*abgespaltenen*) moments [of non-labor] are banished, spheres [of social life] which take on an exclusive character.³¹

Ultimately, Trenkle establishes here that labor-as-the-dissociation-of-social-life doubles as an instance of total social mediation, “only where commodity production has already become the determining form of socialization — in capitalism, that is to say, where human activity in the form of labor serves no other purpose than the valorization of value.”³²

In sum, *Wertkritik*'s value-critical standpoint, having established labor as a historically specific form of work not opposed to but determined by the value relation, makes possible an immanent critique of value-form sociality itself. This it does by rethinking the structuring categories of critique and by emphasizing that these structuring categories precipitate a systemic compulsion that escapes the control of both capital and labor. Specifically, *Wertkritik* and similar forms of value-form critique have emphasized that the affirmation of labor ultimately results in a critique that seeks to realize the essence of a monstrous form of socialization, affirming the supposedly concrete side of capitalism against its abstract side (i.e., as labor against capital) and thereby threatening a structural similarity to Fascism.³³ Rather, the abolition of capital requires that labor serve not as the standpoint of critique, but as the object of critique; requires not the abolition of private property, but the abolition of value.

Rethinking Capital's Subjective Categories: The Frankfurt School

Yet, if *Wertkritik*'s position epitomizes (in my view) an immanent critique of capital — a “theory of crisis founded on the critique of value” — it is (notoriously) undeniable that the mediation of this dynamic via its subjective dimension is under-theorized — and problematically so.³⁴ I would argue that this is especially the case given that the traditional category for conceiving the subject, class, is jettisoned, potentially begging the question as to the character of the subject form responsible for the nonconscious reproduction of this system. Thus, in order to adequately address the continued reproduction of value-form sociality, I intend to elaborate briefly the basic issues of a traditionally inclined critique of capital's subjective dimension: represented foremost by the Frankfurt school, and most systematically so in the (oppositional) critiques of Lukács and Adorno. The overwhelming issue when utilizing either György Lukács or Adorno today — notwithstanding that each critique is in its own right absolutely foundational — is the centrality afforded to class, which results in each critique passing over, in oppositional ways, the subject form that embodies and is in itself determinate of capitalist socialization (i.e., the social monad):

The form of domination related to this abstract form of the universal is not merely a class relation concealed by a universalistic façade. Rather, the domination Marx analyzes is that of a specific, historically constituted form of universalism itself... characterized by the historically constituted opposition of the abstract social sphere and individuals.... The modern opposition between the free, self-determining individual and an extrinsic sphere of objective necessity... is historically constituted with the rise of commodity-determined social relations, and is related to the more general constituted opposition between a world of subjects and a world of objects.³⁵

My point in returning to the category of the collectivized individual (and the antagonisms embodied in it) is essentially parallel to *Wertkritik's* motivation, as they assert that the truly fundamental categories of capital are the antagonisms embodied in the commodity (and not labor as such, as appears in a traditional critique). Just as the examination of labor in abstraction of its determining objectifications (in the commodity) has resulted in the affirmation of this historically specific form of work that is itself what mediates a monstrous form of socialization; the category of class has — among other concerns — obscured, dismissed, and otherwise inconsistently affirmed this historically specific, determinate subject-form the social monad.

This problematic, I would argue, represents a serious inconsistency within Lukács's undertaking in *History and Class Consciousness* — perhaps the foundational text of a theory of the social form of subjectivity constituted by it.³⁶ On one hand, it is here that Lukács establishes that the forms of manifestation of value generate not only the conditions of existence, but the form of consciousness, “understand[ing] reality as a social process... dissolves the fetishistic forms necessarily produced by the capitalist mode of production and enables us to see them as mere illusions which are not less illusory for being seen to be necessary.”³⁷ But, on the other hand, this value-critical position — “wherein reality strives toward thought”³⁸ — is posed in real tension with Lukács' quasi-Weberian affirmation of individual rationality. I would say this is especially the case in Lukács' rejection of psychoanalysis *tout court* as irrationalism, “its rejection of reality is wholesale... containing no concrete criticism.”³⁹ A symptomatic, and pivotal issue here is that Lukács grounds his critique of capital by positively opposing proletarian labor to bourgeois ownership, the former as that which must be realized.⁴⁰ Describing class as a standpoint, as that which must be affirmed, forces Lukács to reject the importance of the negative, specifically, in his desire to realize consciously the sociality of capitalism, rather than to unveil, and abolish, the unconscious compulsions of the subject form through which it functions.

While Adorno (especially in “Sociology and Psychology”) explicitly emphasizes the non-conscious reproduction of the totality of capitalism — thereby launching a damning critique of the idealized, self-determining rationality of its subject form

— this critique paradoxically exists side by side with the affirmation of the same monadic character: as a hermetic enclosure against (what appears in Adorno as) capital's totalized, administrative universe. Postone explains this contradiction by arguing that while Adorno (following Pollock) rightly considers the categories of class and totality as understood in liberal capitalism, he does not “reconsider the source of the limitation of these categories, namely, the one-sided emphasis on distribution.”⁴¹ Thus, he paradoxically maintains that the proletariat was the central contradiction of capital, one that is neutralized under state capital, “the rationality of self-preservation is ultimately doomed to remain irrational because the development of a rational collective subject, a unified humanity, failed to materialize.”⁴² It ultimately becomes clear that with the reconsideration of class and totality as categories to be affirmed, social contradiction, and thus the self-reflexive ground of immanent critique, have vanished.⁴³ Paramount in “Sociology and Psychology” is Adorno's use of the unconscious to bring to light the ‘scars’ of totalitarian violence in the *hope* of lessening it, but it fails to recognize that the pathological is as much symptomatic of the social ‘wounds’ (i.e., of capital's totalized universe) as it is of social contradiction.⁴⁴ Thus, in Adorno, the subject as social monad appears as a preserve against the dehumanizing pseudo-individuation of a universalizing apparatus, “a totality that no longer tolerates any hiding places in which an in any way autonomous subjectivity that has not been already processed by society could conceal itself.”⁴⁵

As such, the above critique (of both Lukács and Adorno) is in some sense the basis from which I argue that the ground for systematizing the subjective dimension of capitalism must necessarily begin — as Marx does for capital's objective side — by retracing the elementary form of the monad as a “social hieroglyphic.”⁴⁶ Just as value, as a purely social relation, falsely appears to be a thing thanks to the objectified form of the commodity; so too, the subject-form of the collectivized individual embodies and is in itself a social relation: the positing of a specific sociality occurring in abstraction from, say, conscious, erotic relationships or a purposive concern for the maintenance of life means. That is, the foundation of capital's asocial sociality (the inner-contradiction of capitalist socialization between total sociability and radical asociality) is itself posited in this pathologized subject form.⁴⁷

Such a critique of the subjective dimension of capitalism, as an automatically and unconsciously produced socialization, must necessarily mediate itself *vis-à-vis* a theory and critique of its pathologized subject-form — now clearly manifest in capital's terminal crisis — and arguably must at least set out from a historicized Freud.

Immanent Critique in Marx and Freud: A Theory of Crisis Arising out of Capital's Elementary Forms

Firstly, any possible ground for a genuine mediation linking up Marx and Freud is to be sought on the level of method: namely, that both can be seen as initiating an

immanent social critique of capitalist socialization, beginning with the essential, contradictory forms under which it appears. Regarding Marx, of course, one can assume this claim as simply a given; but almost the opposite could be said of Freud. Therefore, the bulk of my argument below will seek to establish that the Freudian critique, while naturalizing what are in fact relations specific to value-form sociality, nevertheless offers an immanent account of *only* the subjective dimension of capital, once this critique is itself subjected to historicization. Framed as if a critique of primordial history, the tell-tale heart of Freud's critique is its form: appearing (if much less systematically so and with much more limited scope) as the uncanny mirror of Capital.

Firstly, in the case of both Freud and Marx, the immanent foundation of critique is apparent in their distinct beginning and end points: retracing, from presumed social immediacy, elementary forms, which are critically reconstructed as both the form of appearance and the determinant mediations of (capitalist) socialization. Moreover, both the Marxian and Freudian critiques disclose these socially determinate forms (the commodity and the social monad, respectively) as antagonistic unities, embodying the immanent possibility of a social crisis. For Marx in *Capital Vol. 1*, the commodity manifests itself as the contradictory unity between use value and an exchange value (the latter the form of appearance of value). For Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* the individual monad — by no means a self-contained, self-conscious rational unit — is determined by and further determines social existence according to universalized, unconscious instincts, which are divided between life/libidinal and aggressive drives (the latter as a form of appearance of the death drive).⁴⁸ Finally, in the case of both Marx and Freud, the veiled third term, while actually existing, is tangible only in an externalized, mystified form.⁴⁹ Value, in appearing, falsely, to reside inside the commodity as its positive content — discovering its authentic form of appearance only in the circulation of any arbitrarily given use value — actually discloses itself as a social relation obscured when one specific commodity acquires as its use value an independent value form (money). Likewise, Freud's postulation of a death drive (the aim of life being, purportedly, to return to an inanimate state) appears as such only when projected outward as individual aggression or when condensed with the aims of the libido. Insofar as Freud stipulates that the death drive is a collectivized aim, not alleviated but continually reconstituted by the constraints of society (albeit in nothing like the following dialectical, de-mystified terms) Freud describes as a "drive" what is, effectively, no less than is value, a social relation.

Thus, in both cases, the tenuous cohesion of these elementary forms is itself the positing of a social crisis: the antagonistic aspects tenuously unified in the commodity, as well as the dual, antagonistic characteristics held together in the form of the individual, can just as easily be dirempted.⁵⁰ When in the *Grundrisse* Marx justifies, "bringing the commodity forward" — as an end product that is in fact the positing of the specifically capitalist form of production — he accords central importance

to the fact that the commodity form is constituted as a unity of these antagonistic aspects — that “can just as directly split apart.”⁵¹ If the ramifications of this are not explicitly stipulated in the *Grundrisse*, they are certainly made explicit in Claus Peter Ortlieb’s “A Contradiction between Matter and Form.” Ortlieb asserts that in order to assess the true effect of continually increasing labor productivity, with its corollary goal of generating an eternal fountain of relative surplus value, it is necessary to examine such productivity’s objectified results in the contradictory forms of value and material wealth.⁵² Here, Ortlieb calculates what is already stipulated in Marx’s critical, demystified labor theory of value: that productivity directly varies with the mass of use values produced, but inversely with the mass of value mediated by the former. Hence, Ortlieb’s emphasis, that this same dual character of the commodity both embodies and is itself, what Marx terms capital’s “moving contradiction” — one that is continuously reproduced as capitalism works its way unceasingly even if unevenly towards its terminal crisis.⁵³

And, just as the diremption of the commodity reveals, in crisis, the blind dynamic beneath the frozen image of reality, it follows that the antagonistic character of the social monad as subject — as “an element of the movement of commodities and as an impotent observer of that movement.” That is, it splits apart as the pathologizing of such a subject becomes manifest.⁵⁴ In the case of Freud, the full realization of the crisis embodied in the dual character of the individual is intellectually realized and rendered explicit in his late theory of the artificial group or *die Masse* — that is, mass society as it is instantiated by and through the crisis brought on by the “Fordist Wars.”⁵⁵ Specifically, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud (reading the crowd as a social totality) reconstructs the ambivalent bond of identification occurring between members of the *die Masse* as merely the ideological displacement of the all-sided competition and violence at the core of liberal modernity, “the reversal of what was first a hostile feeling [the all-sided competition of social existence] into a positively-toned tie of the nature of an identification.”⁵⁶ Ultimately, it is this ambivalent relation of identification (a narcissistic ‘mirroring the same’) which embodies, for Freud, a potential social crisis: as, during the First World War, this relation is no longer displaced as common spirit between pseudo-concrete universalized subjects, but manifestly appears as modernity’s foundation on violence brought home — as a collectivized fetishization of (self)-destruction.⁵⁷ And from the above, Freud concludes (undialectically), the existence of an ontological antagonism between the life and the destructive instincts: an antagonism which both necessitates the formation of civilization to repress it and which is continually reconstituted and reactivated by the social domination necessary for civilization.

Thus, the real divergence here is that Marx’s immanent critique not only describes social contradiction (the diremption of value and material wealth) as a definite tendency due to the drive of each individual capitalist to exact relative surplus value and thus the drive to devalorize the commodities it produces absolutely *vis-à-*

vis capital as a whole. Rather, in Marx, social contradiction allows for a self-reflexive critique, able to ground its own conditions of possibility; and, moreover, allows for the immanent possibility of an alternative social formation. Freud, while positing the immanent threat of the death drive, regards the extant civilization stemming from the renunciation of the immediate gratification of the pleasure principle as the best of possible worlds: “the most irrefutable indictment of Western civilization and at the same time the most unshakeable defense of this civilization.”⁵⁸ These divergences in method are suggestive in themselves of the political differences which follow. Freudian theory — by naturalizing its own historically specific conjuncture — assumes the impossibility of a preferable alternative and as such orients itself as a palliative therapy within a repressive, normative order.

In contrast, Marx’s dialectical materialism — which understands itself to be systematizing the historically determinate nature of its own social form — is thus oriented toward the immanent possibility of this form’s abolition, as freedom from capital’s dehumanization and pauperization. For, as Postone formulates what is perhaps the core argument appearing in the final pages of Chapter 1 of *Capital Vol. 1*, while “labor as such does not constitute society *per se*, labor in capitalism, however, does constitute society.”⁵⁹ *Capital Vol. 1* captures the totality of modern social relations precisely because labor under capitalism is no longer merely the production of goods but functions instead as a socially mediating activity:

The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange values presupposes the dissolution of all personal (historic) relations of dependence in production, as well as the all sided dependence of the producers on one another. Each individual’s product is dependent on the production of others; and the transformation of his own product into the necessities of his own life is similarly dependent on the consumption of others. Prices are old; exchange also; but the increasing determination of the former costs of production, as well as the increasing dominance of the latter over all relations of production only develop fully, and continue to develop completely, in bourgeois society... the reciprocal and all sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection.⁶⁰

A juncture overlooked by Freud, capitalism constitutes a decisive rupture from the social evolution of pre-capitalist, tributary systems, which are reproduced via overt and personalized relations of domination — under which all aspects of social life, including labor and the production of wealth are subordinated. That is, in contrast to capital, premodern sociality is mediated via conscious relations of power: “if, therefore, one were to write the theory of the tributary mode of production, the title of the work would have to be *Power* instead of *Capital* [...] and the title of the first

chapter “The Fetishism of Power” instead of “The Fetishism of the Commodities” (sic).⁶¹ It is only under capitalism that social reproduction becomes unconscious, asocial sociality, attaining an objectivity that seemingly exists over and above the individuals it produces:

Looked at from one side, the commodity’s rise to dominance as a form of wealth leads to the formation of a highly socialized system... at the same time, the reduction of wealth as such to wealth in its commodity form signifies a systematic desocialization... under which social relations exist only as relations between things... [and wherein] the social effect and social reality [of these products] appear totally irrelevant.⁶²

Because Freud does not understand the death drive as something historically constituted by and through capital, he is forced to consider the crisis embodied in capital’s social-monad-as-subject as a literally biologized and thus inescapable death drive. As Marx says of materialists in general, “The crude materialism of the economists who regard as the natural properties of things that are social relations of production among people, and qualities which things obtain because they are subsumed under these relations.”⁶³ As such, Freud characterizes the crisis this drive represents — the threat of unmitigated destruction — as immanent to a civilizational order that nevertheless cannot but be preserved. In other words, with abstraction from its historical determinants, crisis becomes, in Freud, a tautology.

“As If” a Drive: The Pathologized Violence of Value-Form Relationality

This is to say that critical Marxists should not take seriously the pervasive violence of modern sociality as it is brought to light in Freud’s materialist critique. As the historically determined relationality through which we as subjects confront one another, such pathologized, all-sided violence is (non-consciously) socially constitutive and constituting; and in this sense, perhaps best conceptualized ‘as if’ a drive:

The truth of the whole sides with one-sidedness, not pluralistic synthesis: a psychology that turns its back on society and idiosyncratically concentrates on the individual and his archaic heritage says more about the hapless state of society than one which seeks by its ‘wholistic approach’ or an inclusion of social ‘factors’ to join the ranks of a no longer existent *universitas literarum*.⁶⁴

In other words, despite the many credible indictments of Freudian theory (whether Marxian or otherwise) critical social theory still cannot, as it often has, comfortably throw out the antagonism of the death drive to the life instincts as simply specious:

and precisely because Freud does instigate an immanent (if also uncritical) theory of the pathologized relations of value-form sociality. This argument above is perhaps most systematically and cogently made in Ernst Lohoff's "Violence as the Order of Things and the Logic of Extermination," which argues that while Freud's materialist approach definitely masks the "constitutive but buried connection" between the death drive and the commodity subject, this theory is indisputably an immanent critique of capitalism's systematic foundation on violence:

"As in Hobbes and Hegel before him, in Freud the constitutive but buried connection between violence and the commodity subject is brought into view. Like his predecessors, of course, he can only reveal this intimate relation by clouding its specific character and turning it into something transhistorically and naturally given, substituting projection for repression. The projective character of Freud's phylogenetic myth can scarcely be ignored"⁶⁵

In particular, Lohoff argues that the character of the death drive discloses not violence *as such*, but its specific form of manifestation under capital. This is not at all to suggest that pre-capitalist societies were inherently peaceful, "to be sure, the propensity for violence was well known in traditional societies... as a medium of oppression."⁶⁶ Rather, the fact that social violence appears to Freud as a drive (i.e., as a collectivized aim and not qualitatively differentiated, as a function of power), necessarily corresponds to the historically specific scope of violence under capital, which appears as uniquely universalized and decontextualized: "violence in the context of commodity society transformed itself into the foundation of all subject forms."⁶⁷

As such, the death drive according to Freud must be treated as actually existing, precisely because of the rigorously immanent, if superficially biologized approach he adopts: beginning, not from an unfounded conception of totality according to abstract concepts, but empirically retracing what is seemingly immediate — that elementary form, the subject as a self-enclosed, monadic unit. Just as the commodity is not merely what it appears—a purely thingly substance — but appears instead as an objectification of value (itself a social mediation), so too, the social monad does not, as it appears in capitalism, assert pure self-interest (as if fully manifested in outright competition or aggression). Rather than merely being compelled as individual acts, it falls under a more general compulsion (here, the death drive). Likewise, Freud posits as socially decisive an apparently objective, universalized aim by which all other desires are coded — and under which erotic and material satisfaction are, to put it in value-critical terminology, dissociated.⁶⁸ Moreover, just as Marx's critique self-reflexively accounts for itself via the contradictory dynamic of capitalism (as it is posited in the elementary form of the commodity), Freud's critique accounts for

itself in the surfacing of the pathological, wherein ‘normality’ becomes visible in its true light:

The mental life of human individuals, when subjected to psycho-analytic investigation, offers us the explanation with the help of which we are able to solve a number of riddles in the life of human communities, or at least set them in true light.⁶⁹

This is essentially to say that, if ahistorically, Freud nevertheless grounds a self-reflexive and immanent critique, via the surfacing of the pathological as social contradiction—the latter posited as an ‘elementary’ (and antagonistic) social form of subjectivity—as the social monad.

As such, once Freud’s theory of the subject is realized as projective in character (rather than written off as an acritical reified reflection), the death drive can be seen to constitute the obverse reflection of the objective laws of capital in crisis laid out by Marx. As the unconscious dimension of value mediated society, the death drive parallels the objective social compulsion of valorization, indifferently to and — contemporaneously as the current, arguably terminal crisis of capitalism continues to unfold — in conflict with actual human needs as fulfilled by material wealth. Just as for Freud the crisis of civilization is not the exclusive result of the seemingly self-interested, aggressive desires of individuals but is actually the external manifestation of a historically specific death drive; for Marx, the competition between capitals (and individuals) is truly the expression of social interest — the contradictory drive of capital in general to de-valorize itself.

Indeed, insofar as the socioeconomic reality of today only now fully begins to correspond to the fundamental categories as laid out in the first chapter of *Capital Vol. 1* — so too does Freud’s instantiation of the death drive come into its own as an actually existing category, fully manifested as the operative compulsion under contemporary global capital.⁷⁰

In the succession of the economic categories, as in any other historical, social science, it must not be forgotten that their subject—here, modern bourgeois society—is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality, and that these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence.⁷¹

That is, as the repercussion of capital’s central antagonism today becomes actualized, we as critical Marxists can no longer afford to shrug off Freud’s postulation of a death drive as a conjunctural, affective reaction or as bourgeois ideology any more than we would be willing to shrug off the First World War as an isolated episode of self-destructive violence, having nothing to do with the continued reproduction of

value-form sociality. As Robert Kurz has wryly put it, the violence of the First World War is hardly an isolated manifestation, external to the essence of capitalism:

In the prevailing bourgeois-democratic ideology, characteristic of its self-deception and historical distortion is that it seeks, as far as possible, to detach the inner contradiction of capitalism from... world catastrophe in the transition to the second industrial revolution. Even if begrudgingly compelled to connect the 'Ur-catastrophe' of the First World War with the genuinely capitalist processes of colonialism, imperialism and the arms race of competing emergent national economies (although mostly from a perspective [which regards them] as somehow 'time-conditioned' excesses, having nothing to do with the true essence of capitalism), the apologetic bourgeois and liberal thinking of the West follows a different pattern for the period after 1918, in order to blur the traces of blood still continuously left behind by the unfolding of capitalist history.⁷²

But today, least of all, can the death drive be discounted, as a chronically crisis-ridden global capitalism in its own paroxysms of hyper-violence reaches the immanent limits of its global self-valorization and hence of its and all of humanity's self-reproduction. On the one hand, the fundamental antagonism intrinsic to the commodity makes itself felt in its complete disregard for human needs: If the destruction of real material wealth is necessary for the preservation of value in the system, then such material will be not given to the largely unemployed labor force it has pauperized, but destroyed:

if the destruction of material wealth serves the valorization of value, then material wealth will be destroyed... into this category [falls]... environmental destruction: the long-term fertility of the soil... air and water of a quality that can be breathed and drunk... biodiversity and undamaged ecosystems... or a climate that is hospitable to human life.⁷³

But as the self-end of value continues to demand unrelenting devotion from the subject it has so continuously reproduced that it comes to resemble time's carcass, the antagonistic character of the latter becomes, in parallel fashion, fully dirempted. That is, where this subject is compelled, in its powerlessness over the objective social processes, to postpone the unrealizable aim of valorization, whether in the form of regressive collective identities or in the form of the mob, the resulting uninhibited violence and destruction that cannot, as, in appearance can the realization of value, be continuously deferred, become, not only in appearance but in actuality ends in themselves.⁷⁴

It is in this sense that social crisis for Marx, and the crisis of civilization for Freud (systematized in *Capital* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, respectively) become one

and the same: despite a real scarcity of resources and the increasingly superfluous population of a now virtually unexploitable, de-socialized reserve army of the *unemployable*, the objective, social drive of valorization compels capitalists personified to destroy the material conditions of life.

Capitalism and Its Discontents: Abstract Labor and Abstracted Erotics in Freud

To further substantiate the idea that Freud and Marx articulate obverse sides of the same social crisis, I next want to fully demonstrate a claim made, in brief, earlier: that Freud's conception of the evolution of civilization from its archaic roots is necessarily a projection of the drives constituted by and through value-form sociality. On a fundamental level, the naturalization of this social form is endemic to Freud's corpus: but it is most directly visible in *Civilization and its Discontents* (and other such anthropological works as *Totem and Taboo*) in Freud's assumption that civilization, from its very beginnings, is mediated by the necessity of labor (rather than power). That is, by ontologizing the socially mediating function of abstract labor as an aspect of civilization *per se*, Freud further projects necessity as constituting the predominant category of unfreedom throughout civilization. Namely, Freud hereby veils the historically determinate form of necessity that is, under capitalism, socially synthetic — with a wholly imaginary natural scarcity of existence:

Th[e] naturalization of abstract domination is reinforced by the overlapping of two very different sorts of necessity associated with social labor. Labor in some form is a necessary precondition — a transhistorical or “natural” social necessity — of human social existence as such. This necessity can veil the specificity of commodity-producing labor — that, although one does not consume what one produces, one's labor is nevertheless the necessary social means of obtaining products to consume. The latter necessity is a historically determinate social necessity... Because the specific social mediating role played by commodity-producing labor is veiled, and such labor appears as labor *per se*, these two sorts of necessity are conflated in the form of an apparently valid transhistorical necessity: one must labor to survive.⁷⁵

Further symptomatic of this naturalization is that the character of labor in Freudian theory mirrors precisely its unique character under capital as ontological: as abstract, asocial activity that excludes the material, sexual realm. This is to say that, for Freud as well as for Marx, labor has attributed to it a socially mediating abstract function, with the exception of course that for Freud labor is understood ontologically.

Firstly, a primary indication of Freud's naturalization of capitalist relationality is that he takes, as his point of departure, not the manifest relation between subjects, but their division from each other — in the absence of the overt, direct relations of

dependence and obligation that reproduce early civilization. That is, Freud takes as his point of departure the form of the monad as a structuring category of socialization, as such, “To the modern, Newtonian view (see also Leibniz’s ‘windowless monads’) [there corresponds] a concept of human society that no longer takes as its point of departure the commonality of its members but their separation/division from each other.”⁷⁶ Because Freud naturalizes this historically determinate form of subjectivity — imagining civilization as a collection of individuals — he likewise imagines, just as the bourgeois economists do, that such a mythologized civilization would have begun via an originary social contract meant to prevent outright the otherwise certain manifestation of individual aggression, maintaining the security of survival. This security is instantiated via subordination to the taboos of the primal father: which Freud further imagines as the compulsion to work, in the abstract, as if it were transhistorically the case, that “the aim of humanity is production.”⁷⁷ Moreover, Freud imagines that the “work” necessary to sustain civilizational security would mandate the restriction of the libidinal aims to a steadfast affection for mankind in general.⁷⁸ Here, Freud reasons that such an abstraction from libidinal aims is necessary in order to sustain a society for work in common, because sexuality does not allow bonds that are strong enough to function as social mediation. Or, in other words, he assumes that sexuality is naturally expressed as a monogamous, private relation — such that sexuality is constituted as entirely self-sufficient between merely two individuals, and thus would not sustainably bind together a large community. Indeed, Freud characterizes civilization and sexuality as antithetical:

Sexual love is a relationship between two individuals, in which a third can only appear superfluous or disturbing, whereas civilization depends on relationships between a considerable number of individuals... [Eros] clearly betrays the core of his being, his purpose of making one out of more than one, but when he has achieved this in the proverbial way he refuses to go any further.⁷⁹

In Freud’s view, because of the necessarily limited social bond made possible by sexual love, it could not protect against the aggressive, destructive impulses that manifest themselves between different groups — that which necessitates the formation of civilization in the first place.

It is precisely the above conception of civilization and sexuality as antithetical that betrays, in Freudian theory, a naturalized, capitalistic character, “the *form of social contextualization characteristic of capitalism is one of apparent de-contextualization.*”⁸⁰ That is, it appears in Freud as social reproduction qua socially abstract universal affection. Apparent in Freud’s conceptualization above is both an ahistorical character, in that sexuality as such supposedly cannot, constitute a form of social, political reproduction; and a hidden projective one — such that an asocial reproduction of

society wherein man is ontologically “born into scarcity” can thus only be mediated by necessity against starvation — as labor.⁸¹ In the first case, as Michel Foucault cogently demonstrates in the *History of Sexuality*, pre-modern Platonic love (although not without its share of abstract idealism), functions as a kind of practical social tutelage whose public character is specifically visible in that it functions, among other things, as a kind of apprenticeship for technical skills.⁸² Moreover, this classic example is not an exception so much as the rule regarding premodern social forms in which maintained and reproduced the fetishism of power necessitates that the relations between people are fetishized (or, in Freudian terminology, cathected).⁸³ In other words, in pre-modernity (i.e., pre-capitalism), social reproduction by no means appears as abstract affection entirely liberated from its physical, sensuous aspects, but relies on conscious, tangible personal relationships to reproduce itself—politically and educationally. Only under the modern social form, after labor itself (per the value relation) comes to mediate the social (unconsciously, and indirectly, in the absence of direct, structural relations of dependency) do the public and practical aspects of Eros undergo abstraction into categorizable personhoods (with sexuality relegated to the private realm).

Symptomatically, Freud argues (transhistorically), not that personalized relations of dependence secure social reproduction, but that this occurs through the sphere of work itself, “[work] attaches the individual firmly to reality... for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality, in the human community.”⁸⁴ Outside of this, community is secured only by abstract masculinist affection, “of which women are little capable.”⁸⁵ Ultimately, that Freud conceives the sublimation of sexuality as necessary to sustain civilizational security, qua labor, can only be symptomatic of the fact that work, in Freud, is already naturalized as an abstraction and labor is endowed with a synthetic, mediating function that is contentless, a withdrawal from life. As Trenkle has argued regarding the already abstract category of labor in capital:

abstracting means withdrawing or withdrawing from something... what is socially and historically specific about... this form is that in the first instance the fact that work is a separate sphere, cut off from the rest of its social setting. Whoever works is working and doing nothing else. Relaxing, amusing oneself, pursuing personal interest, loving, and so on—these things must take place outside or at least must not interfere with its thoroughly rationalized functional routines... for this reason, that is, as a result of the exclusion of all the moments of non-labor from the sphere of labor — the historical establishment of labor is accompanied by the formation of further separate spheres of society, into which all those dissociated (*abgespaltene*n) moments are banished, spheres which take on an exclusive character.⁸⁶

Work, peremptorily dirempted from Eros, appears in Freud as, necessarily, a naturalization of capitalist labor, a withdrawal from social life: “civilization is the obeying of the laws of economic necessity, since a large amount of the psychical energy it uses for its own purposes has to be withdrawn from sexuality.”⁸⁷

“The War of All Against All”: The Social (and Self-Undermining) Compulsions of Valorization and the Death Drive

Yet Freudian theory, if properly historicized as a critique of capital, is hardly dismissible as a reification: and precisely because, as above, Freud retraces and reconstructs the ideal, immediate thought-forms of modern socialization so as to critically posit its actually existing tendencies (albeit in abstraction from the real governing structures of the social form it critiques). Or, Freud’s dogged and reified materialism accurately conceives of the modern social totality via its unconscious, driving compulsion in that Freud (unknowingly) parallels Marx, in opposing free satisfaction not with economic necessity rather than with the constraints of power. Although Freud clearly does not understand this necessity to be socially synthetic, as does Marx, this formulation can only describe modern social relations. No less, like Marx, Freud posits this relationality as, undeniably, self-undermining: That is, the latter’s positing of the threat to socialization (civilization) as a threat coming from within civilization as its own veiled, objective social drive. For Freud, the drive is towards the inward goal of death.⁸⁸ Freud originally defines the death drive, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as a self-destructive one, “the aim of all life is death [since] looking backwards, ‘inanimate things existed before living ones.’”⁸⁹ In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud revisits this drive, exploring its tangible implications as an inclination toward aggression: as that which civilization originally represses, it persists in the unconscious as a continued threat of disintegration. However, Freud does not revoke here his understanding of the primary drive as in fact the drive toward self-destruction:

It might be assumed that the death instinct operated silently within the organism toward its dissolution, but that of course, was no proof. A more fruitful idea was that a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness. In this way the instinct itself could be pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism was destroying some other thing, whether animate or inanimate, instead of destroying its own self. Conversely, any restriction of this aggressiveness directed outward would be bound to increase the self-destruction which is in any case proceeding.⁹⁰

That Freud formulates with cogency that capital's unconscious dimension — the obverse reflection of the objective laws constituting value-form sociality — is specifically apparent in that this instinct toward aggressiveness, while manifesting itself as a competition between monadic, individual interests, is, in essence (as competition is in Marx), the external expression of a generalized (social) compulsion. Indeed, Marx's conception of competition directly overlaps with Freud's treatment of the death drive as a veiled substance whose form of appearance is outwardly directed aggression as the war of all against all. Moreover, Freud's use of this dictum to characterize (capitalist) society's foundation on violence critically diverges from its emergence in Hobbes to parallel its use in Marx.⁹¹ For Marx specifically argues that the war of all against all enacted in the necessity of valorization (as free competition) is merely the manifest form of the real, reciprocal dependence of value-mediated society:

The real point is not that each individual's pursuit of his private interests promotes the totality of private interests, the general interest. One could just as easily deduce from this abstract phrase [free competition] that each individual reciprocally blocks the assertion of the others' interests, so that, instead of a general *affirmation* (my emphasis), this war of all against all produces a general negation. The point is rather that private interest is itself already a socially determined interest... bound to the reproduction of its conditions and means.⁹²

In other words, for Marx, capitalist competition hardly operates as the negative function understood by Adam Smith and other bourgeois economists: as the breaking up of monopolies and, as such, the realization of individual freedom. Rather, its real function as a law is as a mechanism of mutual compulsion. Specifically, it is the compulsion to increase productivity by decreasing the socially necessary labor time and thus decreasing the mass of labor employed toward valorization. As such, what free competition really represents for capital in general is its immanent contradiction, insofar as this compulsion is the real de-valorization of labor-power. It is that which maintains, by constantly renewed self-valorization the total value in the system. Because, of course, it is value that reproduces the social under capital, this drive threatens the destruction of the social itself.

Crucial to solving the puzzle of how the law of competition seems to go against the fundamental self-interest of all capitalists is Marx's assertion that the absolute value of the commodity is immaterial to the capitalist who produces it. Rather, only its relative value is important, such that the capitalist realizes whatever value he advanced, in addition to the surplus carried along with it.⁹³ While the labor theory of value, in Marx's formulation of it, clearly denotes that the value of commodities (including the commodity of labor power itself) is inversely proportional to productivity; on the

other hand, relative surplus value and productivity are directly proportional. This loophole is fully realized with the advent of “real subsumption,” or the necessity of obtaining relative surplus value (the impossibility of extending the working day, or obtaining absolute surplus value). Hence, the individual capitalist, seeking only to drive down the price of the labor power by increasing productivity, drives down the socially necessary labor time by forcing all other capitalists to adopt this new standard. Crucially, this process creates an increased mass of use value over which is spread the same (exchange) value. The effect is as follows: the said capitalist must create a more extensive market in order to realize the value embodied in this larger material mass — but this can only be done by selling his products below their social value. However, this does not cause a loss of value for this capitalist in the singular, who, having increased the relative portion of the working day, is thus able to appropriate greater surplus value even by devaluing his own products.

The result of this compulsive repetition in contemporary global capital becomes increasingly manifest: it represents the real, shrinking possibility of exacting surplus, and thus the decreasing possibility of valorization. In this regard, Ortlieb systematically assesses that as a progressively higher rate of exploitation is achieved by increasingly driving down socially necessary labor time, the mass of surplus value spread over the mass of material produced can only decrease absolutely. Indeed, as the amount of surplus time becomes increasingly higher in proportion to necessary labor time, the amount of surplus value extracted becomes incrementally lesser and lesser: “with unlimited growth in productivity, [the rate of surplus value] tends, like the total value, toward zero.”⁹⁴ Indeed, in post-Fordist capitalism — identifiable as such in that the effects of productivity here render an enormous amount of labor power permanently unexploitable — the semblance of the continued total growth of value is in actuality, “the creation of a new basis for accumulation in... the systematic anticipation of future value in the form of fictitious capital” as claims to value in the form of bonds, stocks, etc. “now [too] reaching its limits.”⁹⁵ This transformation is systematically delineated in Trenkle’s “Labor in the Era of Fictitious Capital.” That fictitious capital — as the structurally necessary postponement of the absolute limits of valorization — no longer merely promotes capitalist valorization but indeed, in contemporary society, has itself become the essential ground of the system. The implications here are not only that capital’s real foundation of valorization in labor no longer exists, but that, even as fictitious capital would seem to postpone such a crisis, its continued reproduction of the capitalist process results in a critical short-circuiting, in “accumulation without valorization.”⁹⁶ The indefinite postponement of valorization, which cannot possibly be realized via its no-longer-extant-foundation, not only runs the risk of destroying capital in general, but moreover, realizes the social compulsion of valorization only at the expense of social reproduction:

While the production of material wealth until the end of Fordism was merely an extrinsic means to augment abstract wealth, it at least implied a direct (if instrumental) relationship... but when the systemic function of material wealth is reduced to providing imaginary material for the anticipation of future value, indifference toward the content, conditions, and consequences of that production intensifies to the extreme. The accumulation of abstract wealth is delinked from its material side to the greatest extent possible. [Thus] the continual destruction of... social coexistence... is becoming [capitalism's] essential content. In the most conspicuous embodiment of this dynamic, countries in crisis like Greece, Spain, and Portugal are being forced to shut down large segments of their social and health systems... in the name of the (notoriously illusory) expectation that the state will at some point be able to pay its debts. In these cases, the *outright destruction* of material wealth becomes the reference point for further accumulation of fictitious capital.⁹⁷

Thus — and possibly for the first time — contemporary society manifests clearly the categorical antagonisms in Marx and Freud (as material wealth against value, and the libidinal against the death drives) as social crises — and, moreover, as the same social crisis. Since labor as such reproduces the social, the compulsion of valorization even as this ground has evaporated has come to result in actual social self-destruction. On one hand, this manifests itself in the sheer pervasiveness of violence “characterized by autonomous operators running amok, killer sects, warlords of every description, and transnational NGO’s of another — terrorist — stripe.”⁹⁸ That is, as Robert Kurz has argued in *Weltordnungskrieg*, the “terminal stage of the capitalist end in itself” realizes itself in (the re-emergence of) a war of all against all:⁹⁹

The anomic condition of a “war of all against all,” first emerged in the transition to a totalized system of exploitation and statehood at the beginning of modernity; and, with the inevitable end of modernity through the barbaric dissolution and self-destructive process of this system, it emerges again... on a planetary scale. However, the character of these anomic relations of violence unconsciously reflects the difference between the beginning and end... [While] the early modern period, circa the Thirty Years’ War, did not represent consciously defined goals, this horizon implicitly determined the course of events and gave the actors a certain logical orientation.... The postmodern anomie has the horizon of only dissolution and destruction... negatively globalized humanity... pushed to the limit of objectivized fetish-relations.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, made palpable in such a logic of annihilation, the sheer abstractness of the commodity subject's "destructive will" intimates not merely the "destruction of the 'other'... for the purposes of self-preservation at all costs," but the desire for self-destruction, the futility of existence under the aegis of value.¹⁰¹

How Solutions to the Contemporary Crisis becomes Dystopic in Marcuse: The Importance of Capital's Essential Categories (Value versus Material Wealth)

Finally, while it is clear that contemporary capitalism truly has reached its absolute limits, it is also clear that this reality is not liberating, but destructive—in the absence of a social movement, "the transition to a liberated society of whatever kind presupposes conscious human action. But it does not follow from this that in the absence of such a transition capitalism can continue to function without a care: it could also end in horror."¹⁰² In this regard, Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* attempts, more or less, to articulate the immanent form of such a liberated society, and uniquely, by addressing both of these social crises. While absolutely crucial to the above analysis, and certainly path-breaking, Marcuse's answer to the above (joint) crisis is, essentially, limited by the conjuncture under which it is conceived — which is to say that it, as a traditionally inclined critique, shares in the aforementioned problems discussed of the Frankfurt school. Symptomatic here is that Marcuse's solution to the above social crisis is not, ultimately, structurally different than Freud's refutation of the workability of 'communism', understood as the abolition of private property and with it and the satisfaction of human needs—with Freud's logic here being "aggressiveness was not created by property."¹⁰³ Despite its uncritical nature, this is a riposte worth mentioning: because, in the sense that Freud's death drive (mirroring the contradictory tendency of capital to destroy, ultimately, the social host on which it depends) is in fact the social compulsion, under the value relation, of literal social self-destruction, Freud actually launches a correct refutation of the idea that with the redistribution of wealth, all social problems will ultimately be solved. This is certainly not to imply, on the part of Freud, any sophisticated understanding of Marxism (or intentions parallel to it); but that due to the value-critical immanence of his methodology, Freud is nevertheless able to intuitively reject such a solution to the crisis of modern socialization as problematic. Marcuse does not place sufficient emphasis on capital's critical and defining antagonisms and thus this solution is inherently limited to being a critique of distribution within the value-form. (When I say this, I refer to the essential antagonisms as posited, per *Wertkritik's* reading of the first chapter of *Capital Vol. 1*, between material wealth and value, and between total sociability and radical asociality — rather than simply the exploitation of labor). Specifically, here, Marcuse skews capital's abstract form of domination and thus the historically determinate form of necessity as it appears in Marx: that is, he opposes free satisfaction to relations of power (as instrumental reason) rather than to an objective and socially synthetic necessity. As such, Marcuse's emphasis on

administrative domination (as the locus of an imperative to extract an amount of labor unnecessary for material wealth) ultimately hypostatizes the form of labor under capital as a transhistorical category — and stunts the impetus of some potentially more radical conclusions.¹⁰⁴

On one hand, Marcuse correctly pinpoints the locus of capital's crisis as its sheer productivity: Under Fordism labor becomes so enormously productive that the total amount of social labor expended could ideally be reduced. Here Marcuse argues that a surplus repression of sexual drives structures the relations of production, such that "the inhibitions are imposed... by a hierarchical distribution of scarcity, by the... interest in domination."¹⁰⁵ As such, Marcuse argues that the immanent possibility of increasing leisure time outside the toil of labor would depend not on realizing abundance for all, but lowering the absurd standard of living such that productivity only need fulfill basic human needs universally with distribution according to need. Actually, in *Capital Vol. 1*, Marx argues much the same thing: industrial technology could be used to free labor from toil. However, this is conditional: technology, when its use value is subsumed by capital, the value relation cannot but further enslave its workers. The problem here is that Marcuse makes necessary labor to refer to material necessities — a certain standard of living, unjustly distributed abundance, etc. That is, Marcuse does not treat productivity as embodying this central antagonism of material wealth and value, but instead treats it as the problem of domination — of falsely perpetuated scarcity that perpetuates unnecessary labor. But in *Capital Vol. 1* socially necessary labor refers to a socially synthetic and quasi-objective form of necessity. It is not, then, domination that perpetuates an unnecessary amount of social labor in spite of such high productivity; but rather, that the creation of new sectors of mass production offset the effect of the "monstrous compression of work" (i.e., the real reduction of socially necessary labor time) that Fordist productivity represented.¹⁰⁶ As such, the effect of this enormous increase in productivity after Fordism has literally freed labor, not from toil but from the means to appropriate subsistence; truly positing that unfreedom under capital is due to necessity, and not immediately to domination (as power).

Moreover, by limiting his critique to one of domination as the locus maintaining a hierarchical, material scarcity — that is, a critique of distribution — Marcuse actually ontologizes the toil of labor as a fact of human existence.¹⁰⁷ Contingently, Marcuse argues not for the abolition of labor, the form of life it maintains and the totality it generates, but rather posits that while labor can never be a realm of freedom, decreased domination for the sake of profit would "release time and energy for the free play of human faculties *outside* the realm of alienated labor."¹⁰⁸ This becomes, if anything, even more apparent in Marcuse's "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics": even as labor is realized as a site of unfreedom, it simultaneously becomes an inescapable one — which could be ameliorated (via the concept of "play") but not abolished.¹⁰⁹ For, while the concept of play initially appears

as an immanent possibility created by the contradictions of capital itself, the issue here is that Marcuse naturalizes the bifurcation of labor and social life (or play) that constitutes capitalism, (as if the already abstract concrete form of capitalist labor as an existential category of human activity is inseparable from this solution).¹¹⁰ Moreover, by so doing, Marcuse in actuality hypostatizes the two antagonistic sides of the capitalist totality: both what it ‘intends’ and what it dissociates. Play — formulated as the suspension of the directed control over the effect of social production — describes, precisely, an unconsciously produced totality: that is, both capitalism as “total sociability” oriented according to an intentional drive for profit and its latency as “systematic de-socialization” wherein social reality, the social effect of objects is irrelevant.¹¹¹ Within Marcuse’s ontological understanding of labor, play exists not as freedom ‘outside’ capitalist domination, but merely represents the activities and realities it dissociates (including, in effect, the enormous amount of labor power rendered permanently unexploitable after the ‘provisional resolution’ of Fordism).¹¹² In effect, hypostatized here are both antagonistic sides of the capitalist totality— thereby rendered inescapable.

Abolishing and Appropriating Capital’s “Made” Social Relations: Or the Social Itself as Standpoint

The point of working through *Eros and Civilization* is to argue that distribution, domination, and most of all, labor, are all forms that are determined by the value relation. And, insofar as global civilization is reproduced under this relation, it has meant, in capital’s terminal crisis, the compulsive self-destruction of the social as such. Given that the crisis of contemporary capitalism has today made clear that the affirmation of totality would be the affirmation of a secondary barbarism, this essay has broadly intended to explore at least schematically how a critique which makes visible the pathologized, subjective dimension of capitalism might inform the stakes and might assist in precipitating an alternate standpoint of critique — and specifically via the immanent formation — not of class — but of the absolutely unique character of capital’s automatic, made social relations:

People in capitalism constitute their social relations and their history by means of labor. Although they also are controlled by what they have constituted, they ‘make’ these relations and this history in a different and more emphatic sense than people ‘make’ pre-capitalist relations (which Marx characterizes as spontaneously arisen and quasi-natural [*naturwüchsig*]).¹¹³

Just as the contradictory dynamic of capitalism provides the essential ground for reconstituting its productive potential (driven by the self-end of value) for the fulfillment of social, material needs, it also allows the realization that the social

relations automatically 'made' under the same socially synthetic end might be, alternatively, re-made. And, following what Marx has shown in *Capital Vol. 1*, the immanent reconstitution of the value-form's subjective dimension would entail unveiling its historically specific, contradictory form — asocial sociality — as posited via its elementary form (the subject as social monad). Both sides, essentially, depend on consciously realizing (and 'not only abolishing, but appropriating') what are in fact social relations constituted in an alien form.¹¹⁴

I want to suggest, therefore, the unveiling of this dynamic (via the newly critical standpoint that now becomes fully perceptible thanks to a historicized Freud) as a crucial counterpart to an immanent critique of the capitalist social form, beyond the critique of intentional exploitation within capital. Specifically, I want at least to suggest in this analysis that an understanding of the value-form's latently pathologized and even suicidal (a)social form of subjectivity — what capital has made of us — in fact hints at the social itself as the standpoint of a more adequate critique of capitalism, the latter now understood as a form of socialization that cannot be progressively affirmed except at the cost, ultimately, of affirming its own self-annihilation — a 'made' sociality that has only itself to lose. Admittedly, this claim requires a great deal more in the way of analysis and self-criticism: in particular, in regards to how the critique this essay attempts would translate to a workable standpoint of praxis inseparable from its theoretical results.

Notes

1. T.W. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," trans. Irving N. Wohlfarth, *New Left Review* I.46 (Nov-Dec. 1967) and *New Left Review* (I.47 Jan-Feb. 1968) 67. Since Adorno is writing in 1955, presumably the reference is to the year 1918, or the period 1918-1919, the years of the failed German proletarian revolution.
2. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology" 67.
3. "Sociology and Psychology" 69, 77.
4. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1993). Marx uses this phrase throughout to indicate the decontextualized and totalized reciprocal dependence of value-mediated society, whereby the interest of the individual is always already socially determined interest.
5. "Sociology and Psychology" 74.
6. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990). See, for example, the passage: "Circulation bursts through all the temporal, spatial and personal barriers imposed by the direct exchange of products, and it does this by splitting up the direct identity present in this case between the exchange of one's own product and the acquisition of someone else's into the two antithetical segments of sale and purchase. To say that these mutually independent and antithetical processes form an internal unity is to say also that their internal unity moves forward through external antitheses. These two processes lack internal independence because they complement each other. Hence, if the assertion of their external independence [*äusserliche Verselbständigung*] proceeds to a certain critical point, their unity violently makes itself felt by producing — a crisis. There is an antithesis, immanent in the commodity, between use-value and value, between private labour which must simultaneously manifest itself as directly social labor, and a particular concrete kind of labor which simultaneously counts as merely abstract universal labor, between the conversion of things into persons and the conversion of persons into things; the antithetical phases of the metamorphosis of the commodity are all the developed forms of motion of this immanent contradiction. These forms therefore imply the possibility of crises, though no more than the possibility. For the development of this possibility into a reality a whole series of conditions is required, which do not yet even exist from the standpoint of the simple circulation of commodities" (209).
7. The one sense in which Adorno's critical-theoretical stance here coincides with but does not exhaust my own in what follows has to do with his privileging of the exchange abstraction — the exchange of equivalents — and the fact that the exchange relation itself becomes apparently the sole constituent of commodity society *per se* — to the possible exclusion of other social constituents and other mediate forms of the value-relation such as labor itself.
8. See Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) 5. Feldner and Vighi's critique develops, in a "parallactic" sense the critique of political economy (Marx) with the critique of the libidinal economy. A central presupposition of their critique is that the mediate link between Marx and Freud is itself only possible to fully theorize through a value-critical understanding of capitalist socialization; and via the latter's more esoteric categories (That is, such is not possible via a critique that affirms the more

sociological category of class, or one which views the category of totality positively).

9. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) 6. The "highly mediated position of class" is a position I will elaborate throughout this essay and especially in Section II (on the significance of Postone and the crisis-oriented *Wertkritik* school).
10. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* 125. In *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* Postone writes of these lines: "Thus, Marx has shown that the statement with which *Capital* begins — the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, appears as an 'immense collection of commodities' is only apparently valid. In capitalism, abstract temporal measure rather than concrete material quantity is the measure of social wealth. The difference is the first determination of the possibility in capitalism that, not only for the poor, but for society as a whole, poverty (in terms of value) can exist in the midst of plenty (in terms of material wealth). Material wealth in capitalism is, ultimately, only apparent wealth" (194).
11. Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination* 154-155. Regarding "capital's tendency to 'delink' abstract wealth from its concrete aspect," see Norbert Trenkle, "Labour in the Era of Fictitious Capital," trans. Joe Keady, *Krisis* 3 (2015).
12. Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination* 62 and 174. Essentially, this follows Postone's critique of totality as it is positively conceived in traditional Marxism (i.e., constituted by real or un-alienated relations of labor which are veiled by the decontextualized appearance of capitalist socialization. On the "made" relations of capitalism, I refer to Postone's distinction between the 'made' relations of capital; as opposed to quasi-natural character of pre-capitalist social relations as formulated in *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, 165-66.
13. See Robert Kurz, "Die Substanz des Kapitals," *Exit!* 1.1 (2005): "...a concept of human society that no longer takes as its point of departure the commonality of its members but their separation/division from each other." Translation by Neil Larsen. This has since been translated in English and published as Robert Kurz, *The Substance of Capital*, trans. Robin Halpin (Chronos Publications: London, 2016).
14. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973) 487-488.
15. Ernst Lohoff, "Violence as the Order of Things and the Logic of Extermination" and "Off Limits, Out of Control: Commodity Society and Resistance in the Age of Deregulation and Denationalization," *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM' Publishing, 2014). "Even in classical bourgeois parts of society, the ideal of the ego-sovereign, controlled from within, has probably never been realized to the degree that is often ascribed to it. Subject form and external guidance... are not contradictory" ("Violence as the Order of Things" 245). And: "If both the market and the mechanical demiurge of the state declare that the majority of people are superfluous, do they demonstrate anything other than their own superfluity?" ("Off Limits, Out of Control" 170).
16. Freud's discovery of the drives and especially the death drive (*Thanatos*) as the second of two broad categories of drives (the first being the erotic/life instincts (*Eros*) occurs relatively late in the progression of his work. This theory represents a major theoretical revision from the centrality of the Oedipus complex and the broader sense of the unconscious that appears in his earlier work.

17. The linkage between the ongoing crisis of the value-form and the sheer pervasiveness of violence engendered by and through it is perhaps most systematically and thoroughly elaborated in Robert Kurz, *Weltordnungskrieg: Das Ende der Souveränität und die Wandlungen des Imperialismus im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Horlemann: 2003). See also, Claus Peter Ortlieb's argument in "A Contradiction between Matter and Form: On the Significance of the Production of Relative Surplus Value in the Dynamic of Terminal Crisis" in *Marxism and The Critique of Value*. On the connection between crisis and the rise in specifically racist and sexist violence, see Norbert Trenkle, "The Rise and Fall of the Working Man: Towards a Critique of Modern Masculinity," *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM' Publishing, 2014).
18. Lohoff, "Off Limits, Out of Control" (173).
19. Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* 179: "As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other."
20. Essentially, I argue here that the hidden kernel of Marx's "economic personifications" argument — aside from how it discloses the alienating objectification of relations under capital — is an epistemological claim. In Hegel's pre-capitalist schema of the lord and bondsman, for example, the lord is never doubled as a "personification," in the thrall of aims that are not his own. Regarding "the identical subject/object." For more, see Postone in *Time, Labor and Social Domination* 75: "Marx suggests that a historical Subject in the Hegelian sense does indeed exist in capitalism, yet he does not identify it with any social grouping, such as the proletariat or humanity. Rather, Marx analyses it in terms of the structure of social relations constituted by forms of objectifying practice and grasped by the category of capital (and hence value)." See as well: Neil Larsen, "Lukács sans Proletariat, or Can History and Class Consciousness Be Rehistoricized?" *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence*, eds. Timothy Bewes and Timothy Hall (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).
21. Claus Peter Ortlieb, "A Contradiction between Matter and Form: On the Significance of the Production of Relative Surplus Value in the Dynamic of Terminal Crisis," *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds. and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM' Publishing, 2014) 117.
22. See Peter Samol "All the Lonely People: Narzissmus als adäquate Subjektform des Kapitalismus," *Krisis* 4 (2016). Samol divides the above subjective manifestations (the rational subordinating agent versus irrational impotence) according to the Oedipal and Narcissistic pathologies. The argument here is that the former pathology appears in capitalism in an extremely limited sense and thus only fully corresponds to liberal capitalism. Rather, the narcissistic pathology, emerging with the instantiation of mass society proper, is the adequate subject of capital one that is fully manifest in crisis capitalism. The specific phrase, "completely impotent regarding its effects" is paraphrased from Feldner and Vighi's *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism*, 79. See also, Juliet Flower MacCannell, *Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
23. Lohoff, "Off Limits, Out of Control" 173. See also Ortlieb, "A Contradiction between Matter and Form," 98 and Norbert Trenkle, "Labor in the Era of Fictitious Capital," trans. Joe Keady, *Krisis* 3 (2015).

24. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 159.
25. “Introduction,” *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds. and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM’ Publishing, 2014) ix.
26. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 125.
27. “Introduction” ix.
28. As Postone argues, “The significance of the social contradiction goes beyond the narrower economic interpretation as the basis of economic crises in capitalism... It should not be understood simply as the social antagonism between laboring and expropriating classes; rather, social contradiction refers to the very fabric of society, to a self-generating “nonidentity” intrinsic to its structures of social relations—which do not, therefore, constitute a stable unitary whole” (*Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 88). Regarding ‘Fordism’ (and in particular, its relation to the contradictory ground of capitalist socialization), Lohoff contextualizes the rise of state-planned consumption (superseding “self-regulating” liberal capitalism) as a deferral of capital’s essential contradiction between “total sociability” and “radical asociality”: “a society that actually sought to drive absolutely every expression of life through the needle’s eye of the exchange of equivalents would become incapable of self-reproduction. To avoid breaking itself apart, commodity society is bound to de-systematize certain components of the social production of wealth, but only so as to subsume them indirectly within the commodity form.” (“Off Limits, Out of Control” 156). See also Robert Kurz, *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus: Ein Abgesang auf die Marktwirtschaft* (München: Ullstein Taschenbuchverlag, 2002). Kurz offers a thorough account of how the Fordist “planned investment in consumption” temporarily resolves the lag between investment in the means of production and consumption.
29. See Norbert Trenkle, “Struggle without Classes: Why There Is No Resurgence of the Proletariat in the Currently Unfolding Capitalist Crisis” *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds. and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM’ Publishing, 2014) 201-224. See also *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 84-120.
30. See Robert Kurz, “Henry Ford und die Geburt der Auto-Gesellschaft,” *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus: Ein Abgesang auf die Marktwirtschaft* (München: Ullstein Taschenbuchverlag, 2002) 421-444. Kurz demonstrates that despite its appearance of philanthropic aims, Fordism is in essence not an increase of the wage so much as a cheapening of the life means of the worker — and specifically via the scientific management of labor, the “transformation of the worker into machine” (435). In effect, then, this enormous increase of productivity is only offset by the creation of new sectors of mass production (requiring massive amounts of additional labor) embodied in the form of the automobile as a mass consumption good. See also Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* on the “pessimistic turn” of critical theory, which with the advent of state capitalism critically reconsiders the notion that labor constitutes “the basis of general human freedom” (103).
31. Norbert Trenkle, “Value and Crisis: Basic Questions,” *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds. and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM’ Publishing, 2014) 3.
32. Trenkle, “Value and Crisis: Basic Questions” 4.
33. This position is most systematically elaborated in Robert Kurz, *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus*, and specifically, the section entitled “Arbeitsstaat und Führersozialismus.” Such an argument is also articulated throughout *Wertkritik*. There is also the related argument to be made here that the

affirmation of working class identity has often resulted in the disassociation of racialized and gendered others, just as abstract labor itself does in practice.

34. "Value and Crisis: Basic Questions" 13.
35. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 163-164.
36. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971). On one hand, *History and Class Consciousness* truly epitomizes an immanent social critique: both in its central mandate — "for the dialectical method, the central problem is to change reality" (3) — and because this mandate is realized via the necessarily contradictory nature of capitalist totality — as both the possibility of capital's overcoming, and the self-reflexive ground of critique. However, as I have tried to elaborate, Lukács' basis of contradiction in the internal antagonism between the forces and relations of production as manifested in class conflict, contradictorily affirms labor (and totality) as that which is to be realized, the standpoint of critique — and thus remains a critique of distribution. See also György Lukács "What is Orthodox Marxism?" in *History and Class Consciousness*.
37. Georg Lukács "What is Orthodox Marxism?" *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) 13.
38. Lukács "What is Orthodox Marxism?" 2.
39. Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (Merlin Press: 2006) 29.
40. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 83. Also, per Postone, "totality, according to Lukács, is veiled by the fragmented and particularistic character of bourgeois social relations, and will be realized openly in socialism. The totality, then, provides the standpoint of his critical analysis of capitalist society" (*Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 73).
41. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 98.
42. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology" 78.
43. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 98.
44. "Sociology and Psychology" 73.
45. "Sociology and Psychology" 76.
46. See, Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* in his characterization of the the immediate, mystified appearance of the commodity: "Value, therefore, does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic" (167).
47. "Off Limits, Out of Control" 156.
48. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989).
49. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 164.
50. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 164.
51. Marx, *Grundrisse* 881.
52. Ortlieb, "A Contradiction between Matter and Form" 82.
53. "A Contradiction between Matter and Form" 82.
54. Here, I paraphrase the above characterizations, both of crisis and the splitting apart of capital's subject from "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" in Lukács' *History and Class*

Consciousness. As the adamant reader of Lukács will note, I have reversed the sense of these moments: for example, I read ‘crisis’ in an immanent and objective sense (value) — rather than as Lukács parses it, in terms of class (i.e., the self-realization of the proletariat) when he writes, “the image of a frozen reality that nevertheless is caught up in an unremitting, ghostly movement at once becomes meaningful when this reality is dissolved into the process of which man is the driving force” (181). Likewise, I pose value, and not the proletariat, as the subject of history.

55. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949). The aforementioned centrality of *die Masse* or the artificial group as a social category appears in Freud’s late theory and is essentially concurrent with the realization of mass society via WWI. Regarding the realization of mass society, see Robert Kurz “Die Urkatastrophe des 20. Jahrhunderts” in *Schwarzbuch*. Freud’s focus on the “artificial group” represents a radical theoretical revision wherein Freud positions the category of “the crowd” as socially determinant and essentially dispenses with the centrality of the Oedipal pathology. In this essay, I will reference the aforementioned late period of Freud’s almost exclusively, taking the category of *die Masse* as an essential category of capital; and reading (as has been argued elsewhere) the Oedipal pathology as a highly mediated one that only fully corresponds to the rigid paternalist and class distinctions of liberal capital (and more specifically Victorian culture). In this regard, see: Peter Samol’s “All the Lonely People: Narzissmus als adäquate Subjektform des Kapitalismus” and Juliet Flower MacCannell’s, *Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy*.
56. Freud, *Group Psychology* 88.
57. Kurz, “Die Urkatastrophe des 20. Jahrhunderts” 387-420. Kurz argues the above without explicitly systematizing this collective fetishization of destruction as Freud’s “death drive” per se. “Pseudo-concrete universalized subjects” (“scheinkonkreten Großsubjekten”) is Samol’s formulation in “All the Lonely People” (35). My translation. “Mirroring the same” is MacCannell’s characterization in *Regime of the Brother* (14).
58. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Beacon Press: Boston 1992) 11.
59. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 157.
60. Marx, *Grundrisse* 156.
61. Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009) 98.
62. “Off Limits, Out of Control” 155.
63. *Grundrisse* 687.
64. *Sociology and Psychology* 70.
65. Lohoff, “Violence as the Order of Things” 238.
66. “Violence as the Order of Things” 241.
67. “Violence as the Order of Things” 241.
68. Juliet Flower MacCannell, *Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 22.
69. Sigmund Freud, “Lecture X,” *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989) 207. Regarding the more general meaning here, see Peter Gay’s introduction to *Group Psychology* in *The Freud Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989) 627: “Freud wrote little explicit social psychology. One reason for this ‘neglect’ may be found in... his brief study presented

here: he thought the individual and social psychology to be virtually the same.”

70. *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds. and trans. Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM Publishing, 2014)18.
71. *Grundrisse* 106.
72. Kurz, “Diktaturen und ‘Krieg der Welten,’” *Schwarzbuch* 508-9. Original text reads: “Es gehört zum Selbstbetrug und zur Geschichtsklitterung der auch heute noch herrschenden bürgerlich-demokratischen Ideologie, daß sie die nun folgende dritte Runde der Weltkatastrophe im Übergang zur Zweiten industriellen Revolution von den innerkapitalistischen Widersprüchen möglichst weitgehend abzulösen sucht. Ist man noch genötigt, die ‘Urkatastrophe’ des Ersten Weltkriegs widerwillig mit dem genuin kapitalistischen Prozess von Kolonialismus, Imperialismus und Rüstungswettlauf der konkurrierenden jungen Nationalökonomien in Verbindung zu bringen (allerdings meistens unter dem Aspekt irgendwie ‘zeitbedingter’ Auchwüchse, die nichts mit dem wahren Wesen des Kapitalismus zu tun hätten), so folgt das apologetische bürgerliche und liberale Denken des Westens für die Zeit nach 1918 einem anderen Muster, um die blutigen Spuren der weiteren kapitalistischen Geschichte zu verwischen.” My translation.
73. “A Contradiction between Matter and Form” 112.
74. “Unrelenting devotion” is Walter Benjamin’s formulation. I reference this specifically as it appears in Feldner and Vighi’s *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism*, which begins with an explanation of the former’s statement, “Capitalism is not only a mode of production, but also a religion” (8). “Time’s carcass” is Marx’s formulation but I reference it as it appears in Evan Calder Williams, “Fire to the Commons” in *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles* ed. Benjamin Noys, (New York: Minor Compositions, 2012) 184. The latter half of this same sentence follows closely from Samol’s “All the Lonely People” (46). There is also a reference here to Lohoff’s “Violence as the Order of Things,” as he characterizes the contemporary “post-statist violence” now entirely dirempted from “any connection to political ends,” as an end in itself (260).
75. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 161. While the general meaning (and quotation) in this sentence follows Postone, the specific term, “socially synthetic” is from Sohn Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor* (New York: McMillan, 1978). I use it essentially as a shorthand to demarcate the historically determinate function of necessity in capitalism, according to the following distinction in: “the convenient adjective ‘socially synthetic’... [or] ‘synthetic society’ distinguishes the ‘man-made’ structure of exchange society from primitive tribal society.” But I use this term in a different sense and with another range of meaning from that of ‘social synthesis.’ The first “synthetic” applies only to commodity societies, the second “social synthesis” is understood as a general and basic condition of human existence, with no historical limits” (37).
76. Kurz, “Die Substanz des Kapitals.” (Translation is Neil Larsen’s).
77. *Grundrisse*, 487-488.
78. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 55-57.
79. *Civilization and its Discontents* 64-65.
80. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 174.
81. “Violence as the Order of Things” 239.

82. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). While Foucault's critique begins with historicizing power, it ends by effacing the mechanisms that operate upon the individual. Arguably indicative here is that Foucault does not account for the rupture occurring at the onset of capitalism, where the social is mediated not by power but labor.
83. See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989) on the distinction between pre-capitalist and capitalist forms of fetishistic misrecognition: In capital "the place of fetishism has shifted from inter-subjective relations to relations 'between things'" (22).
84. *Civilization and its Discontents* 130.
85. *Civilization and its Discontents* 59. The masculine manifestation of the commodity subject is also noted in "Violence as the Order of Things" 240.
86. "Value and Crisis: Basic Questions" 3.
87. *Civilization and its Discontents* 55, 59. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud's phrasing, "economic necessity" does not refer only to psychic economy (as would be its assumed referent in most instances). Freud elaborates that "love and necessity" as Eros and *Ananke* — referring therefore to an assumed scarcity or "external necessity" that creates the compulsion to work. On the passage cited, Freud explicitly speaks of "the work of civilization" as necessitating a withdrawal from sexual life; and specifically, even, that "the economic structure of society... influences the amount of sexual freedom that remains." See also, Lohoff's critique in "Violence as the Order of Things" 239.
88. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 174: "Because labor in capitalism is not really free of nonconscious social determination, but itself has become a medium of social determination [...] the alienated abstract social relations that are mediated by labor [...] constitute a framework of 'objective', apparently nonsocial constraints within which self-determining individuals pursue their interests—whereby 'individuals' and 'interests' seem ontologically given rather than socially constituted."
89. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989) 46.
90. *Civilization and its Discontents* 78.
91. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989) 178.
92. *Grundrisse* 156.
93. *Capital Vol. 1* 437.
94. "A Contradiction between Matter and Form" 98.
95. Trenkle, Norbert Trenkle, "Labour in the Era of Fictitious Capital," trans. Joe Keady, *Krisis* 3 (2015). Here, Trenkle delineates the Third Industrial Revolution (microelectronics) as marking a qualitative change in the relation between labor and capital: under which increase in productivity, the massive amount of labor made redundant cannot be compensated for via the development of new production sectors (as under Fordism).
96. Trenkle, "Fictitious Capital."
97. "Fictitious Capital."
98. "Violence as the Order of Things" 260.
99. Robert Kurz, *Weltordnungskrieg: Das Ende der Souveränität und die Wandlungen des Imperialismus im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Horlemann: 2003) 29.

100. Kurz, *Weltordnungskrieg* 287-288. Original text reads as follows: "Der tatsächliche anomische Zustand eines 'Krieges aller gegen alle' stellte sich erst am Anfang der Moderne her, im Transformationsprozess zum totalitären System von Verwertung und Souveränität; und er stellt sich wiederum auf erweiterter Stufenleiter und im planetarischen Maßstab am unausweichlichen Ende der Moderne her durch den barbarischen Auflösungs- und Selbzerstörungsprozess dieses Systems. Dieser Unterschied von Anfang und Ende reflektiert sich allerdings auch unbewusst im Charakter der anomischen Gewaltverhältnisse und ihrer Träger. Mag sich auch die Herausbildung moderner Staatlichkeit (als Pendant zur Herausbildung der kapitalistischen Ökonomie) in den Dauerkriegen, anomischen Zuständen und Plünderungsverhältnissen der frühen Neuzeit, etwa im Dreißigjährigen Krieg, nicht als bewusste Zielbestimmung dargestellt haben, so bestimmte doch implizit dieser Horizont das Geschehen und gab den Akteuren eine gewisse logische Ausrichtung, eine Zukunftsbestimmung und eine Kohärenz der Motivationen.... Die postmoderne Anomie hat nur den Horizont der Auflösung und Zerstörung, in ihr schlummert kein neuer 'objektiver' Nomos. Die negativ globalisierte Menschlichkeit ist an die Grenze objektivierter Fetischverhältnisse überhaupt gestoßen. My translation.
101. *Weltordnungskrieg* 71. In "Die Metaphysik der Moderne und der Todestrieb des entgrenzten Subjekts," Kurz delineates a "logic of annihilation" per the "destructive will" of the commodity subject, as the process of valorization reaches its absolute limits and the subject "can no longer represent itself in the world of things" (70). Kurz elaborates, "The abstractness of this destructive will reflects the self-contradiction of capitalist relations in a double sense: on the one side it aims at the destruction of the 'other,' seemingly for the purpose of self-preservation at all costs, [while] on the other side there is simultaneously a will toward self-destruction, which the futility of their own market economy existence executes." My translation.
102. "A Contradiction between Matter and Form" 79.
103. *Civilization and its Discontents* 71.
104. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 96-104. Here, the issue in Marcuse parallels what Postone calls the "pessimistic turn" of critical theory vis a vis Adorno and Max Horkheimer. In this regard, Postone argues that theorists of this conjuncture rightly reconsider the limits of a 'traditional Marxian' critique, become increasingly visible in postliberal capitalism, "whereas 'labor' has been regarded as the locus of freedom, it now implicitly comes to be seen as a source of unfreedom" (103). However, the replacement of the critique of private ownership with a critique of administration remains nevertheless tied to the sphere of distribution, and thus remains a critique from the standpoint of labor. Moreover, the focus on administrative domination effaces contradiction, as an immanent dynamic *beyond* conscious control, with state planning assuming a conscious mode of distribution, "a conception of an antagonistic and repressive social totality that has become essentially non-contradictory."
105. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* 129.
106. Kurz's *Schwarzbuch Kapitalismus* 435.
107. Likewise, Marcuse does not see Freud as reflecting specifically capitalist relations that are projected into an archaic past. This is an essential divergence between Marcuse's and Adorno's reading of Freud. Marcuse suggests Freud expresses something older than the capitalist social form. This

quite possibly is related to why Marcuse speaks of capitalist relations as 'repressive' rather than productive.

108. *Eros and Civilization* 156.
109. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics" *Telos* Vol. 16 (Summer 1973). Here, Marcuse characterizes the "already abstract" concrete form of capitalist "labor" as a transhistorical category of human activity, arguing that "in the totality of human existence, labor is necessarily and eternally "earlier" than play: it is the starting point, the foundation, and principle of play insofar as play is precisely a breaking off from labor, and a recuperation for labor" (15). The issue at stake is that Marcuse assumes a bifurcation of labor and social life in both ancient civilizations and capitalism; however, only under capital are labor and play (or social life) constituted as separate spheres.
110. Marcuse, "On the Philosophical Foundation of the Concept of Labor in Economics" 13-15.
111. "Off Limits, Out of Control" 155.
112. "Off Limits, Out of Control" 156.
113. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 165.
114. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* 165-166.

On Communism, Science Fiction, and Utopia: The Blagoevgrad Theses

Darko Suvin

[What is necessary] is a theory that thinks the whole in its untruth.¹

What these Utopian oppositions allow us to do is by way of negation, to grasp the moment of truth of each term. Put the other way around, the value of each term is differential, it lies not in its own substantive content but as an ideological critique of its opposite number.²

Nun muss sich alles, alles ändern.³

These theses are written in the mode of a hypothetical imperative.

Truth in advertising: I was asked to open the conference "Science Fiction and Communism" organized by the American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad, in May 2018.⁴ I couldn't attend, but we agreed I should send theses to be read at the beginning of the final wrap-up discussion, in which I then participated via Skype. Those theses lacked the final section on anti-utopia and counterrevolution (included here), planned then but written later. For both time and recapitulation reasons, I have used here large chunks of my previous texts. I hope regrouping and bringing them to a new point might result in further insight, and thus still be of help. A radical novelty might be found in the expression "anti-utopia as counterrevolution," articulated in the final section.

At the strategic beginning of *Works and Days*, Hesiod puts the allegory of the two Erises or Strifes. The first one makes for pernicious war and discord. The second is the good Strife that urges the mortals to work, for potter vies with potter and a singer

with another singer. I find this *splitting of notions* into good versus bad a most useful procedure, for it allows both a conservation of cultural inheritance and its radical renewal. Of course, this binary heuristic has to be believably supplemented in any particular investigation by an analogue spread between two ideal poles.

1. Good versus Bad Communism

Premise: We are talking about the relation between the original Marxian project of full social emancipation of people versus the state, of political relationships between people and institutions. We may identify the two poles as: Communism 1, or a real plebeian, direct-democracy communism that liberates and empowers people (C1), versus Communism 2, or the official state-party communism, at its beginnings often emancipatory but then as a rule devolving into statics and repression (C2). C1 is the axiological sense of the notion, or Ernst Bloch's "concrete utopia," C2 is its pragmatic embodiment in so-called "really obtaining socialism" of the 20th Century, paradoxically evolving from eutopia to dystopia — and finally, in the return to capitalism, to open anti-utopia.⁵

Thesis 1.1: To Rework Marx

When the communist state freed itself from capitalist class rule while preserving, in the best case, a capitalist organization of production and bourgeois law and while operating on the world capitalist market, the working people or plebeians were not freed from the "capital relationship," that is, the exploitation of labour and all particular group and personal egotisms that arise from it. This was accompanied by other class alienation factors: the legacy of patriarchal despotism, gender discrimination, city vs. country, intellectual vs. manual labor, and ecological blindness.

Political and legal emancipation through the state is, no doubt, a big step forward. It is the final step of human emancipation possible in the hitherto existing macro-framework of states and classes.

However, when people proclaim themselves socialist/communist *through the medium of the state*, they still remain non-communist (not C1 but C2), because they acknowledge themselves only through an intermediary, as in a lay religion: The state is the intermediary between people and their freedom. Similar to a state which professes religion, the so-called communist state is the imperfect state, and communism is regarded by it as the supplementation and sanctification of its imperfection. Communism thus necessarily becomes a means, and the state — a hypocritical state.

Thesis 1.2: On Party/State Communism

But what are the *limits of applicability* of this argument, adapted as closely as possible from Marx's *Jewish Question*?

A central hypothesis for understanding "real socialism," as argued in my book on SFR Yugoslavia *Splendor*, is that *the Party/State government was a two-headed Janus*

(at its progressive best, ca. 1945-68). It was then not only a factor of alienation, but also the initiator and lever of real liberation — up to a certain limit (the liberation is important and the limit is important). Liberation: banishment of occupiers and collaborators — capitalists, bureaucrats, and mercenaries — hence independence of the country as a prerequisite for all other moves toward self-government (Tito); nationalization and creation of a unified planned economy (Kidrič); realization of a bourgeois revolution, with universally accessible education up to and including the university level, in a patriarchal-comprador and despotic country; first steps toward a communist solidarity (the welfare state). This opened the doors to a possibility of full freedom or disalienation, its emblem was policy. It was a road to C1.

Limit: at the same time, the Party/State government was an intermediary and custodian of a liberation that increasingly turned towards oppression; in SFRY, the oligarchy grew in the sixties into a consolidated class, mercilessly suppressing the 1968 student revolt in Belgrade. In the Soviet Union, this happened in the bloodiest turn to Stalinism after 1928.⁶ The Party/State machine closed the doors to Marx's full human emancipation, its emblem was the *police*. C2 was fossilizing and fencing in C1.

Gloss: The historian can find overlapping causes for this enclosure: The Stalinist tradition of monolithism and non-transparency (obtaining in all states that did not have a radical bourgeois revolution); the strong economic and ideological pressures of capitalism from outside, and then increasingly from inside as well; the unfavorable turn of capitalist world market after 1973 against smaller and poorer states; and so forth. But the stone does not excuse the fallen.

Thesis 1.3: The Aporia and the Alternative

In revolutionary periods when state power is born violently out of society, when liberation through the state is the form in which people strive towards their liberation, in this time of etatistic self-confidence, the state seeks to suppress its prerequisite, the society of citizens, and to constitute itself as the real human fullness, devoid of contradictions. But the state can achieve this only by coming into violent contradiction with its own presuppositions, by permanent repressive violence, and the drama necessarily ends with a change in the character of the state or a change in the character of the society.

Only when real, individual people re-absorb in themselves the abstract citizen of the state and when individual humans have become in their day-to-day life, work, and relationships integrally human beings, only when people have recognized and organized their own powers as *societal* powers, and, consequently, no longer separate social power from themselves in the shape of state power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.

A real and integral democracy, both political and economic, is communist (C1): in it, people and their associations would be carriers of self-determination and self-awareness restraining and humanizing the often necessary state. Official state

communism (C2), however, may at best — when it is not simply a lying veil for a police state — dream of and postulate the sovereignty of humanity as the highest being, but this being is different from “really existing” people, the tangible reality, present material existence.

Gloss: Thus, whenever the state (C2) suppresses plebeian democracy from below (C1) — Stalinism, today the state capitalism in PR China and elsewhere — this is a counter-revolution that annuls the beginnings of disalienation (Enlightenment, welfare state, attempts at self-government, etc). My metamorphosis of Luxemburg’s slogan “socialism or barbarism” in conditions of hegemonic world capitalism with permanent warfare is: “Communism as plebeian democracy (C1) or counter-revolution into savagery.”⁷

2. Good versus Bad Science Fiction (Criteria)

Premise: We are talking about the ideal poles of useful vs. harmful in the narrative incarnation of a science-fictional stance of cognitive estrangement and of focus on a *novum*.

Thesis 2.1: On Estrangement Theory

Estrangement always comports and signals the fact that a semantic shift, one putting a dominant stifling norm into doubt, has occurred. It uses pleasurable perception against positivistic illusionism and Kantian *interesselos* (ambiguously “disinterested”) aesthetics. However, epistemologically, which today means also politically, estrangement has two poles, *the mythical* and *the critical*.

Brecht provides one “ideal type” of the critical method. In it plotting proceeds by fits and starts, akin to what Eisenstein called a montage of attractions. The intervals tend to destroy illusion and to paralyze the audience’s readiness to empathize. Their purpose is to enable the spectator to adopt a critical attitude both towards the represented behavior of the play’s agents and towards the way in which this behavior is represented. It is therefore also a permanent self-criticism. This means there is in Brecht’s plays no suspense as to whether and how a goal will be reached, but instead a convergence towards increased clarification as to the nature and causes of the conditions uncovered and seen afresh; the goal is implicitly presupposed and subtending the events. To the suspense of illusionistic theatre or media this opposes astonishment at many ensuing events and the human condition they delineate, differing from the humanizing goal and ideal.

The other pole is best represented in fascist ideologies: Knut Hamsun, Ernst Jünger or Ezra Pound practiced an estrangement wedded to various proto-fascist myths, rightly identifying liberal ideologies as hypocritical and wrongly arguing for a return to simplified brutality. To take a poetically pertinent example, Ezra Pound’s powerful invocation and condemnation of *usura* in the *Pisan Cantos* is a major semantic shift or estrangement of those aspects of capitalism that the “Left” fascists were

sincerely (though quite inconsequentially) spurning. However, as all such fixations on a supposed hierarchical *Gemeinschaft*, it is a cognitively sterile — or even actively misleading — estrangement: It does not make for a permanent critique and renewal but leads back to as dogmatic and pernicious certainties as in the most hidebound epochs, in a way worse than the conservative certainties it was rejecting. It spurns self-criticism as bloodless intellectualism; protofascism or full fascism is always dead certain.

Gloss: In short, in today's retrospect, estrangement (*Verfremdung*) is a neutral technical term, akin to Shklovsky's only perceptive — or at best aesthetic — *ostranenie*.⁸

Thesis 2.2: Toward Estrangement Practice

I have argued in *To Brecht* that Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* is to be understood as an open dramaturgy, opposed to predetermined religious as well as Stalinist horizons, embodying a directionally oriented but open, tendentially possible, just, and redemptive history. The historicity of matters shown is retained and encouraged but inserted within a formal process participating of utopian expectation. To apply Auerbach's *Mimesis*, it is a figural allegory "far more indirect, complex, and charged with history than the symbol or the myth," but its use of venerable or legendary matters is "youthful and new-born as a purposive, creative, concrete interpretation of universal history." It uses a lay and earthly pluri-temporality in all its sensory differentiations. Instead of an incarnation of the word, Brecht and his ilk start from a topological and verbal rationalization of the flesh and body, where the sensual and the visionary are not sundered. History does not end, so that each point reached is also the starting point for new contradictions and resolutions, subject to new estrangements.

Estrangement is then, at best, a periscope or prism to help us see ourselves in a different light, as the stranger of strangers or Other of the others — and often at that as the powerful Other against the powerless, humiliated, and exploited others (say the "extracommunitarians" of Africa and Asia drowning off our shores, or inside our society together with the native proletarians). It is clearly akin to the utopian slogan "things could be not so but radically different," to the *novum*, as well as to the shocking recognition of beauty as a kind of estrangement-effect alerting us to aliveness.

True, it is one matter to digest a perceptual-cum-cognitive shock, another to pass from an understanding to effecting change. Logically this may be a small and almost immediate step, practically it is a huge and time-consuming leap with a series of complex mediations. Thus this theoretical premise demands in any particular case a properly sociopolitical and historical examination *en situation* of the intended and the real addressee and user of art, poetry or estrangement.

Gloss: The practitioner of critical estrangement is thus in the company of poets or philosophers, and an ally — in however roundabout ways — of the ruled and exploited classes, she aims at cognition wherever it may take us, as long as it participates in

finding out a radical *novum* in people's sociohistorical relationships. The practitioner of mythical estrangement is in the company of priests — in pre-capitalist social formations often was a priest — and an ally of the rulers and exploiters, he aims at catharsis as a sophisticated reaffirmation of the class status quo, as long as it reveals the hidden transhistorical and cosmic forces.

Thesis 2.3: On *Novum* Theory — Presuppositions

In *Metamorphoses* (and then in chapter 13 of *Defined*) I defined estrangement as a feedback oscillation that moves now from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality to the narrative possible world in order to understand the plot-events, and now back from that world to the author's reality, in order to see it afresh from the new perspective gained. It is a cognitive strategy of *perception-cum-evaluation* based on a radical swerve and desire away from the ruling encyclopedia (Eco). In this intent, the *novum* is its main diegetic device, and it borrows its method from art, science, and empirical production. I proceeded to doubt its univocal use in 1997, much before the analogous doubting of estrangement.⁹

Concerning science, what struck me was not only that applied scientific mass production first came about in the Napoleonic Wars, and that the *novums* of institutionalized science have a huge stake in war, in killing and maiming people. The popular emblem of SF, the large space rocket, was developed and used mainly by competing genocidal armies. Indeed, the economy of overripe capitalism is, in its systematic dependence on weapons production as well as on strip-mining human ecology for centuries into the future, based on a productive system efficient in details but on the whole supremely wasteful and irrational. Science as institution has grown to be largely a cultural pressure-system legitimating and disciplining the world's cadres or elite, in unholy tandem with the converging pressure-systems disciplining and exploiting the less skilled workforce, usually through sexism and racism. Finally, the elite enthusiasm for bureaucratized and profit-oriented rationalism engendered the understandable (if wrong) mass mistrust and horror, reviving all possible irrationalism, and incidentally downgrading SF into a nostalgic precursor of a Fantasy mainly complicit with everyday horrors; I therefore proceeded to write quite a bit on the divorce of wisdom and knowledge, Science₁ vs. Science₂. To base *novums* on formal innovation as hegemonized by modern science grew quite untenable after its overarching *novum* became the transformation of Science₂ into capital: and clearly so when it was force-fed by much Rightwing money into "hard" SF, the "space cadets" of imperialist warfare.¹⁰

But at a deeper level, a suspicion also grew in my mind that the *novum* — the surplus or newly created knowledge — was finally anchored in the extortion of surplus or newly created value from the laboring people. To the extent that this may be true, it is poisoned at the source.

The plagues bothering us will not be dealt with by old antibiotics: progress,

expanding GNP onwards and upwards, reason identified with the bottom line, etc. We are between two major bifurcations: the “short twentieth century” ended about 1989; the other, economists whom I think well of speculate, may be expected somewhere around 2040, give or take a decade, and barring an earlier nuclear war. The old, including the old New, is dead, the new has not managed to see the light of the day, and we are not sure whether it will in our lifetimes (surely not in mine). In the meanwhile, a too long while, the old masquerades as the newest; as Gramsci and Brecht concluded, in the half-light monsters rise up. The incantatory use of the *novum* category as explanation rather than formulation of a problem has to be firmly rejected. *Novum* is as *novum* does: it does not supply justification, it demands justification.

Gloss: I could here invoke many critical allies, in the first place Fredric Jameson, but I’ll mention only three. For the emblematic example of the United States science fiction films of the 1980s, Vivian Sobchack has persuasively shown that their new depthlessness, ahistoricism, and hysterical tone no longer show the alienation generated by a new economic system, but rather our incorporation of that new system and our absorption by it.¹¹ Just so in science fiction, the endless Post-Fordist succession of unbearable 1500-page Tolkienesque or military series subordinate use-value (cognition and estrangement) to the brand-name “event.” Brian Aldiss phrased this as, “The awful victories of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *Star Trek* have brought — well, not actually respectability, but “instant whip” formulas to science fiction. The product is blander. It has to be immediately acceptable to many palates, most of them prepubertal.”¹²

Thesis 2.4: On *Novum* Theory — Positions

In brief, innovation has deliquesced into a stream of sensationalist effects largely put into service of outdated and replacing existing commodities for faster circulation and profit. Harvey has even suggested that spectacles, with their practically instant turnover time, i.e. the production of events rather than of goods, provide the ideal Post-Fordist model; just as oil, steel or electricity companies can only look with envy at the model monopolization in book publishing. In the USA already in the 1980s two percent of the publishers controlled 75 percent of the books published; three distributors handled 95 percent of all science fiction and fantasy. The lay of the land for the *novum* has changed from Baudelaire and Rimbaud to the investment of billions, to science and technology as the racing heart of corporate capitalism, where innovation is divorced from making our lives more pleasurable, beautiful, and easeful. Entire industries are based on “perpetually accelerating obsolescence,” most clearly the computer one.¹³ The *novum*’s “semantic impertinence” (as Ricoeur might put it) is in a great majority of cases abused for salesman touting. In sum, I strongly suspect we are already at the beginning of the Deluge. Is the proper position of a provisional survivor that if there’s no dry land left (no guiding values), if God and Communism are dead, then everything is permitted? Or is it rather, how many arks of what kind

do we need, who could build them how, and in which direction may the dove look for shores?

Therefore, *we need radically liberating novums only*. By “radically liberating” I mean not only a new quality as opposed to simple marketing difference: I mean a novelty that is *in critical opposition to degrading relationships between people* as well as to the commodification of human and surrounding nature, and in fertile relation to memories of a humanized past (see Bloch’s *Antiquum*). I mean also a novelty enabling us to understand whence comes the rising tide of racism and fascism 2.0, and crucially that it is fed by central commandment of capitalism: profit now, more and more profit, and let the straggling hundreds of millions be eaten by wolves.¹⁴ A textbook example: Robert Heinlein’s super-racist united humanity of egalitarian super-militarists in *Starship Troopers*, with genocidal discrimination transferred to non-humans — read: the dangerous classes — and economics suppressed.

Further, perhaps a labor-saving and nature-saving eutopian society would also need *novums*, but just how many? Might we not rather wish, as William Morris did, for the true *novum* of “an epoch of rest”? Philosophically speaking, should we not take another look at the despised Aristotelian final cause? Politically speaking, what if science is a more and more powerful engine in the irrational system of cars and highways with capitalism in the driving seat heading for a crash with all of us unwilling passengers — what are then the *novums* in car power and design? How can we focus on anti-gravity, or at least rolling roads, or at the very least electrical and communally shared cars — which could have existed in 1918 if the patents had not been bought up and suppressed by the automotive industry? How can we constitute a power system able to decide that there can be no freedom for suppressing people’s freedom?

For, as in Brecht-Weill’s *Alabama Song*, if we don’t find a way out from the genocidal mastery that rules us, then “I tell you, I tell you, I tell you we must die.” But then, as I concluded in “News from the Novum,” we need a new reasonableness: a rationality that incorporates much refurbished science but also permanent self-estrangement and self-criticism under the eyes of plebeian salvation, including practices not reducible to clear-cut concepts yet articulated in topological propositions — for example, those usually called emotions and approached in pioneering ways by some Feminist theoreticians.¹⁵ Already Nietzsche had surmised that we have to “look at science in the light of art, but at art in the light of life.”¹⁶

Gloss: As can be seen in the best works of SF in or following the generation for me culminating in much Ursula Le Guin and Stanislaw Lem and perhaps half of Philip K. Dick, say by Marge Piercy or Octavia Butler or Pat Cadigan or Stan Robinson or C.J. Cherryh or Ken Macleod.

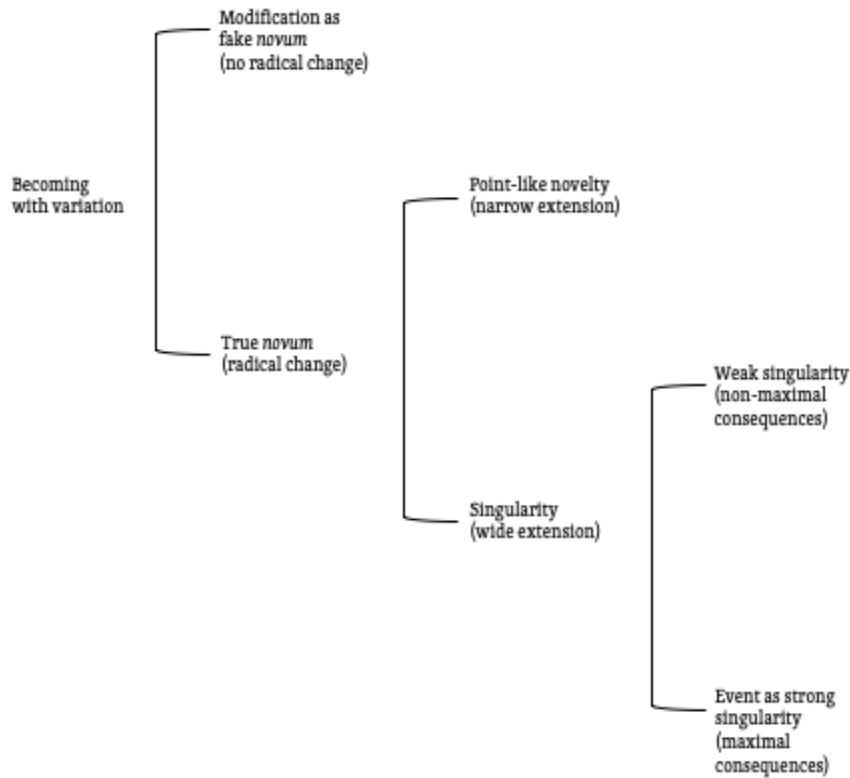


Figure 1. The Graph Sequence of *Novums*¹⁷

3. Good versus Bad Utopianism: Anti-utopia as Counterrevolution

Premise: What happens when, in a most radically bad *novum*, all of us find ourselves thrust inside anti-utopia, a kind of demented *Tron* movie we cannot get out of, increasingly more bitter if not impossible to live in?

Thesis 3.1: On Theory of Utopia and Negentropy

Here I don't need an initial Hesiodian splitting, since in the theory of utopia this has been done long ago by a group of people, most notably Lyman T. Sargent, Fredric Jameson, and Tom Moylan.¹⁸ Everybody agrees about the semantic usefulness of *eutopia* (the good one) and *dystopia* (the bad one). The good meaning or eutopianism is a presentation, orientation, and striving toward the horizon of radically better forms of relationships among people, an affirmation and annunciation. The bad meaning or dystopianism is a presentation of radically worse forms of relationships

among people, a negation and denunciation. In both cases, what is radically better or worse is judged from the point of view and within the value-system of a discontented social class or congeries of classes, as refracted through the writer. This factually and axiologically main body of utopian writings and horizons is an affirmation of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; the pursuit of the possibility of action towards this Jeffersonian trinity is in thermodynamics called negentropy (the obverse or negation of entropy, see Thesis 3.2). It is very significant that in the Renaissance utopia underwent a sea-change from Platonic philosophical argument and blueprint — and then Augustinian theological devaluation of mundane existence — to a literary or narrative genre. Within the belly of the new, increasingly totalizing and dynamic Leviathan, storytelling, the imagination of alternative actions by agents in an alternative possible world, has added cognitive means to convey the feel of “thick” life and its experiences inside, with, and against Leviathan.

What needs to be disentangled is dystopia and anti-utopia. Given the small role of anti-utopia, I earlier thought these were both varieties of the “black” utopia, but this cannot be sustained any more. I would therefore propose that dystopia as an ideal type is an awful warning, denunciation, and negation of negating eutopian orientation and strivings, whereas — to follow Sargent — anti-utopia as an ideal type is precisely the opposite: a denunciation and negation of eutopian orientation and strivings. One differentiating characteristic may well be the battle over language, memory, and expression that usually develops in dystopia versus the monophony refusing any critique in Rand (or, e.g., on all world media).¹⁹ In practice, a number of “black” texts meld dystopia and anti-utopia at the expense of their quality, most prominently George Orwell’s 1984. Possibly, one ought to add a resigned and/or cynical version of anti-utopia that instead of equating utopia with hell says “Life is hell but this is immutable” — there is no contradictory history, only ontology — frequent today (e.g. in media).²⁰ Clearly, dystopia, so powerful from Zamiatin and Pohl-Kornbluth on, needs more discussion.²¹ At stake is after all what Ernst Bloch called “the principle of hope.”²²

However, I want to underline that any theory of utopia(nism) worth its oats made it crystal clear that utopia is an epistemological and not ontological beast. The argument that an approximation to eutopia or dystopia may be found or constructed in reality, as in blueprints or colonies, misses the point why they all necessarily fail: Utopia cannot be realized or not realized; it can be only imagined as a contrast or yardstick, a *Fata Morgana* in the desert of the oppressively real, a memento for the downtrodden or a stick for beating one’s ideological opponents.

Yet contrary to all of this, a powerful approximation to anti-utopia can and is being globally realized by present-day capitalism, its banks, armies, states, and ideologies. This unprecedented emergency must be considered and articulated. I begin by proposing what is at least a suggestive analogy to this totalizing situation whereby we are living in and being existentially shaped by this most corrupt or what

J.G. Fichte calls a “perfectly sinful” form of utopia/nism.

Thesis 3.2: Anti-Utopia: On Being Lived by Entropy

A real world-historical *novum* hit humanity like the Yucatan comet that extinguished the age of dinosaurs: in a ruse of history, the ideologico-political development of capitalism (that had all along produced fake *novums* galore, such as the rise of both fantasy and militaristic science fiction) morphed into an encompassing monster — the *anti-utopia*. It was brilliantly diagnosed in Part 1 of Jameson’s *Seeds of Time* in the early 90s, but its virulence has since become globally genocidal.

In thermodynamics, degradation of energy is the basic law of our universe.²³ *Entropy*, the central term and notion of thermodynamics, is usually explained as the inverse measure of the energy available to do work, but the Second Law of Thermodynamics means that the entropy of any isolated structure increases both constantly and irreversibly. Since life is tied to activity or work (doing things), any living entity survives by sucking low entropy from the environment, and thereby, regardless of local fluctuations, accelerating the transformation of the environment toward higher entropy. The Entropy Law founds a physics of irreversible qualitative development toward a narrowing of possible activity. And beyond being a branch of physics dealing with heat energy, thermodynamics underlies any biophysics of life and activity (including thinking). Life, thinking or cognizing, and creativity are fragile local reversals of and always threatened deviations from the cosmic norm; analogous are emancipatory revolutions deviating from the socio-political norm.

The analogy obtains between, on one hand, the closed cosmic segment subject to entropy, and on the other hand the existential closure in which all of us are encompassed and threatened by anti-utopia as the destiny of subjection within a long-duration collapse of capitalist structures of accumulation. This introduces a radical reversal from a situation in which interested readers looked *from outside* at utopia(nism) as a negentropic choice of freedom, a possible world, to a situation whereby all of us are willy-nilly *inside* anti-utopia in our empirical, more and more entropic zero world. In anti-utopia, imaginative understanding is being pre-empted by blind and malevolent doing. It functions rather like the mathematized models in capitalist financial speculation designed to make the modelled state of affairs more like the model (and quite incompatible with Baudrillard’s misleading approach to simulacrum as “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality,” 166). We are being forcibly lived by entropy, a growing restriction of possibilities to work for life-enhancing change. This is physically obvious when entire parts of the world are being thrust into destruction by capitalist armies, and even for the richer enclaves (just so nobody should be spared) by the capitalocene. *This changes all* — including utopia(nism), its theory and practice.

Capitalism has by now grown fully parasitic: profit is no longer accompanied by rising accumulation or productivity, it comes increasingly from political manipulation

of “rents” rather than from production (except in China). As we saw harshly illuminated in 2008, capitalism survives only by continuously increased extortion of surplus from the 95 percent of lower classes and nations to the rulers. It is by far the biggest entropy machine invented by our species — that is, the biggest manmade threat to liberty, cognizing, and creativity. Or simply to survival.

Gloss: If something like this is correct, my thermodynamic detour is no longer an analogy, but what is in epistemology and science called a model. And our analytic tools have to be thoroughly adjusted to this victory of ideology over utopia. One guideline: this cannot be done unless accompanied by thorough and explicit analysis speaking against the central features of anti-utopia — that is, today’s capitalism sliding into more or less fascism: racism, terror, and perpetual mega-warfare. When inside anti-utopia, use negative denunciation first of all. Positive annunciation is then necessary to supply the point of view and value-system within which the foregoing negation is legitimate and indispensable. The use of critical dystopias and eutopias to thwart anti-utopia is a matter of life and death.

Thesis 3.3: Anti-Utopia as Ptolemeian Counterrevolution

The pedigree of anti-utopianism has been little explored, but my hypothesis would be that it began first in essayistic ideological horror at the French and similar revolutions. Such Right-wing reactions opposed all strivings for human disalienation and radical democracy of the nineteenth century, and then especially after the 1917 Russian Revolution and its direct or indirect fallout, within which utopianism was often wedded with communism or socialism: the welfare state. Eventually they slopped over also into narrative form as the subgenre of anti-utopia, written to warn against utopias, not (as in dystopia) against the existing status quo, and culminating perhaps in Ayn Rand’s *Anthem*. Anti-utopianism is an embattled adoption of the point of view and value-system of globally ruling capitalism and the class — or congeries of classes — supporting it. *The anti-utopia is a targeted and openly political use of a closed horizon to refute, ridicule, and render unthinkable both the eutopia of a better possible world and the dystopia as awful warning about the writer’s and readers’ present situation, to stifle the right to dream and the right to dissent, to dismantle any possibility of plebeian democracy.*

The existential anti-utopia was historically brought about as a global ruling-class counter-project to the post-1917 welfare-and-warfare state, which first lost its welfare wing and was as of the 1970s rapidly devolved to a warfare-and-bamboozlery state. Warfare was exported outside the state-system of the metropolitan (capitalist, patriarchal) North, represented at the end of twentieth century by the “trilateral” group of North America, west-central Europe and Japan plus a smattering of their outcrops (the “little tigers” of East Asia, the “White dominions” of ex-British Empire). But war grew into a new norm in strict parallel to the dismantling of the (sometimes spotty) solidarity and justice that had brought about and sustained the welfare state

in both its Leninist and — reactively — Keynesian wings: now violence as war abroad also meant increasing violence as repression within, needed to quell the rising despair over, and possibly protests against, the sabotage of public health, education, housing, and all other services for people and controls over savage capitalism without a human face, spearheaded by the rising exploitation of immigrant workers without civic rights. It means that the specter haunting us today is the police state or indeed a reborn fascism 2.0, where bamboozling is replaced by outright Social-Darwinist cynicism, the warfare and repression state. As a rule these repressions returned from the US-organized dictatorships around the world to roost in the native soil, first hypocritically and then openly as of the George Bush Jr. administration and its “war on terror”; the old imperialist nostalgias of France and UK, and then the rising state capitalist power of China and the somewhat reconstituted Russia follow the same oppressive pattern, while providing some opportunities for maneuvering for smaller states and groups. Each reader can fill in the list of moral and political reasons for our indignation at such a huge impoverishment and militarization of our lives.

Beside warfare, the new super-technological capitalism is centrally developing through a depth *attack on life*. The pulsating heart of capitalism was always the unequal exchange of life (people’s time and labor-power) for money, well compressed by Ben Franklin 250 years ago as “Time is Money.” Now private property, having exhausted things, annexes also relationships, prominent among whom are vital the functioning between things, to which people are reduced (reified) as equally strip-mined “human resources.” A strategic link is private property on knowledge that exploded with the right to patent living matter — from genes to species — for profit, as decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1980; it is estimated there are by now more than 100,000 such patents. The true owners of life today are, besides the armed forces, pharmaceutical companies, agrochemical monsters, and information profiteers — all connected through international mega-banks.

This poses an epistemological problem. Since I do not believe in Original Sin, and especially not in the variant that the Devil rules on Earth, I have to — all of us have to — explain this slide from epistemology to ontology, from a thirst for understanding to a fetishism of the oppressively existing. I shall proceed by articulating an intermediary link: Disneyfication.

Thesis 3.4: Disneyland/Disneyfication: A Key Link in the Anti-Utopian Chain

As suggested in 3.2, there is a central existential difference between a *life-world one is necessarily inside of* and a *secondary creation one is as a rule outside of*. In any really existing situation people willy-nilly live, work, die, and (often) get children: their body and psychophysical interest is fully engaged in their location. To the contrary, a piece of utopian literature, a Fourierist blueprint or even a Disney World does not fully enclose a person: one may visit it, but not live in it, one may dwell on but not in it, one is never completely inside. Utopian colonies attempting to span this abyss regularly

cracked up. “The Book of Nature” is not really a book, in whatever hieroglyphs it may be written; the “Theatre of the World” (or of Society) is not really a theatre, whatever plays or games may on it come and go, for we are not an audience but on the stage. The relationships and traffic between virtual and actual reality, between the life world and secondary virtual creations or possible worlds are multiple and complex since both partake of human imagination in differing ways, but for the most important purposes the entities themselves remain distinct; as noted at the end of Freud’s “Transference” essay “nobody can be killed *in absentia* or *in effigie*.”²⁴ Traffic piles up unless it proceeds between two distinct places.

Disneyland and Disneyfication is a concentrated example of how to counteract eutopia, in which what is good cannot be seen in everyday reality whereas what is seen in everyday reality cannot be good.²⁵ To the contrary, “[commodified spectacle] says simply ‘what appears is good, and what is good appears’”; and Debord goes on to note presciently, “The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life. The relation to the commodity is not only visible, but one no longer sees anything but it: the world one sees is its world. Modern economic production extends its dictatorship extensively and intensively.”²⁶ This is here coupled with a restless rage, at times sensational and always cute, for addictive consuming as a new anchor for collective unanimity in lieu of radical disalienation. The cuteness is diametrically opposed to cognitive Modernist poetry from Baudelaire on, where “sensuous refinement... remains free of cuteness (*Gemütlichkeit*, coziness).”²⁷

Disneyland’s first move is spatial delimitation and then the layout of various “lands,” splendidly dissected by Louis Marin. Yet their presentation is by no means a qualitative rupture with the dominant imaginary encyclopedia, as in Thomas More or William Morris or even H.G. Wells, and Yevgeny Zamyatin. Instead, the omnipresent and invasive ideological continuity of vanguard Disneyfication with everyday hegemony has for its goal to intensify the turn to commodification. I deduced from this, first, that “the Disneyland experience” amounts to a not so hidden persuasion that the only way to live is by exchange-value, subject to the bottom line of “profit this year,” and second, that the Disney enterprise was an “*exemplum*... intended to be intentionally total (in all fields of life) and extensionally global as none before ... [a dynamically aggressive] anti-utopia.”²⁸ Without having fully experienced our existential anti-utopia, I found it implied in the logic of commodification and profit.

Three depth characteristics of Disneyfication were destined for a great future. The first one is a *truly totalitarian iron control* over the visitors to his theme parks (itself taken over from industrial shop-floor and chattel slavery): they are steered from the word go to one-way presentations, enclosed in vehicles, hectored by guidebooks and voiceovers telling them how to feel, given no space or time for reflection or spontaneous exploration, deprived of interpretive autonomy. The visitor is ceaselessly within the flow, constantly bombarded by subtle and unsubtle solicitations to buy/consume, surfeited by kitschy sensory overloads, not allowed freedom to catch her

breath even for a moment. Disney's type of "happy feeling" is stuffed down the throats of children and infantilized visitors as a substitute for a democratic public realm where dialogue and even opposition might happen: "Just try to get [things such as hunger, lack of shelter, cold or disease] past the turnstiles at Disneyland sometime!"²⁹ No work, no dirt, not even unregulated nature are permitted to be shown here, all must be predictably, manageably cozy (though in fact these illusions are produced by underpaid and precarious people working). This type of control is in our anti-utopian lives transferred from space to space-time management. As early as the later 1930s Benjamin, who had enthusiastically hailed the earliest disrespectful Mickey Mouse, was meditating about "the usability of Disney's methods for fascism."³⁰ How widespread such conformism was in the United States by the 1960s can be seen from Marcuse's noting a massive atrophy of mental faculties for grasping contradictions in favor of a "Happy Consciousness" in the service of a technologized death instinct.

A second characteristic of Disneyfication is *reproductive empathy*, the fact that "the Disneyland visitor is on the stage, an actor of the play being performed, caught by his role like the rat by the trap, and alienated into the ideological character he plays without knowing it. 'Performing' Disney's utopia, the visitor 'realizes' the ideology of the ruling class as the mythic legend of origins for the society in which he lives."³¹ Third is *transfer ideologizing* (the analogy to Freud's account of dreamwork is striking), the continually reinforced and quite uncritical immersion into the hegemonic bourgeois version of US society by "naturalizing" and neutralizing in the "lands" three imaginative domains: historical time as the space of alternative choices; the foreign(ers); and the natural world.

In sum, Disneyfication is a drug of the brainwashing variety. This drug functions using the brain's imaginative powers to create empathic images which constitute a fake *novum* or what Marin calls a degenerate utopia, predicated upon alienated labor that makes people crave satisfaction in "leisure time" consumption. The slogans of this alienation were "comfort, affluence, consumerdom, unlimited scientifico-technical progress, and good conscience, values assumed by violence and exploitation appearing disguised as law and order."³²

Gloss: However, the strategy of Disneyfication was developed during the New Deal and its fallout up to the 1970s, and its emphasis was upon persuasion and consensus. Disneyland was an intermediary link, and indeed a testing ground, in the chain leading from being outside and trying to understand (epistemology) to being inside and trying to survive (ontology): in it *you are inside but only for a time*, and within the framework of not simply leisure but infantilized consuming. The substitutive consumption gratifications were rechanneled utopian desires. In grimmer Post-Fordism, where compromise with the ruled by means of co-opted consumerism is no longer necessary, the Ayn Rand supermen operate by means of either direct physical killing or total precaritization with the permanent threat of hunger and destitution. The totalized control as well as the intensification and celebration of being

commodified is no longer experimental and intercalary à la Disneyland but extended over the whole country and globe, a new Borgesian map identical to the territory. As in the “American Dream” picket fence appearance of *The Truman Show* movie and similar fakely ideal sets in a number of science fiction stories by Philip K. Dick, anti-utopia can only be maintained if the inhabitants are persuaded it is the only reality. The utopia of personal freedom, as ideal or protest, is simply made unintelligible. As the Debord quote above ends, “Modern economic production extends its dictatorship extensively and intensively.”³³ There is no different present or future, time duration has for almost all of us shrunk to the next financial deadline for survival.

Thesis 3.5: Anti-Utopia as Constituted Absence

As to the theory of utopia(nism), we could salvage it by assuming *eutopia is in anti-utopia latently present as a constituted absence*: The sinister hollow is defined by a possible threatening plenitude – symmetrically obverse to the constitutive relation between life and death or between negentropy and entropy. This is an all-pervasive absence, it determines all defining traits of anti-utopia: not only the usual fake *novums* foreclosing radical ones, but also quantity instead of quality, closure instead of openness, fake ontology instead of modest epistemology, point-like inescapability instead of fertile traffic between past present and future, monologism instead of contradictoriness, impotent horror instead of intervening hope and indignation, cynicism instead of belief, vertical leadership and horizontal identities instead of polymorphic diversity with recall democracy, Mussolini, Carl Schmitt, and Ludwig von Mises as great ancestors instead of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, J.S. Mill, and Marx. Such traits culminate in the subsumptive unholy trinity of anti-utopia — hatred of plebeian creativity and roaming intelligence (*Denkverbot*), the state as repressive violence instead as public power, and annihilating warfare instead of creative emulation. These traits amount to an anti-utopian “mythological machine,” blending degraded numinosity, power, and commodity esthetics. It does not aim for truth — indeed truth is repressed and left in obscurity, somewhere behind — but for Austin’s performativity (i.e. a fascistoid effect on corruptible masses). In relation to the light of a disalienated humanity, it is, as Milton says in *Paradise Lost*, “No light, but rather darkness visible.” Sociologically, it is rendered concrete as capitalist mass media shaping mass opinion. It entails a thoroughgoing abolition of free choice, on which any worthwhile culture, and within it the system of literature and its genres, reposes — again quite analogous to the lack of meaningful choice in elections for the United States Presidency or the Council of Europe or the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee.

As Foucault never tired to argue, neoliberal governing comports “a formidable extension of the control and coercion procedures.... [of] the major disciplinary techniques that take in and take care of (*reprendre en charge*) the individuals’ everyday behaviour up to the smallest detail.”³⁴ The hypocritical inclusion of people into power and meaning is in fact a most frustrating exclusion, where the body or “naked life” is

the final and often only “capital” left (cf. Luhmann). The brunt is aimed at the category of revolution and any claim to fertile universality or totalisation (Wegner 121-28).

A surface example: Rancière notes that “the pseudo-European Constitution testifies to [hatred of democracy and egalitarianism] a contrario”; the absence of “the irreducible power of the people “is then constituted as ultra-elitist “expert management of monetary and population flows.”³⁵ In sum, democracy as freedom for individuals how to choose meaningful lives and pursue happiness is evacuated.

A middle-range example: the global neoliberalist market imposes its “intelligibility grid” on all non-economical human affairs, so that whatever cannot be used as “human capital” and subjected to “cost-benefit” and “supply-demand” criteria becomes simply non-intelligible — irrational and indeed inhuman — and is ruled out of court by power. Its perfect local complement is the carefully manipulated mini-nationalisms of globalization that mean, most clearly in Africa and eastern Europe, “linguistic unhoming, the deaccession of archives [including their physical destruction, DS], the eradication of historical memory, internal colonization” — a creeping version of Orwell’s *Newspeak*.³⁶

A central depth example: the frantic interlocking planning, usually for a year if not less, of all capitalist bureaucracies — financial, political, military, corporative — with the goal of maximum profit is the absencing of a plebeian, workers’ control system of flexible planning extending to long-duration coordination, where human welfare overrides profit. To generalize: the ideal-type eutopia does not know the categories of profit or servitude, dystopia shows them as crazy and inhuman, anti-utopia argues how to get more profit through servitude. Its mantra is “there is no alternative”; its biggest fear is freedom — while hypocritically invoking it in a castrated version. From Matthew 23:27: “like unto white[washed] sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” In sum, Marx’s “profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization,” visibly naked in the colonies, has now been globalized.³⁷ Where he identified the reduction of the working day as the prerequisite for the realm of freedom, anti-utopia is a whirling turbine of unceasingly frenzied activities on pain of instant failure. No wonder the German term for our age is turbo-capitalism.

In terms of literary narration and history, anti-utopia was mainly confined to the anti-Bellamy cluster in the 1890s and the anti-Leninist one in the 1920s-30s, often by émigrés and always by reactionaries. As a rule, it was poor. The writer and style are less important, absent are all the usual qualities by which not only writers like More, Morris, Zamyatin, Lem, and Le Guin were great writers *tout court* but that also characterized a thick supporting substratum of what I’d call an important “2a class” of writers supplying stimulating ideas, alternatives, and plots — from Jack London to A.T. Wright, Stanley Weinbaum, and Aldous Huxley, as well as from early Heinlein, Orwell to (say) Ernest Callenbach, Frederik Pohl, and those mentioned in Thesis 2.4. Anti-utopia gets its force outside literature, from obsessive repetition of its ideological

points in all aligned media and think-tanks and from the whip of obscurity and hunger (where not drone liquidation) for dissenters. Anti-utopia is not “good to think with” as all other varieties of utopia, it is a preachment to the willy-nilly converted or kept at bay. What it amounts to, behind elaborate smokescreens shaming the puny Wizard of Oz, is a world where all, and primarily all people and human possibilities, exists only as adjunct capitals for profit. Overtly or covertly, this is the dominant horizon of “post-communism.” It is not even Aldiss’s “instant whip,” it is John Clute’s instant burger that eats your insides.³⁸

In sum, anti-utopia reposes both genetically and structurally on the fear of radical change (of plebeian self-empowerment, that is, revolution in and around production). Only the panic fear, rage, and loathing at the supposed Leninism — communism come to power — can explain the last forty-odd years of finally triumphant capitalism. Its allegorical emblem is the “terminator gene” introduced by mega-corporations into seeds to ensure their non-renewability, thus constituting the absence of thousands of years of human crop cultivation, of the utopian horizon of “bread for all.”³⁹ Centrally, the whole emancipatory panoply of capitalism’s radical bourgeois beginnings, from Enlightenment through revolutions, Romantics, and humanist culture in general is being ruthlessly and systematically scrapped, up to the shark-like liquidation of traces of welfare for (the) people. As Marx piercingly observed: When events force upon the bourgeoisie a democratic constitution, this helps the proletariat “and *threatens* the very foundations of bourgeois society.”⁴⁰ To give one weighty example: the abolition of torture, the favorite feudal tool against rebelling lower classes, was the crown jewel of true Enlightenment and bourgeois liberalism; it is now taken back.⁴¹ Rewinding history à rebours, the revolutionary and liberatory citizen aspect is being thoroughly expunged. The result is the relentless deepening and broadening of the “zone of non-being” identified by Fanon for the racialized and colonized subject.⁴²

In the style of the *Communist Manifesto* and Brecht, we could ask: Within the production of human suffering, what are Attila, Gengis Khan, and even the (fortunately) short-lived Hitler state compared to agribusiness, pharma business, the Seven Sisters of oil, and the capillary grip of financial capital?

Gloss 1: I came to the concept of constituted absence by being reminded of the role of the Baroque God in Pascal and Racine, whereof Lucien Goldmann speaks, or indeed of the Mbuya tribe’s father god Ñamandu in Pierre Clastres.⁴³ This absence was in history positively sublated by the appearance of a revolutionary wave of rich personalities like Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or Tom Payne. Alas, the constitutive absence of value signaled by anti-utopia is a repressed and anal-retentive obverse of the Baroque tragicalness. It flows out of triumphant counter-revolution and it is carried by impoverished Übermenschen like Ayn Rand and the Donalds, Rumsfeld and Trump. The return from bourgeois democracy to a semi-masked (and often open) bourgeois tyranny adds to cynicism, as Marx noted in the *18th Brumaire*, also a confession of weakness: true democracy would work against capitalism.

Gloss 2: Two indubitable examples of present anti-utopia: the post-federal-USSR and post-federal-Yugoslavia populations live in a state — and mostly in “miserable little statelets” — of primitive robber or mafia capitalism that could be called Dickens plus drones.⁴⁴ Economically, they are entirely dependent on raw material (gasoline, ore) export to metropolitan capitalism, scrapping and fire-sale of the considerable achievements of socialist industrialization, and deep immiseration of the working people; their rulers at home and abroad actively constitute the absence of communism (as the so-called communist parties themselves did for decades prior to their collapse). Neither am I aware, despite a large reservoir of creative people in those longitudes, of many *novums* in the realm of imagination — ideas, artefacts or inventions — from them (except, for example, in Slovenia, which deindustrialised much less precipitously).

Corpus	Exemplary Locus	Rupture (total except for row five)	Quality	Relation to Political Hegemony	Emotion
Morus	Space (far)	Static (cut off)	Better socio-political organization	<i>opposed</i>	Joy, wonder
Bellamy-Morris	Time (future)	Static (vision)	Better socio-political organization	<i>opposed</i>	Joy, wonder
Nineteenth and twentieth century	Time (future)	Static (vision)	Worse socio-political organization	<i>Opposed to opposing</i> : back to hegemony	Horror, disgust
Wells I: <i>Time Machine, The First Men in the Moon</i>	Time as socio-biological	Dynamic – machine)	Inverted socio biological	<i>opposed</i>	Wonder, horror, sensation
Disneyland (Disneyfication)	Space (contiguous, time, provisional)	Intercalary (dynamic, rollercoaster)	Identification with desire for	<i>Opposed to opposing Intensified</i> : back to hegemony but only intercalary	Sensationalness, cuteness
Lived anti-utopia of existence in the twenty-first century	Global, perpetual present	Dynamic (financial and computerized)	Worse socio-political organization	<i>Opposed to opposing Intensified</i> : back to hegemony but only intercalary	Sensationalness, numbness, or anger

Notes

1. Theodore W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. H.W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
2. Frederic Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," *New Left Review* 25 (January/February 2004).
3. "Now all, all has to change." Ludwig Uhland (set by Franz Schubert) "Frühlingsglaube."
4. Theses do not suffer notes gladly. But I must thank the kind colleagues at Blagoevgrad, Dr. Emilia Karaboeva, Ralitsa Konstantinova, and Professor Emilia Zankina, as well as Frederic Jameson, but for interaction with whom the explanation of anti-utopia at the end could not have been written, and the responses and encouragement of Antonis Balasopoulos, Rich D. Erlich, Nenad Jovanović, Gloria Macmillan, Aleksandar Matković, and especially Tom Moylan. About entropy: while as a science student I took a course on thermodynamics, Pamela Zoline's splendid 1967 story "The Heat Death of the Universe" (*The Heat Death of the Universe and Other Stories*, McPherson & Co, 1988) precedes my argument in "Introductory Pointers toward an Economics of Physical and Political Negentropy (2009)," *Leviathan's Belly: Essays for a Counter-Revolutionary Time* (Rockville: Wildside Press, 2012) 331-50. My argument would have gotten nowhere without Hesiod and Marx, and then Benjamin, Bloch, Brecht, Debord, Goldmann, Gramsci, Harvey, Lukács, Luxemburg, Morris, the science fiction and utopia writers and critics named, and especially Jameson.
5. Darko Suvin, "Reflections on What Remains of Zamyatin's *We* after the Change of Leviathans: Must Collectivism Be Against People?" *Envisioning the Future: Science Fiction and the Next Millennium*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2003) 51-8.
6. Darko Suvin, *Lessons from the Russian Revolution and Its Fallout: An Epistemological Approach* (Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Southeast Europe, 2017) <http://www.rosalux.rs/en/lessons-russian-revolution-and-its-fallout>.
7. Darko Suvin, "Communism Can Only Be Radical Plebeian Democracy: Remarks on the Experience of S.F.R. Yugoslavia and on Civil Society," *International Critical Thought* 6.2 (2016): 165-89. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21598282.2016.1172695>
8. Darko Suvin, "Parables and Uses of a Stumbling Stone," *Arcadia* 5.2 (2017): 271-300.
9. See Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), Darko Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction, and Political Epistemology* (Oxford: P. Lang, 2010), and Tom Moylan, "'Look into the dark': On Dystopia and the Novum," *Learning from Other Worlds*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (Durham: Duke UP, 2001) 51-71.
10. Darko Suvin, "Of Starship Troopers and Refuseniks: War and Militarism in US Science Fiction," *Fictions* 3 (2005) 107-54.
11. Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (Newark: Rutgers University, 1987).
12. Brian W. Aldiss, *The Pale Shadow of Science* (Seattle: Serconia Press, 1985) 108-09. On the *novum* in general, see Victor Wallis, "Innovation," *Historical Materialism* 16.3 (2008): 227-32.
13. Victor Wallis, *Red-Green Revolution: The Politics and Technology of Ecosocialism* (Toronto: Political Animal Press, 2018) 82.
14. Darko Suvin, "To Explain Fascism Today," *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 45.3 (2017): 259-302. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2017.1339961>.

15. Darko Suvin, "On Cognitive Emotions and Topological Imagination," *Versus* 6869 (1994): 165201.
16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967) 19.
17. The capitalist *Das Immerwiedergleiche* though always with glitzy surface variations, simulating novelty — such as chrome tailfins on cars in the 1950s or NGOs pushing civil society in Eastern Europe of the 1990s. The true *novum* combined with point-like novelty as defined by Suvin in earlier writings. The terms "Singularity" and "Event" taken over from Badiou with thanks and anchored in possible world theory. "Weak Singularity" would bear more explaining. It is probably connected with compromise formations, such as Obama's initial healthcare proposals (anyway torpedoed because too near to a true *novum*). Stimulated by Badiou, *Logique des mondes*, without his ontology.
18. Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow* 381-412.
19. See Raffaella Baccolini, "Finding Utopia in Dystopia: Feminism, Memory, Nostalgia, and Hope," *Utopia-Method-Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming*, eds Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini (Oxford: P. Lang, 2007) 159-189; Raffaella Baccolini, "Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katherine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler," *Future Females, The Next Generation*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 13-34.
20. Søren Baggesen, "Utopian and Dystopian Pessimism: Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest* and Tiptree's 'We Who Stole the Dream,'" *Science-Fiction Studies* 14.1 (1987): 34-43.
21. Raffaella Baccolini, "Breaking the Boundaries: Gender, Genre, and Dystopia," *Per una definizione dell'utopia* ed. Nadia Minerva (Ravenna: Longo, 1992) 137-46; Lyman Tower Sargent, "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," *Utopian Studies* 5.1 (1994): 1-37. Tom Moylan, "Look into the dark"; Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Westview, 2000); *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, eds. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003).
22. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge: MIT UP, 1986).
23. Darko Suvin, "Introductory Pointers," 331-50 and Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1971).
24. Sigmund Freud, "Dynamics of Transference," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth 1953-1974) 107. (translation amended).
25. Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow*.
26. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit; Black & Red Press, 1970) 29.
27. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1972-83) 671 and 675.
28. *Defined by a Hollow*.
29. Ariel Dorfman, *The Empire's Old Clothes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983) Dorfman 60.
30. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1045.
31. Louis Marin, *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces*. (Paris: Minuit, 1973) 298-99.
32. Marin, *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces* 298.
33. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 29.
34. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C.L. Markmann. (New York: Grove, 1967).
35. Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. S. Corcoran. (London Verso, 2014) 95.
36. Emily Apter, "Untranslatability and the Geopolitics of Reading," *PMLA* 134.1 (2019): 195.
37. Karl Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India," *New-York Daily Tribune* (August 8, 1853).

- <https://marxists.catbull.com/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.htm>
38. John Clute quoted in Darko Suvin, "Considering the Sense of 'Fantasy' or 'Fantastic Fiction,'" *Extrapolation* 41.3 (2000): 209-47.
 39. Predrag Matvejević, *Pane nostro* (Milano Garzanti, 2009).
 40. Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850," *Selected Works Volume 1*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, Moscow 1969) accessed via *Marxists.org*:
www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/cho2.htm
 41. Eric Hobsbawm, *Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism*. (New York: Little, Brown, 2008) 143.
 42. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 7.
 43. Darko Suvin, "Power without Violence: A Lesson from Tribal Communism" *The Montreal Review* (August 2013) <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Power-Without-Violence-A-Lesson-from-Tribal-Communism.php>.
 44. G.M. Tamás, "Words from Budapest." *New Left Review* 80 (2013): 5-26, <https://newleftreview.org/ii/80/g-m-tamas-words-from-budapest>
 45. Adapted from Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow*. First, each name stands for a paradigm - in row 1, for example, for the "alternate islands" of Bacon, Campanella, etc. Wells I = *The Time Machine* and *First Men in the Moon*; all ruptures after this are dynamic. The Paradigm: King Utopus cuts the isthmus connecting Utopia to a continent. The lived anti-utopia of existence in twenty-first century is reduplicated then as *das Immerwiedergleiche* in inferior narrations and media (e.g. with zombies).

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Crisis and Clarity: Fredric Jameson's *The Antinomies of Realism*, Affect, and the Problem of Representing Totality Today

Thomas A. Laughlin

Understanding crisis means understanding capitalism, not superficially, but in its totality, as a historically specific social formation, hell-bent on the reproduction of surplus value. That at least would be the wager of Marxism in the present era of global financial crisis. Yet many critics of late-capitalism — Fredric Jameson one of the foremost among them — have also noted how the increasing sophistication and expansion of capitalism's exploitative logic, through globalization and financialization, now adds to the challenges of representing its totality today. If we think of this representational challenge as being an aesthetic one as well as a political one — as indeed Jameson has long encouraged us to view it — it may be important to ask what role art can also play in helping us cognize totality.

In the 1930s, Marxist literary critic and philosopher Georg Lukács famously defended realism against the new modernist aesthetic practices being espoused by Ernst Bloch, and later Theodor W. Adorno, as the more historically sensitive aesthetic and the most capable of representing totality. These realism/modernism debates between Lukács and his colleagues, however, were later eclipsed by the emergence of that new "cultural dominant," postmodernism, which, as Jameson noted, posed threats to realism and modernism alike.¹ While some continue to debate the merits of modernist aesthetics in a postmodern world, the political, let alone aesthetic, viability of realism would seem to have become irretrievably a thing of the past.

Jameson, however, not only reopens the discussion on realism in *The Antinomies*

of *Realism*, but also argues that realism's dissolution has been an impediment to our sense of history and our ability to "think" totality. He nonetheless draws the conclusion that, although realism has atrophied, what had been its unique historical sensitivity — particularly in the earlier form of the historical novel — now survives in Science Fiction, which is still grounded in the representation of both totality and history, albeit from a future-oriented perspective.

For followers of Jameson's work, this is not an entirely new argument. What is new, however, is the role that Jameson now gives affect in his theory of realism's formation and dissolution, an argumentative move that is clearly meant as his own intervention in what has been termed the "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences.² But, by locating and historicizing "the codification of affect" in the nineteenth-century realist novel, Jameson's argument leaves curiously bracketed the significance of this "affective turn" in the present situation, theorizing instead the socio-cultural origins of our fascination with affective experience, rather than the current conditions of its new theoretical moment. With an eye to connecting aesthetic and theoretical preoccupations with affect, I conclude this essay with a sublation — cancellation, preservation, and transcendence — of Jameson's conclusions about the ultimate ahistoricity of affect, emphasizing instead the specificity of affect's "codification" to the realist novel in the period of nineteenth-century capitalism in order to better historicize and understand affect's return in our own period of global financial crisis, as a new theoretical school and conceptual language making claims on the political imaginary. With the imminent publication of *Allegory and Ideology* (his latest installment of *The Poetics of Social Forms*), it seems especially worthwhile to reconsider and reevaluate the stakes of *Antimonies of Realism* before turning to this new volume.³

Postmodernism and the Problematization of Referentiality

In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson famously argues that the essential difference between modernism and postmodernism is the loss of the semiautonomous sphere of cultural production, which, for Adorno, had endowed art with its critical, negative potential.⁴ "Art and reality can only converge if art crystallizes out its own formal laws, not by passively accepting objects as they come": it is only thus, Adorno says, that the contradiction between the world mediated in the work of art and the world as it actually exists "confers on the work of art a vantage point from which it can criticize actuality" and makes "[a]rt the negative knowledge of the actual world."⁵ For Jameson, the problem with such a claim is not a theoretical one, but a historical one: "in postmodern culture," he says, "'culture' has become a product in its own right" and "modernism was still minimally and tangentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself." Whereas: "Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process."⁶

But if the commodification of culture under late capitalism made autonomy

and negativity equally impossible to attribute to “the work of art” (itself a now outmoded modernist concept), postmodernism now also problematized in more overt and lasting ways the very notion of referentiality and therefore the aesthetic and political legitimacy of realism as well.⁷ As Rachel Bowlby observes, “Nowhere is this [contemporary skepticism] clearer than in the regular scorn [we now see] for realism’s crudely ‘linear’ narratives, its naively ‘omniscient’ narrators, and — worst crime of all — its facile assumptions of linguistic ‘transparency.’”⁸

However, rather than lament the passing of realism both as a literary genre and privileged vehicle for cognitive content, Jameson willingly assigns its validity — at least in the form with which we are most familiar — to the cultural past and seeks its cognitive potential in new formal discoveries. As Jameson notes in his most sustained theorization of the realism-modernism-postmodernism sequence, “any theory of realism... must also explicitly designate and account for situations to which realism no longer exists, is no longer historically or formally possible; or on the other hand takes on unexpected new and transgressive forms.”⁹ Jameson’s emphasis on the latter — the “unexpected new and transgressive forms” that “realism” *might* take in some future environment — thus allows him, *contra* Lukács, to make formal inventiveness part and parcel with realism’s search for totality, such that “realism” no longer necessarily becomes the privileged name or even form of that which can be said to orient itself towards a representation of the social totality.

This is most evident in Jameson’s development of the notion of “cognitive mapping” in *Postmodernism* — a process which, he says, “enable[s] a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society’s structures as a whole.” For Jameson, cognitive mapping is neither purely mimetic nor wholly “ideological” (in the commonplace sense of being false or incorrect): for although it does not offer an exact (i.e., mimetic) replica of reality and in that sense is false, it nonetheless “involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place” that helps us navigate the now “unrepresentable totality” of global capitalism. He thus compares cognitive mapping to “the great Althusserian (and Lacanian) redefinition of ideology as ‘the representation of the subject’s *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence.”¹⁰ For Jameson, the notion of cognitive mapping “becomes extraordinarily suggestive when projected outward onto ... larger national and global spaces,” “in terms of the way in which we all necessarily also cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities.”¹¹

Realism and the Invention of the “Referent”

By separating the cognitive possibilities of aesthetic practice from the category of realism, Jameson is thus able to attribute a much more particular vocation to realism as a historical phenomenon, which is none other than “cultural revolution” — the overturning of the older magical narratives of feudalism and antiquity and, through

that, the invention/discovery of a new secular reality to be represented. As early as *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Jameson begins to theorize “realistic representation ... as the systematic undermining and demystification, the secular ‘decoding,’ of those preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms,” to which, he says,

must be ... added the task of producing as though for the first time that very life world, that very “referent” — the newly quantifiable space of extension and market equivalence, the new rhythms of measurable time, the new secular and “disenchanted” object world of the commodity system, with its post-traditional daily life and its bewilderingly empirical, “meaningless,” and contingent *Umwelt* — of which this narrative discourse will then claim to be the “realistic” reflection.¹²

What is particularly interesting then about Jameson’s return to the question of realism in *Antinomies* is the centrality he now gives affect in this desacralizing process by which the raw data of “post-traditional daily life” is gradually introduced into the literary geography of the realist novel. However, in *Antinomies* this process, as I will show, is now also associated via affect with the incursion of an eternal, existential present into the novel that will gradually undermine realism’s ability to make History appear and thus lead to its own dissolution. In my conclusion to this essay, I will attempt a strident re-historicization of these supposedly ahistorical affects, situating their early “codification” firmly in the context of developing nineteenth-century capitalism and their return – as a whole theoretical school and language – within our own moment of global financial crisis.

Affect and the Dissolution of Realism

Antinomies opens with a casual observation, which will turn out to be the book’s central claim and argument about realism. “I have observed,” writes Jameson,

a curious development which always seems to set in when we attempt to hold the phenomenon of realism firmly in our mind’s eye. It is as though the object of our meditation began to wobble, and attention to it to slip insensibly away from it in two opposite directions, so that at length we find we are thinking, not about realism, but about its emergence; not about the thing itself, but about its dissolution. (2)

Since the phenomenon, realism, is itself always forming and dissolving before our very eyes, literary critics have felt the need to pin it down, says Jameson, by way of comparing it to something that it is not. The problem is that any number of *not-realisms* readily appear as valid and tend to force their authors into “a passionate

taking of sides,” in which realism is either “elevated to the status of an ideal” or else “denounced” in favor of its opposite number, which is variously identified as romance, epic, melodrama, idealism, naturalism, critical or socialist realism (as opposed to bourgeois realism), or, for the more diachronically minded — simply modernism (3). The accumulative effect of such oppositional approaches to defining realism has not been more clarity, but more confusion. Rather than seeking to stabilize realism by opposing it to something which it is not, Jameson chooses to treat it as an inherently unstable category with its own internal contradictions, which always threaten to undo its coherence as a subject itself and as an object for critical analysis:

My experiment here claims to come at realism dialectically, not only by taking as its object of study the very antinomies themselves into which every constitution of this or that realism seems to resolve: but above all by grasping realism as a historical and even evolutionary process in which the negative and the positive are inextricably combined, and whose emergence and development at one and the same time constitute its own inevitable undoing, its own decay and dissolution. (6)

Jameson goes on to identify the twin sources of realism’s composition and simultaneous dissolution as “the narrative impulse,” or, in French, the *récit*, and “the scenic impulse,” which he associates with “Affect, or, the Body’s Present.” For Jameson, “the narrative impulse” is the persistence within realism of the older genre of the tale and the temporal dimension of storytelling itself, which, taken at its most rudimentary, constitutes the “tripartite temporal system of the past-present-future” (10). This tripartite system can be further refined, he says, to “the before and after,” since, for the tale’s beginning, middle, and end to be narratable, we must always be dealing anyway with a future-past (10): “The time of the *récit* is then a time of the preterite, of events completed, over and done with, events that have entered history once and for all” (18).

What realism combines with the “narrative impulse” of the tale — and indeed what begins to distinguish it from the tale — is a new “scenic impulse,” in which narrative is momentarily suspended in the elaboration of a scene, those innumerable banal details of realist description, which test our patience and, as Roland Barthes once argued, give off a certain “reality effect” (signifiers, not so much of reality per se, but of our encounter with a reality being simulated in the text by the presence of just such mundane details). It is always, then, when narrative progression is at its slowest and description at its richest, that we can be most confident that what we are reading is realism, as if the text’s very provocation to exhaust the reader, to bore her with such innumerable details, were also somehow a guarantor of its authenticity. This latter “scenic impulse” Jameson associates in a surprising turn of argument with the “realm of affect,” which he defines via Alexander Kluge as the “insurrection of the

present against the other temporalities” (10). Thus, Jameson claims, “we now have in our grasp the two chronological end points of realism: its genealogy in story telling and the tale, its future dissolution in the literary representation of affect” (10).

But what exactly does Jameson mean by “affect”? Indeed many have been thrown off by Jameson’s sudden focus on the voguish concept-word and taken it to mean — as some thought it meant when all of a sudden the famous Marxist started to write about Postmodernism — that he has changed uniform and started batting for another team. However, the strength of Jameson’s dialectical approach has always been its ability to subsume concepts from other theoretical schools, sometimes hostile to Marxism, and assign them their own moment of truth in his philosophical *Darstellung* before he then historicizes them and dramatizes their own conceptual limitations. Thus, anticipating a certain hermeneutic anxiety on his reader’s behalf, he introduces the term “affect” as

a technical term which has been strongly associated with a number of recent theories which alternately appeal to Freud or to Deleuze and which, like the theory of postmodernity, also take this phenomenon as evidence for a new turn in human relations and forms of subjectivity (including politics). I do not here mean to appropriate it for a different theory of all these things, nor do I mean to endorse or to correct the philosophies of which it currently constitutes a kind of signal or badge of group identity. Indeed, I want to specify a very local and restricted, practical use of the term “affect” here by incorporating it into a binary opposition which historicizes it and limits its import to questions of representation and indeed of literary history. (29)

What Jameson retains, though, from the so-called affect theorists — especially Gilles Deleuze — is the notion of affect’s resistance to language, to its being named (31). Jameson, for purposes of clarification, thus distinguishes between what he calls “named emotions” — “love, hatred, anger, fear, disgust, pleasure, and so forth” — and “unnamed emotions,” or simply “affect,” which, he says, “eludes language and its naming of things (and feelings)” (29). This distinction, he then reminds us, is an essentially Kantian one in which “affects” are treated as “bodily feelings, whereas emotions (or passions, to use their other name) are conscious states” (32). Realism’s “discovery” and, as I will discuss in a moment, its “codification of affect,” will thus mark the insertion into literature of a whole new bodily sensorium, particular to — and indeed inseparable from — modern, secular experience:

if the positive characteristic of the emotion is to be named, the positive content of an affect is to activate the body. ... And therefore, alongside a crisis of language, in which the old systems of emotions [for example,

the passions] come to be felt as a traditional rhetoric, and an outmoded one at that, there is also a new history of the body to be written, the “bourgeois body” as we may now call it, as it emerges from the outmoded classifications of the feudal era. (32)

This “new history of the body,” then, is one that is coextensive with all those new sites of modern experience that enter into literature for the first time: the sights and delights of the urban capital being the most infamous and obvious. In fact, it is precisely such secular “affects” that Jameson will argue are being codified in those long and seemingly unnecessary descriptions of the city, which can keep an author of Charles Dickens’s or Émile Zola’s caliber occupied for pages (the latter’s descriptions serve as Jameson’s privileged example of just such a “codification of affect”). For, as Jameson will point out, if one of the peculiar characteristics of affect is its resistance to being named, its representation “must somehow achieve independence from the conventional body itself” if its expression is to be codified by something other than a system of names (38). This representational challenge thus propels realism, against the “narrative impulse” of the *récit*, to search for an ever-refined language capable of expressing the various modifications of bodily sensations that make up the “modern experience,” or what Jameson calls, “the sliding scale of the incremental, in which each infinitesimal moment differentiates itself from the last by a modification of tone and an increase or diminution of intensity” (42). It is in this sense, then, that we are to understand the “scenic impulse” — those descriptions, for example, of the city as a barrage of various sights, sounds, and smells — as just such a codification of affect, which, for Jameson, “becomes the very chromaticism of the body itself” and marks “the coming into being of bourgeois daily life” (42, 5).

Realism’s “discovery” of affect and its development of the “scenic impulse,” however, threatens to dissolve the temporal “linearity” of the tale, or *récit*, into the ever-expanding, existential present of free-floating sensations and intensities, which now remain forever variable. Narrative increasingly becomes less an end goal in itself and more the “motivation of the device,” whereby more and more existential data is accumulated for the codification of affect (something that Jameson explores more fully in a chapter on “distraction” in Leo Tolstoy). The “scenic impulse” in realism thus wages as subtle, and molecular, war against the structures of plot, particularly, Jameson argues, against the novel’s “protagonicity,” such that increasingly it no longer makes sense to speak of heroes or, for that matter, villainy, since now, in the existential present of the affective realm, all are allowed to dwell equally in their anxiety and bad faith on the possibility that they are their own worst enemies. Pérez Galdós and George Eliot serve here as Jameson’s respective examples of this dual tendency: the waning of protagonicity and therefore also villainy.

What, importantly, is at stake in this historical narrative and dialectical understanding of realism’s own internal dissolution, then, is not only the

disappearance of plot in the new modernist novel, which now becomes realism's logical heir, but also, with the ever-widening realm of affect, the gradual eclipse of History itself, for example, in the new modernist novels of a single day such as *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, which appear briefly in *Antinomies* to illustrate this point. It is here that Jameson's argument starts to reconnect with his now familiar argument about Postmodernism and "the end of temporality,"¹³ a question to which Jameson returns in *Antinomies* in the book's final chapter, provocatively titled, "The Historical Novel Today, or, Is it Still Possible?"

History, In and Out of the Novel

The relation between the historical novel and realism is a difficult one to map given their apparent similarities, but which Jameson explains — by way of Lukács — as the disappearance of the masses, world-historical leaders, and revolutionary Events from the social geography of the novel. In the tumultuous years of the so-called bourgeois revolutions, popular consciousness was gripped by the sudden appearance of two secular agents of history on the world stage: the masses and their leaders. The historical novel, for Lukács, is the expression of this particular "structure of feeling," in which a third party observer — or common hero — mediates the representation of the world-historical protagonist and the masses united by a single revolutionary Event. The historical novel, for Lukács and Jameson, is thus a novel about social change and transformation, often told, however, from the conservative perspective of one whose way of life is at stake in a struggle that they did not choose to undertake themselves. The lesson of the historical novel — essentially that people make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing — is one that Jameson argues was so successful that the past was no longer necessary for the representation of History. The present, as was the case with Balzac, could now be treated historically without the stimulants of world-historical characters, the masses, or even revolutionary Events.

Balzac, though, is a transitional author, for Jameson, coming between the historical novel and realism proper. Balzac's rhetorical mode, he claims, is still ultimately one of allegory, not affect, in which descriptive details can always then be allegorically rewritten as signifiers of civilizational decline, the passing of the *ancien regime* and the emergence of what was for Balzac a new and more vulgar bourgeois era. But as the "scenic impulse" gradually strips away the allegorical register of Balzacian-style description and replaces it with the affective realm of new free-floating intensities and diminutions, the sense of *the present as history* slips away too and the historical novel, in Jameson's language, "hardens over" into the stuff of harlequin romance and Hollywood costume dramas, in which historical periods are grasped as so many styles and settings (307), or else, as Jameson showed us in *Postmodernism*, it becomes the stuff of "fantastic historiographies," the so-called magic realisms of writers like Salman Rushdie or Gabriel García Márquez, in which history is marked by its *sur-reality* and its *de-facto* resistance to truth-claims, which now can always be re-written from

different perspective anyway.¹⁴ This, for Jameson, leads us to the present conjuncture where “what seems to survive at best [from the historical record] are a host of names and an endless warehouse of images.” Thus, he asks, “What kind of History can the contemporary novel then be expected to ‘make appear’?” (263).

A New Shape of Time: History as Science Fiction

For Jameson the only remedy we have against such a disappearance of History is that of imagining the possibility of a different future, that is, of historicizing by looking forward, instead of back. This at least is the final claim of *Antinomies*: “the historical novel of the future (which is to say our present) will necessarily be Science-Fictional inasmuch as it will have to include questions about the fate of our social system, which has become a second nature” (298). Given postmodernism’s deconstruction of so-called “linear-history,” and the consummate failure of the various alternative temporalities — cyclical, simultaneous, or repetitive — to replace it, Jameson argues, that “what is needed is not so much a new theory or system, as precisely a new image [or “shape”] of time, a one-time ad-hoc invention which can be discarded after productive use” (301).

Jameson finds just that in Christopher Nolan’s 2010, film *Inception*:

The shape *Inception* provides us with is that of its massive central elevator, which rises and falls to the levels of its various worlds, its portals opening on past or future indifferently, and on the weathers of the globe’s named spaces and the interiors — modern or antique, glass or dark wood — of its innumerable yet distinct and disjointed situations. (301)

For Jameson, this elevator ride through the various space-times of world-history provides us with an image capable of bringing together, albeit in this piecemeal fashion, elements of a historical record now too complicated and large for any one person to grasp, or “cognitively map,” by the older methods of representation that realism and so-called “linear history” once offered. It is with such an image in mind that, he says, we may now re-theorize the vocation, or even the possibility of the historical novel in our own time: “For historicity today... demands a temporal span far exceeding the biological limits of the individual human organism: so that the life of a single character — world-historical or not — can scarcely accommodate it; nor even the meager variety of our own chronological experiences of a limited national time and place” (301-02). For Jameson, David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* is just such an exemplary novel. Although it too grasps historical periods as so many available styles and settings, the way in which it shuffles through them — moving disjointedly from one story and period-style of narration to another, in roughly chronologically order, until it reaches two dystopian futures — gives it the advantage of impelling “us to invent as many connections and cross-references as we can think of in an ongoing process” (303). As a consequence, we may at least begin to “think” history too as just

such an ongoing process in the present. Moreover by including as its two dystopian futures an image of totalitarian world-dictatorship and an another of a civilizational decline into barbarism, it would seem to exhaust, at least symbolically, not only the available repertoire of historical costumes and settings, but also our two most cliché fears about the future: “1984 and *Road Warrior*, states and nomads” (308). The merit of such a Science-Fictional retelling of history is that it makes us wonder, as we no longer do when we read our historical fictions of yesteryear, “what comes next” and thus reminds us of our own historicity. For, as Jameson concludes at the end of *Antinomies*,

only our imaginary futures are adequate to do justice to our present, whose once buried pasts have all vanished into our presentism. “Our philosophies” want to absorb all these foreign totalities as identical with us and flesh of our flesh; Science Fiction wants desperately to affirm them a different and as alien, in its quest for imaginary futures. In an ideal world, perhaps, they would be different and identical all at once at one and the same time: at any rate, for better or for worse, our history, our historical past and our historical novels, must now also include our historical futures as well. (313)

Capitalism and Affect: Always Waning, Never Waning?

For readers familiar with Jameson’s work, the conclusion — that we must think historically and at the same time imagine a future lest we become locked in an eternal capitalist present — is unsurprising. What is surprising, as I’ve already noted, is the new centrality that Jameson gives affect. This is not by any means the first time Jameson has discussed affect, but formerly its centrality appeared to be at odds with Jameson’s hermeneutical project and practice of “totalization” first laid out in *The Political Unconscious*. It will be important then to reconstruct the context in which Jameson first began to articulate his thoughts on affect so as to clarify and dispel some misconceptions about how *Antinomies* might reconnect with the larger arc of Jameson’s critical project, particularly his comments on postmodernism.

In his groundbreaking essay, “Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” published in 1984 and in the book of the same title published seven years later, Jameson famously declared that under late capitalism there was – in its cultural products and new theoretical discourses – a noticeable “waning of affect” part and parcel with what poststructuralism had began touting as “the death of the subject.” These claims about postmodernism present a certain challenge to readers of *Antinomies* hoping to unite these different arguments into a single narrative thread. Are the affects discovered in the literary genre of realism, which will also lead to its dissolution, the same affects that are on the wane in postmodernism? The answer, in my opinion, has to be no.

The confusion stems from the fact that in 1984, when Jameson first theorized the “waning of affect,” there was not yet a whole theoretical discourse associated with the word, which for many of its proponents turns on a terminological distinction between the emotions (Jameson’s “named emotions”) and affects proper, now understood as unnamable, pre-cognitive bodily “intensities.” Jameson’s “waning of affect” is more precisely then the waning of what we should now call emotions and their various systems of meaning, the latter of which can be subject to historicist interpretation or “totalization.”

In *Antinomies*, as I have shown, it is the system of feudal passions that erodes with the discovery and codification of a whole new sensorium of bodily highs and lows particular to urban, bourgeois experience. The passions are then replaced by a totally different set of “named emotions” in modernism, particular to imperialism or the monopoly stage of capitalism: namely, anxiety and alienation. For Jameson, any system of named emotions is unthinkable without the “concept of expression” — “a whole metaphysics of the inside and outside” — which becomes in modernism that “of the wordless pain within the monad and the moment in which, often cathartically, that ‘emotion’ is then projected out and externalized, as gesture or cry, as desperate communication and the outward dramatization of inward feeling.”¹⁵ It is this inward feeling, for Jameson, that links the subject, still centered in modernism, to its lived environment, which now presses in on it, freighting the emotion, as it were, with sociological content.

In an interview with Anderson Stephanson, the extended version of which was first published in *Social Text* in 1987, Jameson clarifies his position on the transition from modern to postmodern experience. “Symptomatic” of this transition, he says,

is the changeover from anxiety — the dominant feeling or affect in modernism — to a different system to which schizophrenic or drug language gives the key notion. I am referring to what the French have started to call intensities of highs and lows. These have nothing to do with “feelings” that offer clues to meaning in the way anxiety did. Anxiety is a hermeneutic emotion, expressing an underlying nightmare state of the world; whereas highs and lows really don’t imply anything about the world because you can feel them on whatever occasion. They are no longer cognitive.¹⁶

This is a perfectly clear argument, then: deep, interiorizing feelings, freighted with sociological content, are replaced by free-floating “intensities” in the transition from modernism to postmodernism, now understood as the “cultural logics” particular to the monopoly stage of capitalism and “late capitalism,” by which Jameson always means, globalized multinational capitalism. The “waning of affect” is thus the replacement of deep feelings with new random intensities caused by the “schizophrenic” culture

of late-capitalist consumer society – Guy Debord’s “society of the spectacle.”

Jameson’s argument, however, has become complicated by a certain ossification of terminological language that now accompanies the turn to affect in the humanities, when, for example, one of its foremost proponents Brian Massumi equates “intensity,” in the new theoretical sense of the word, with that which Jameson had formerly opposed it: affect.¹⁷ In light of this hardening over of theoretical language in which affect now acquires technical detail and specificity as unnamable “intensity,” one can (and probably should) rewrite Jameson’s “waning of affect” as *the unleashing of affect*, without — it should be noted — changing in any way the substance of his argument. Alas, such often is the history of a word.

What is interesting, then, from the perspective of *Antinomies* is that Jameson now lays the preconditions for the “waning of affect” (now understood to mean *the unleashing of affect*) in the nineteenth century and the development of realism – and not, as was previously the case, in postmodernism. *Antinomies* would thus seem to attribute characteristics of the *longue durée* to affect’s molecular war against the structures of plot and the “thinkability” of History itself, in which the timeless ahistoricity of affect and the assimilating and naming powers of plot can now be rewritten as antinomies, whose warring encompasses all of western modernity, starting (at least) as early as the seventeenth century (the time of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*) and extending to our own present postmodernism.

Affect as Ideology, or, How To Historicize Affects

But it is here that Jameson’s argument also starts to brush up against its uncanny double — ahistoricism — in *Antinomies*’ refusal to provide us in the end with something like a Marxist unmasking of the ideology of affect, which would show that a preoccupation with affect and its codification is yet another “strategy of containment” in which the possibility of grasping history and totality is foreclosed upon in advance. That Jameson believes the latter is surely the case is clear; but, counter to our expectations, he reaches that conclusion by agreeing with, and insisting upon, the Deleuzian definition of affect as something like an ultimate, or final, surface which cannot be made to represent, or stand in for, anything else. This, then, is a much different method of critique than the symptomatic reading made famous in *The Political Unconscious*, which relied on a surface-depth model of analysis, and is bound to frustrate familiar readers looking for a more classic Jamesonian approach as well as self-identified affect theorists, particularly those following Deleuze, for whom the non-representational and de-subjectivizing force of affect makes it available for a politicized disengagement from the status quo. Clearly, as a Marxist who still espouses the class struggle and tends to speak of History with a capital H, Jameson is not particularly interested in the politicization of affect on these terms. And indeed one senses that Jameson’s almost perverse insistence on affect as a kind of ultimate surface is meant to dramatize — on the very terms such theorists would use — that affect is not subsumable to a larger

political project, but is rather a historical “discovery” of something that was always there from the start, like so many dinosaur bones, the assimilation of which has reshaped the way we think about ourselves, our temporality, and the way we encode those concerns in our fictions.

However, it is hard to not glimpse in his numerous descriptions and examples of “the codification of affect,” its circulating intensities and diminutions, something else altogether – namely the mediation of the various flows of capital as they were then beginning to assert themselves in the nineteenth-century literary imagination. In this light, it perhaps important to emphasize that, insofar as affects “must somehow achieve independence from the conventional body itself” (38), their representation already implies a second-degree removal from bodily immediacy and therefore also a process of mediation. Thus, while Jameson’s unnameable affects look at first an awful lot like Deleuze and Massumi’s unnameable intensities, the process of codification actually detaches affect from its “virtual” immediacy in the body and begins to associate its increase and diminution with something other than itself, which mediates it.

Jameson explores this more fully in his chapter on Zola, which turns largely on a reading of *Le Ventre de Paris*. Here, he argues the narrator’s incessant cataloguing of the sights, sounds, and smells of the urban market, Les Halles, has the effect of autonomizing or liberating affect from the body. As the narrator’s lists accrue more and more details, naming and cataloguing the many goods on display, the narrative takes on the quality of a detached camera eye, which has left the human body behind, and, in a kind of panning shot, starts to take in all Les Halles has to offer. Here, “the realm of the visual begins to separate from that of the verbal and conceptual and to float away in a new kind of autonomy.” It is “[p]recisely this autonomy [that] will create the space for affect” (55). As Jameson observes, the goods of the market — particularly the seafood and, in one scene especially, the cheeses — conjure up for the reader not just the sights of the marketplace, but also the smells, which now, because of the roving camera-eye quality of the narrative, become weirdly detached from any identifiable *smelling* subject or body. Thus, even as the many different names of seafood and cheeses are being rattled off by the narrator, there is a secondary effect, or rather *affect*, which escapes the specificity of any of these names and creates, alongside this on-going inventory of wares, a subterranean current of rising and diminishing affective intensities without a name: “a tremendous fermenting and bubbling pullulation in which the simplicity of words and names is unsettled to the point of an ecstatic dizziness by the visual multiplicity of the things themselves and the sensations that they press on the unforwarned observer” (54).

For Jameson, the “codification of affect” always requires it to detach from the body as a site of circumscribed meaning and reattach to something outside the body, which will become its representational vehicle: “the registration of affect,” he says, “must become allegorical of itself, and designate its own detached and floating structure

within itself” (65). It is in this sense that he compares it to “the invisible materiality of light”:

a transparency capable at certain moments of thickening into an object in its own right, with its own kind of visibility, as with certain hours of the day in Los Angeles or Jerusalem, where light can be perceived in and for itself, and where the surfaces of the buildings are best observed as sheets whose pores and rugosities capture the new element and hold it for a moment. (68)

Light, as Jameson observes here, can only take on a kind substantiality for the human eye when it is reflected off something other than itself, particularly a shiny surface of some kind, whose shininess is itself a secondary effect of the light mirrored in it. For Jameson, it is this kind of “autonomization” that empties affect of any representational content beyond its own self-reflection, associating it, for him, with Deleuze’s and Massumi’s unnameable intensity.

It is undeniable that these affects that circulate in Zola’s novel are unnamed and perhaps even eternally unnameable. Whatever the affect that the naming of cheeses produces, it certainly isn’t so clearly identifiable as would be Jameson’s “named” emotions. However, I remain skeptical that such nameless affective intensities remain without content, reflective of nothing other than themselves. In fact, they seem rather precisely indexed to “the piles and well-nigh infinite variety of commodities” (61) that circulate in the urban marketplace and therefore symptomatic also of that very particular capitalist infrastructure created to facilitate consumption – the shopping mall! And even if the commodities themselves remain on the shelf as the disembodied camera eye swoops by to catalogue them, the circulation of that narratorial eye, as well as the free-floating circulating affective intensities it generates, seem to conjure that other disembodied “real abstraction” that circulates in the marketplace: “exchange-value,” which, as Marx says, resides in neither the commodity nor the money that represents its value, but in their ceaseless exchange, a “change of form” that then “becomes an end in itself” — in short, autonomized.¹⁸

In other words, I cannot help wanting to put Jameson’s argument back within the coordinates of an older Jamesonian methodology that would then, in its final gesture, present affect to us repackaged as the cultural logic of nineteenth-century capitalism, which has returned to us, via Deleuze and others, as a theoretical language and diagnostic now that the metaphorical flows of affective intensity, which once mediated the more concrete flows of commodities and hard cash in the realist novel, have become even realer “real abstractions” under late-capitalist globalization, financialization, and the ensuing crisis. As Audrey Jaffe argues in a study that attempts to link affect to both Victorian and present-day representation of financial crisis, the boom-and-bust cycles of financial capital have always seemed to represent something

of the “affective life of the average man,” making us want to allegorize the peaks and valleys of the stock market graph into a representation of our collective heartbeat: a kind of thermometer for the inner soul of the collective.¹⁹ But the economy, even when it requires us to invest in it libidinally as well as financially, doesn’t run on affects alone. To escape the representational crisis that a narrow focus on affect brings about, we must resituate “the codification of affect” within its broader historical context.

Thus, where Jameson would now seem to want to outdo and, in so doing, overturn the affect theorists in his determined commitment to the Deleuzian position that affects can never represent, or stand in for, anything else, I would want to outdo and, in so doing, overturn Jameson, by insisting in an older Jamesonian fashion that anything can be made to stand in for something else; that mediation, in other words, is both inescapable and necessary, and that realism’s “codification of affect” — “in which each infinitesimal moment differentiates itself from the last by a modification of tone and an increase or diminution of intensity” — is already an unconscious attempt to grapple, albeit by way of another category, with the circuitous self-differentiations (exchange value) that capital utilizes for its increase. The “codification of affect” in nineteenth-century realism is thus actually a trans-codification of affect and totality, a feeling-for-totally that persists even as History seems to disappear, and a compensation, in fact, for that very disappearance. What “affect” means for contemporary theory is a question that Jameson leaves curiously bracketed in *Antinomies*. But already his strong correlation between the birth of European capitalism and the “codification of affect” in the realist novel points the way for a new and rigorous historicization of those supposedly ahistorical affects. Thus, to return to *Antinomies*’ final point — that we must return to historical thinking by means of whatever stimulant available, be it future-oriented and Science-Fictional or otherwise — Jameson remains, as irony would have it, eternally correct.

Notes

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) 4.
2. See, for example, Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press 2007).
3. *The Poetics of Social Forms* series has not been published in order. In a 2012 interview, Jameson describes their thematic ordering in the following terms: “The book on utopia [*Archaeologies of the Future*, 2005] is the last volume; the book on postmodernism [*Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991] is the next to last. *A Singular Modernity* [2002] is the fourth. The book on realism [forthcoming] is the third, the book on allegory [forthcoming] is the second, and the book on myth [forthcoming] is the first.” Maria Elisa Cevalco, “Imagining a Space That Is Outside: An Interview with Fredric Jameson,” *minnesota review* 78 (2012) 89. The then forthcoming book on realism is *Antinomies of Realism* (2013) and the second book on allegory is the now forthcoming *Ideology and Allegory* (London: Verso, 2019).
4. It is perhaps important to note here, as Jameson does elsewhere, that “it is a paradoxical feature of the concept of autonomy that it almost always turns out really to mean *semi*-autonomy (in the Althusserian sense): that is to say, the independence and self-sufficient internal coherence of the object or field in question is generally understood dialectically to be relative to some greater totality (in relation to which alone it makes sense to assert that it is autonomous in the first place).” *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 276.
5. Theodor Adorno, “Reconciliation under Duress,” trans. Rodney Livingstone, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977) 160.
6. Jameson, *Postmodernism* x.
7. As Jameson observes, the former “semiautonomy of the cultural sphere” enjoyed by modernist artists “has been destroyed by the logic of late capitalism.... [C]ulture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed as one level among others in earlier moments of capitalism”; and again, later in the same text, “This autonomy of culture, this semiautonomy of language, is the moment of modernism, and of a realm of the aesthetic which redoubles the world without being altogether of it, thereby winning a certain negative or critical power, but also a certain otherworldly futility.” But: “Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning — the signified — is problematized. We are left with that pure and random play of signifiers that we call Postmodernism, which no longer produces monumental works of the modernist type.” *Postmodernism* 48 and 96. However, for an attempt to complicate some of these claims about the disappearance of artistic semiautonomy under late capitalism, see Nicholas Brown, *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art Under Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
8. Rachel Bowlby, Foreword, *Adventures in Realism*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2007) xi.
9. Jameson, *Signatures* 229.
10. *Postmodernism* 51.
11. *Postmodernism* 51-52.
12. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

- University Press, 1981) 152.
13. Fredric Jameson, "The End of Temporality," *Ideologies of Theory* (London: Verso, 2008) 636-58.
 14. *Postmodernism* 368.
 15. *Postmodernism* 11-12.
 16. Fredric Jameson, *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 45.
 17. Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 27.
 18. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin—*New Left Review*, 1976) 228.
 19. Audrey Jaffe, *The Affective Life of the Average Man: The Victorian Novel and the Stock Market Graph* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010) 2.

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Does History Make Sense? Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice

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Does Historiography Make Sense? Terry Pinkard on Hegel on Philosophical History

Anirban Karak

For those who grapple with the problem of the diffusion of modern concepts and practices in colonial regions, Terry Pinkard's recent reworking of Hegel's philosophy of history is bound to feel disappointing. For although the book is a serious attempt to put "philosophical history" back on the table after a long hiatus, Pinkard's approach to the question of whether modern norms can be affirmed as constituting a "world history" remains bound within a conventional historiographical impasse. This review will acknowledge the merits of the philosophical tradition Pinkard belongs to, but it will insist that his approach to, and his account of, modern history must be rethought in order for his own normative claim about modern freedoms to remain defensible.

To fully comprehend the necessity of philosophical history, Pinkard insists, we need both philosophical abstractions and careful attention to the "decidedly concrete" of empirical history. The philosophical insight that informs his account is Hegel's unique view of the nature of human self-consciousness, one based on the larger distinction between nature, which has neither purpose nor determinate normative content taken as a whole, and spirit, all organic life that has purposes (or a *telos*) built into its constitution. What Pinkard calls "the logic of self-conscious animals," is thus a reference to the different kind of self-relation that human animals have. We are aware of our purposes as purposes, which enables us to raise the question of the adequacy of our purposes.

Pinkard rightly points out that while this view of human subjectivity is metaphysical, it is also simultaneously historical and social. For Hegel, a historically

determinate shape of subjectivity — and its entailment in institutionalized practices — is the way in which the “universal *particularizes* itself and is herein identity with itself” (18, emphasis in original). It is this emphasis on the historicity of human subjectivity that opens up the possibility of a philosophical study of the succession of “orders of thought.” Hegel believed that historical failures in attempts by human beings to justify their norms and practices to each other and the successive attempts to pick up the pieces and rebuild another community, indicates that history is not just “one damn thing after another.” Rather, there is an “infinite end” at work in history — that of securing justice, which has transformed itself in the modern period into a concern with justice as “freedom for all.”

Throughout the book, Pinkard tirelessly insists that this view of history is a retrospective, and not a straightforwardly teleological one. In his apt words, while we cannot look back and say that older forms of Spirit were false, we can say that they “turned out to be false” (149). This is also an effective counter to poststructuralist views, which deny that any “logic” of self-consciousness can be found in history, thereby suggesting that human self-comprehension of its own history cannot go beyond an acknowledgement of radical contingency.

It is one thing to clarify the need for a philosophical history however, and quite another to actually write one. The central contradiction in Pinkard’s book is between what it wants to claim and what it can claim within a purely philosophical framework. While the philosophical argument is pitched at the level of the relationship between a universal logic of human self-consciousness and historically determinate practices and norms, this cannot directly enable the claim that any historically specific set of norms also constitutes a “world history.” Yet, Pinkard also wants to affirm the specifically modern norm of justice as “freedom for all” as constitutive of such a “world history.”

The impasse (and predictable resolution) to which this tension leads can be best grasped by tracing the key arguments in chapters three to five of the book. Chapter three, titled “Hegel’s False Start: Non-Europeans as Failed Europeans,” has a primarily negative purpose. It acknowledges that Hegel’s Eurocentric and racist comments about the lack of self-consciousness among the blindly rule-following communities of Africa, China, and India are both empirically wrong and morally inexcusable. Pinkard points out that China under the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) could boast of a “vibrant market society” (59) long before any European community could, and that up to the early nineteenth century, neither China nor India imported European goods for daily consumption. Indeed, Indian cotton textile production was “one of the provocations of the English industrial revolution in textiles” (64). He also states more than once that philosophy beyond Europe was capable of generating its own negativity, embedded as it was in a rich cultural life and (often) supported by dynamic economic institutions. Given Pinkard’s self-distancing from Hegel on this account, we can conclude that stories particular to different communities about how the modern conjuncture of

“world history” came to pass can be told. Moreover, we cannot judge which stories mattered in what ways in the transition to modern life prior to their telling. In short, even if the *telos* of philosophical history is modern history as “world history,” it is still profoundly contingent, and cannot possibly pin its hopes on a Eurocentric account of history.

Unfortunately, just when chapter three seems to have opened up a space for novel historical accounts of modernity, chapter four forecloses it. It is titled “Europe’s Logic,” and it essentially recounts Hegel’s sweeping account of European history as told in the *Phenomenology*. It begins in ancient Greece, where, according to Pinkard (and Hegel), “what became the agenda of world history” (144) began, and the chapter ends with nineteenth-century Western Europe, where, once again following Hegel, the norm of “freedom for all” is seen as being embodied in the tripartite institutions of the family, civil society, and the state. This equation of the history of “modernity” with the history of “Europe” clearly undermines the promise inherent in chapter three, and leaves unclear how the acknowledgement of differences pertaining to “cultures,” “civilizations,” and “traditions,” can be combined with an attempt to grasp modern norms as constitutive of a “world history.”

This problem is not new. Historians have been grappling with it for many decades, although it is far from clear that any broadly acceptable resolution to it exists. The disappointing aspect of Pinkard’s book is that instead of owning up to this difficulty as a problem deserving further investigation, it falls back on nineteenth-century “imperialism” as the sole agent of the transition to “world history” It is worth quoting Pinkard at length here:

The conclusion that one can draw from Hegel’s conception of the modern concept is that just as the “master” and “servant” at the initial stages of the *Phenomenology* may be coming at each other from different systems, by virtue of the struggle, their own subjectivity (and therefore the final ends guiding their lives) become implicated with each other in a shared enterprise. After the European imperialism of the nineteenth century had extended its grip all over the world, world history became even more definitively “world” history... Just as the destinies of master and servant had become inseparable in [Hegel’s] own system, the destinies of the world’s people became more closely intertwined. (160; all quotation marks are Pinkard’s own.)

The problems with this assertion are many. It leaves unclear in what sense we can speak of a world history before the nineteenth century if the ultimate explanation for how “world” history came to pass remains imperialist expansion, it falls back on the tired metaphor of Europe as the master that schooled the world into enlightened knowledge as the only way to narrate the history of the past two centuries, and it forces

us to seriously ask how adequate Pinkard's Hegelianism (however sophisticated) can be as an account of the modern world, if its historiographical end point is merely the affirmative opposite of the postcolonialist rejection of bourgeois modernity as such.

Pinkard offers no clues in other words, as to why we must retain a commitment to the core claims of Hegel's philosophy of history, if the determinate account of "world history" that follows from it reproduces the logic of imperialism. Although this problem has often led to a rejection of Hegel *tout court*, I want to suggest that a Marxian approach to the historiographical impasse that Pinkard reaches can be helpful, since Marx allows for an immanent critique of bourgeois modernity instead of proceeding from either a one-sided affirmation or rejection of it.

Consider, for example, the contradictory role that concepts such as "market economy" and "civil society" play in the book, especially in Pinkard's historical narrative of the transition from the early modern to the modern world. On the one hand, Pinkard argues that a "thinly constituted" civil society has historically been the basis for "formal" freedom (123), such that even the roots of the French Revolution can be traced to the decline of the mediating effects of guilds and estates (123). Linking formal freedom to guilds and estates, Pinkard suggests that civil society is intrinsically driven by the "competitive nature of a market economy" (159) and thus forms the ground for the intelligibility of bourgeois political norms. At the same time however, Pinkard says that for the market to be a part of a "civil society" based on "decency in interaction," state regulation of the market is needed (163). Following Hegel, here the "market" is seen as an extrinsic feature of civil society, one that can and must be regulated by a political community in order to nurture ethical life.

The lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the "market" and "civil society" means that the question of whether "formal" freedom is to be seen as a norm finding plausibility only in the free play of market exchanges as a practice extrinsic to civil society, or whether such freedom must also be viewed as constitutive of civil society as such, is left hanging in the balance. If the former is true, we do not know what the appropriate response should be if formal freedom and the rather vaguely defined "decency in interaction" were to come into conflict. If the latter is true, we do not know how civil society might find resources within itself to overcome the thinning out of ethical solidarity generated by its own principles.

More significantly, if we take into consideration Pinkard's own admission that a "vibrant market society" (59) had existed in Song China, the fact that the kind of state-backed economic dynamism in early modern Europe that Pinkard refers to (115) was not exceptional in the wider context of the early modern world and the fact that the norm of "freedom for all" had found plausibility in non-European spaces as early as the late eighteenth century, we will be forced to accept that neither "market society," "market economy," nor Hegel's account of the "elements" of modern life as set out in the *Philosophy of Right*, can function as categories that grasp the web of institutionalized practices that make the modern norm of freedom (whether

substantive or merely formal) plausible.¹ In order to account for the intelligibility of modern freedoms, and in order to argue for their “world-historical” significance, we need more historically specific categories that can grasp the specificity of modern life at the level of practices that are not bound by “tradition” or “culture.”

Long story short, Hegel did not have (and Pinkard does not either) a fully historicized account of why modern norms emerged at the time that they did, and hence he could not have much to say about whether the articulation of modern freedoms might not themselves lead to further contradictions and dissatisfactions. Hegel continued to believe in the possibility of using “ethnies” or racial-psychological types (94-95) as the ground for normative intelligibility, and Pinkard agrees that even Hegel’s account of the rise of modern nation-states is dependent on references to such “ethnies” (116).

It is with respect to this problem of providing an adequate account of the historicity of modern life that Marx turns out to be a better Hegelian than either Pinkard or Hegel himself. The reason, simply, is that within the framework of a critical Marxian approach, the category “capitalist society” refers to a historically determinate set of practices — commodity production and exchange — that both constitute “world history” as an object of inquiry and function as the explanatory ground for the intelligibility of freedom as a modern political norm. The specificity of these practices, and hence of capitalism as a form of social mediation, lies in the fact that within the capitalist form of life, labor acts as the fundamental constituting unit of social relationships, whereas in all other human communities, labor had been organized through more overt relationships such as kinship ties. This practical fact that labor in capitalism mediates a new, abstract form of social (and not just political) interdependence that is not intrinsic to laboring activity as such, is grasped by the category of “abstract labor,” which is a “real abstraction” rather than a taxonomical one that merely refers to concrete labor in the abstract. Abstract labor is thus the “substance” (in the Aristotelian sense, i.e. both form and content) of value — which is the historically specific form of wealth in capitalist societies — measured in terms of socially necessary labor time, and embodied in commodities.²

What sets apart the Marxian theory from more casual invocations of “capitalism,” then, is that it sees capitalist society as constituted by normative practices that rest on the socially mediating role of labor. In contrast to all approaches that continue to accept the economic/ethical binary at face value, and therefore founder on the question of how genuinely ethico-political acts may become possible on a large scale in the contemporary world, the Marxian approach seeks to understand the centrality of the “economic” in capitalist societies as itself inextricably bound to the normative force of abstract labor as a form of social mediation. Marx, however, did not believe that bourgeois modernity could adequately realize its own aspirations to freedom, emphasizing instead that commodity production and exchange as the basis of social interdependence relies on practices of alienated labor. That is, it relies on the role of

labor as a means to a means (a wage) and because in capitalist society the purpose ultimately governing productive activity (endless capital accumulation) is indifferent to the personal aims of laborers as well as of capitalists, social life under capitalism is at once a condition of practical freedom and an engine of systematic unfreedom. In short, Marx's use of "capitalist society" allows us to grasp the historical specificity of bourgeois modernity, and renders visible its contradictions through an immanent critique.

In historical terms, such a Marxian approach can serve as a powerful analytic to understand the plausibility of modern freedoms in non-European spaces, without reducing the driving motor of that history to imperialism. For instance, Andrew Sartori has convincingly argued that the constitutive role played by a new vision of freedom in the peasant politics of agrarian Bengal from the mid-nineteenth century onward, cannot be understood without reference to the history of capital, with which local processes of commercialization had become increasingly intertwined since the early nineteenth century.³ Specifically, the normative significance of the "property-constituting powers of labor" that informed peasant politics, was tied not to an atavistic demand for autarkic existence, but rather to the peasants' embrace of commodity production as the way to participate more deeply in processes of commercialization. The key issue, in other words, is that the transition to capitalist society cannot be understood as existing in a merely extrinsic relationship to more particular histories. Rather, Sartori's point is that the content of peasant agency cannot be historicized and effectively grasped either as mere derivative mimicry or as the functional expression of already-constituted interests. In a related vein, I have argued elsewhere that an adequate historical understanding of the conceptual roots of state planning in mid-twentieth century India can open up the possibility of putting Indian history in conversation with a broader development of the time, namely the separation of political economy into economics and sociology, and that the condition of possibility of such a comparison is the increased imbrication of vastly different cultural contexts within the expanded vortex of capitalist reproduction.⁴

It might be said therefore, that what began as a philosophical insight in Hegel, that the "bad infinite" of history can "make sense" to us only when viewed as the working out of the "infinite end" of securing justice, must become a historically specific critical social theory of capitalism if the modern norm of "freedom for all" is to be affirmed as constituting a "world history." Indeed, as mentioned earlier, even "world history" is an historical concept that gains plausibility only under capitalism. As Marx himself put it:

The further the separate spheres, which act on one another, extend in the course of this development, and the more the original isolation of the separate nationalities is destroyed by the advanced mode of production, by intercourse, and by the natural division of labor between various

nations arising as a result, the more *history becomes world history*. Thus, for instance, if in England a machine is invented which deprives countless workers of bread in India and China, and overturns the whole form of existence of these empires, this invention *becomes* a world-historical fact.⁵

The Marxian approach therefore, insists that a practical basis in the historical experience of diverse peoples must be demonstrated in order to argue that the problem of “freedom for all” and self-conscious reflection on social norms had become a problem for such peoples, and not just one imposed on them. Otherwise, it is hard to argue from within the terms of Hegelian philosophy that people who have no basis in their immediate or mediate experience to warrant an identification with modern norms, and who rarely have their own histories written (for instance, the communities of North-Eastern India), must necessarily and unquestioningly submit to such norms. What Marxian approaches have — and what is crucially lacking in Pinkard — is an approach to history that mediates the discussion between a philosophical and an empirical history of modern life.

Notes

1. See, for example, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Of *Imarat* and *Tijarat*: Asian Merchants and State Power in the Western Indian Ocean, 1400–1750,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37.4 (1998): 750–80 and Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry*, 26.4 (2000): 821–865.
2. A canonical theoretical statement of such an approach to capitalism is Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For an argument about why the history of political economy as a real abstraction matters for historiographical debates, see Andrew Sartori, “Global Intellectual History and the History of Political Economy,” *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) 110–133.
3. Andrew Sartori, *Liberalism in Empire: An Alternative History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
4. Anirban Karak, “What was ‘Indian’ Political Economy? On the Separation of the ‘Social,’ the ‘Economic,’ and the ‘Ethical’ in Indian Nationalist Thought, 1892–1948,” *Modern Asian Studies* (Forthcoming).
5. *Karl Marx-Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Volume 5, 1845–47 (Progress Publishers, 1975), 50–51, emphases mine. For an insightful review essay on Marx’s lifelong involvement with historical research and the ways in which his extensive studies informed his evolving views on world history, see Michael R. Krätke, “Marx and World History,” *International Review of Social History*, 63.1 (2018): 91–125.

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