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Johnson, Andrew

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On the Uses and Abuses of History for Politics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Political

Science

by

Andrew Ryan Johnson

Committee in charge:

Professor Kevin B. Anderson, Chair

Professor P. E. Digeser

Professor William I. Robinson

Professor George Lipsitz

September 2022

The dissertation of Andrew Ryan Johnson is approved.

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George Lipsitz

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William I. Robinson

_____

P.E. Digeser

_____

Kevin B. Anderson, Committee Chair

September 2022

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by

Andrew Ryan Johnson

VITA OF ANDREW RYAN JOHNSON
September 2022

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, University of Maine, June 2008
Master of Arts in Philosophy, Louisiana State University, June 2010
Master of Arts in Political Science, University of California Santa Barbara, June 2018
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science, University of California Santa Barbara, September 2022

FIELDS OF STUDY:

Primary Field: Political Theory
Ph.D. Emphasis: Global Studies
Secondary Fields: International Relations and American Politics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Lecturer in Political Science, Seattle University, 2021-2022
Teaching Associate in Political Science, University of California Santa Barbara, Summer 2020
UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Graduate Teaching Fellow, 2019-2020
Teaching Assistant in Political Science, Sociology, and Black Studies, University of California Santa Barbara, 2014-2020
Professor of Philosophy, Beijing Huijia IB International School, 2012-2013
Professor of English, Guangxi University, 2011-2012
Adjunct Professor of Sociology, Husson University, 2010-2011
Teaching Assistant in Philosophy, Louisiana State University, 2008-2010

RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS:

Philipps-Universität Marburg Visiting Fellowship, 2022 to Present
UCSB Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies Graduate Research Fellow, 2020-2021
Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Benjamin J. Cohen, 2019-2020
Princeton University U.S. China Coalition, 2019

PUBLICATIONS:

"Hegel's *Polizei*", *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (forthcoming)
"Stuart Hall", *The Encyclopedia of Critical Political Science* (forthcoming)
"Gilles Deleuze", *The Encyclopedia of Critical Political Science* (forthcoming)
"Bureaucrats with Guns: Or, How We Can Abolish the Police if We Just Stop Believing in Them", *Anthropological Notebooks* 27(3), 2021, pg. 159-208
"Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism", *Journal of International Relations, Peace Studies, and Development* 5(1), 2019, pg. 1-33

"Twilight of the Humans: Nietzsche, Dismal Politics, and the Coming Planetary Apocalypse",
The Agonist: A Nietzsche Circle Journal 7(2), 2019, pg. 7-27
"Foucault: Critical Theory of the Police in a Neoliberal Age", *Theoria: A Journal of Social
and Political Theory* 61(4), 2014, pg. 5-29
"On Honesty and Deceit: An Interpretation of Deleuze's Difference and Repetition",
Philosophy Study 2(5), 2012, pg. 301-313
Viral Politics: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Auto-Immunity and the Political Philosophy of
Carl Schmitt, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010
"The End of Art or the Origin of New Art? A Heideggerian Historization of the New York
City Graffiti Movement", *Dialectic: University of New Hampshire's Undergraduate
Journal of Philosophy* 8, 2007

AWARDS:

UCSB Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, Fall 2020
UCSB Political Science Department Dissertation Research Grant, Summer 2020
Confucius Institute Graduate Student Travel Grant, Spring 2019
Manzer-Wesson Award for Best Peer-Reviewed Publication, 2018
UCSB Doctoral Scholar Fellowship, 2016-2017
UCSB Doctoral Scholar Fellowship, 2013-2014
Levinson Award for Best Philosophy Paper, 2008
The Charles Schwartz Virtue Award, 2008

COURSES TAUGHT:

Police and Politics
Global Policing
Introduction to Political Theory
Modern Political Theory
Contemporary Political Theory
Introduction to Philosophy
Theory of Knowledge
Ethics
Introduction to Sociology

COURSES ASSISTED:

Sociology of Deviance
Sociology of Education
Political Sociology
Civil Rights Movement
Introduction to Political Philosophy
American Government and Politics
Introduction to International Relations
The American Presidency
History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

Philosophy in Literature
Contemporary French Philosophy
Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

Historical Materialism, November 2022
American Studies Association, November 2022
Mobilization, June 2022
Western Political Science Association, Feb. 2022
Association for Political Theory, Nov. 2021
Geneva Graduate Conference in Political Philosophy, February 2021
Abolition Convergence, postponed
Critical Genealogies Workshop, postponed
33rd International Hegel Congress, June 2021
State Violence Research Network, April 2020
International Herbert Marcuse Society Conference, Oct. 2019
Philosophy, Politics, & Anthropology Conference, May 2019
Western Political Science Association, April 2019
International Studies Association, March 2019
Association for Political Theory, Oct. 2016
Nihilism.Hope, April 2016
21st Century EcoSocialism, Oct. 2015
EcoMaterialisms, May 2015
Western Political Science Association, April 2015
International Deleuze Studies in Asia Conference, May 2013
Kaifeng International Deleuze Conference, May 2012
9th Biennial Meeting Radical Philosophy Association, Nov. 2011
43rd Meeting North Texas Philosophical Association, March 2010
Biennial Brennan Graduate Student Conference in Philosophy, March 2010
Collegium Phaenomelogicum, July 2009
Emory Graduate Philosophy Conference, April 2009
Society for Student Philosophers, March 2009
3rd New England Philosophy Conference, April 2007
Portland Philosophy Conference, March 2006

EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE:

Structural Violence, Prison/Police Abolition, and Decoloniality Research Cluster: Global
        Carcerality Bibliography
2014-2020 Organizer for UCSB Political Science Graduate Speaker Series
UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Conference, January 2019
2015-2016 Board of Directors for the Santa Barbara Student Housing Cooperative
2013-2020 Interfaith Coordinator for the Santa Barbara Student Housing Cooperative
2015-2016 Undergraduate Advisor for the UCSB Political Science Department
Center for Jewish Nonviolence: Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue, Summer 2017

8th Annual Critical Race Studies Symposium, October 2015
Organizer of Louisiana State University Philosophy Conference, Feb. 2010
Organizer of Louisiana State University Philosophy Conference, April 2009
Collegium Phaenomenologicum, 2009
New York University's 4th Annual Conference in Modern Philosophy, Nov. 2007
Reviewer for Surveillance & Society and History of the Human Sciences
Member of UCSB Social Movements Working Group, UCSB Politics of Identity Working Group, UCSB Center on Work, Labor, and Political Economy, American Political Science Association, Association for Political Thought, International Studies Association, American Studies Association, Radical Philosophy Association, and Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy

MEDIA APPEARANCES:

"Global Policing", Structural Violence, Decoloniality, and Police/Prison Abolition Podcast, 2022
"Graeber, Policing, and Abolitionism", Against the Grain Radio, 2022
"Hello Harrell, So Long Sawant?", *The Spectator*, 2021
Ben Brucato on "White Citizenship, Black Slavery, and Police: U.S. America's Peculiar Institution", Orfalea Center Webinar, 2021
"Interview with the MENA Prison Forum", Orfalea Center, 2021
"I.V. CSD 2021-21 Budget Projects Increase in Revenue Despite Coronavirus", *Daily Nexus*, 2020
The Unveiled Truth (documentary), 2020
"Charles Moscowitz and Andrew Johnson Discuss Defund the Police", June 2020
"Police, Power, and Resistance", University of Virginia podcast, April 2020
"University of California Graduate Students Strike Against Unsustainable Housing Costs", *The International Humanist-Marxist Organization*, March 2020
"Inside the Israeli Palestinian Crisis", *The Young Turks*, May 2017

TALKS ORGANIZED:

Alphonso Lingis, March 2021
Wendy Trevino, Jan. 2021
John Woolley, Jan. 2021
Ben Brucato, Nov. 2020
Brendan Joyce and Kevin Latimer, Nov. 2020
Stephanie Kaylor, March 2020
Michael Montenegro, Feb. 2020
Dylan Rodriguez, Feb. 2018
James Ferguson, Feb. 2018
Elizabeth Pérez, Feb. 2018
Beautiful Trouble, March 2017
Dick Flacks, March 2017
Vasanth Vijajji Maharaj, May 2016
Stan Klein, April 2016

Amy Lerman, April 2016
Ahmad Ahmad, Feb. 2016
Ashley Bohrer, May 2015
John Foran, May 2015
Dick Flacks, May 2015
Ahmed Mousa, April 2015
Maurizia Boscagli, April 2015
Christopher Newfield, March 2015
Cedric Robinson, Feb. 2015
Edward Casey, postponed
Elisabeth Weber, Jan. 2015
George Lipsitz, postponed
José Cabezón, Dec. 2014
Skylar Covich, Oct. 2014
Harold Marcuse, May 2014
Brian Walker, May 2014
Joseph Navarro, May 2014
Beth Digeser, May 2014
Andrew Dilts, April 2014
Kip Fulbeck, April 2014
Carly Thomsen, April 2014
Shyam Sriram, March 2014
Jovian Radheshwar, March 2014
Kevin Anderson, Feb. 2014
Edward Song, Jan. 2014
Egidio Garay, Nov. 2013
Edward Casey, Feb. 2010
David Wood, Feb. 2010
Todd May, April 2009
Edward Casey, March 2008
John Sallis, Feb. 2008

ABSTRACT

On the Uses and Abuses of History for Politics

by

Andrew Ryan Johnson

This dissertation is composed as a series of distinct essays. Each essay is fixed within the history of political thought, but also attuned to the most pressing of present-day political problems. Historical figures studied include: G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and David Graeber; however, many other philosophical figures play foundational roles in the thoughts herein. There is particular attention given to a conceptual analysis of the "police." Police haunt the history of political theory as an all-pervasive, intangible presence, whose underlying force portends the worst excesses of violence. There is general recognition that there is presently a *crisis of policing*, both here in the United States and abroad. This dissertation aspires to be an example of social movement drive theorizing. Social movements have taught me more valuable lessons than any political theorist. In particular, my thinking in these pages is inspired by, but also in response to, the slogans and narratives associated with the police abolition movement. Simple narratives and slogans are employed by conservatives, liberals, and abolitionists alike. I argue that historical and theoretical complexity can benefit social movements by challenging received wisdom and transforming common sense beliefs. I claim the mantle of a vulgar and pessimistic abolitionism that is less interested in defending the cause than questioning its precepts.

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INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin, the sage that he was, once hauntingly professed: "The work is the death mask of its conception" (Benjamin 1979: 65). As a self-styled prophet of looming catastrophe, it is fitting that this dissertation ends in failure. This is not the dissertation that I intended or proposed. It is a dissertation of necessity. However, I hope that the ambitiousness of its initial prospect is burrowed within the arguments herein, struggling to break free of their limitations. I originally wanted to write a rough draft of a future book proposal. One limitation is the ongoing struggle to develop a style that is true to myself. I aspire to write a book for a public audience. A dissertation is written for a tapered audience and judged by academic standards of expertise. Nevertheless, there is still a rough draft of a future book project buried within these extended studies. This is not to speak dismissively of a dissertation composed of discrete academic articles. The expectations are different across disciplines and geography, but the three-article dissertation is so common that it has its own acronym: TAD. There is debate within higher education about the changing landscape of universities, the job market, knowledge production, emerging technologies, collaborative research, and the lasting role of dissertations amidst such changes (see Adkins 2009; Patton 2013; Honan and Bright 2016; Thomas, West, and Rich 2016). Perfecting the essay or article form is every bit as valuable as learning to write a book-length manuscript. Many a great scholar and/or writer has achieved social and/or professional impact through essays or articles. As a practical matter, articles are a testament to concerted research on narrow topics, demonstrate exacting standards, and allow young scholars to produce publishable work. I hear that if we are not publishing at this stage we might perish! As a matter of style, I have found the bounded nature of academic articles to

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be a useful constraint. Each writer writes differently, as every reader has particular tastes. Ultimately, I suffer from having too much to say. I write articles that press against the word limits of academic journals. I have benefited immensely from viciously editing my overly verbose prose. An overly verbose book would be a less forgiving sin. Styles and tastes exhibit neurodivergence; each are the means in which writers and readers think differently. This dissertation ends in failure not because it departs from academic norms and traditions, but because it too closely conforms to them. Following the expectations set by Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre, in their post-qualitative movement, this dissertation fails to "imagine and accomplish an inquiry that might... produce knowledge *differently* [my emphasis]" (Lather and St. Pierre 2013). Besides, as I will elaborate upon later, I wish to reclaim the utility of failure. This is both a personal and political imperative. Every article that I have published, while professionally a sign of success, I look back upon as various failed attempts. My hope is that I might accumulate just enough attempted failures that one day I might produce something *actually* worthwhile. One must always keep in mind Samuel Beckett's adage: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (Beckett 1989).

The UCSB Department of Political Science requires completion of a dissertation prospectus workshop. I would like to recall a funny, but revealing, story from mine. The Professor, who is excellent but who I will not name here, asked the students to choose an author whose style they would like to imitate. This was a really valuable exercise, the purpose of which was focused upon the importance of abstracts and introductions. All my colleagues choose political scientists who were still alive and produce scholarship of the highest caliber. I chose Walter Benjamin. I remember quite distinctly the certain smirk and repressed eyeroll of the Professor. To be fair, Benjamin is the last author an aspiring political scientist should

choose to imitate. Benjamin was something of a failed academic. Benjamin withdrew his only completed book manuscript, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, as qualification for his *Habilitation* (a German university teaching credential), because he thought it would be rejected. What many call his magnum opus, *The Arcades Project*, largely composed of the quotes of others, was left incomplete at the time of his death. Benjamin's professional failures resulted in him being cast as an outsider within the Institute for Social Research (colloquially known as the Frankfurt School) and contributed to the difficulty he faced in securing escape from the Nazis. Benjamin, surely, is one of history's great essayists. However, having both studied and taught Benjamin, few thinkers are as obscure. When my students reply that they do not think that they properly understood what he was trying to say, my preprogrammed response is to let them know that this is precisely the point. Benjamin praised ambiguity as the bastardization of dialectics by means of imagery, what he devilishly referred to as "dialectics at a standstill" (Benjamin 2002: 10). Hannah Arendt argued that it was impossible to write á la Benjamin as his genre of thought fragments was a strange form of critical alchemy (Benjamin 1968). I should have also been more exacting in my answer to the Professor's query. My personal tastes as a reader are drawn to obscure thinkers such as Benjamin (but also, and this is a truncated list, Jorge Luis Borges, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari). What makes these authors so delightful is that there are secret riddles to be deciphered within their texts. I, on the other hand, do not wish to be unclear and imprecise, quite the opposite; I just do not think that my brain works in such a way. For me, writing is an expression of my own confusions. The aim of my prose is not to create riddles but to decode them. I do not *want to* write like Benjamin, I just *happen to* write like a poor man's version. My style is but a second-rate imitation. But, to be fair, no one can match the greatness of

Benjamin's pen; there is a reason why he is considered a master of the essay form.[1] One limitation of my style is that each of my conclusions ends in something of a standstill, what Benjamin might call a "profane illumination" (Benjamin 1978: 179). This was the reason why I named Benjamin as a stylistic influence so many years ago. I do not, however, mean that as a compliment. At the end of most of my essays, I find myself as confused as my readers. None of this, admittedly, is a good model of success for early career political scientists to follow.

The Professor's smirk was also very telling. There is an informal hierarchy within the subfields of the political science discipline. It is not just that I am an oddball, political theory as a subfield is the black sheep of the discipline. The first piece of advice for incoming graduate students is to make their primary field one of the more respected and employable subfields: American Politics, International Relations, or Comparative Politics. This is due, in part, to a separation between normative and empirical political analysis. Political theory is criticized as being mere opinion. The science part of political science is more valued than the political part. The positivist revolution within the social sciences has pushed theory to the margins of the discipline. I do not think that my Professor's smirk was intended as a slight. It makes perfect sense why an aspiring political theorist might choose an author unlike the others. Political theory is, without a doubt, different than the other subfields. The other political science subfields have distinct subjects, but they share a similar style. Political theory, on the other hand, as it is commonly understood and traditionally taught, is a dead conversation. The major subjects of the subfield are quite literally decomposing corpses: Plato, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Karl Marx, even John Rawls. Political theory is studied and

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[1] Benjamin is a great example of what Deleuze and Guattari, referring to Franz Kafka, called "a minor literature" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). The essay is always cheapened in comparison with great books. However, by doing more with less, Benjamin and Borges and Kafka are virtuosos of subversion.

taught as the historical basis for political analysis writ large. The other subfields are less interested in *the ancients*. While each subfield has their own set of canonical texts, no other subfield has established a canon of so-called *great books*. Many might argue that we should hasten political theory's demise. The fetish of the canon is a fetish of the European experience, a fetish of the male gaze, a fetish of white hegemony. This dissertation largely follows the traditional parameters of political theory. This is a dissertation overwhelmingly preoccupied with the historical fetish. Each of the authors studied herein, including David Graeber, are dead and buried. Each were white men.[2] However, much like Benjamin, I desperately seek to have the past speak to contemporary concerns. Benjamin was an amateur historian *and* an expert cultural critic. Benjamin described our remembrance of the past as phantasmagorical, thus something of an ignoble lie, but nevertheless he aspired to *awaken history* with new dreams and visions (Benjamin 2002: 12-13). I do not think that this present study contributes to a rude awakening of history, but it is animated by a strong belief that political theory is a *living conversation*. Political theory has something invaluable to contribute to the most pressing of present-day political debates. Political theory as it is practiced within the leading academic journals is transcending its stereotype. Many of the most exciting topics being debated (to name just a few: political realism, neoliberalism, post-democracy, indigenous and Black radical thought, etc.) show little allegiance to the dead masters. This dissertation contributes to a living conversation but fails to free itself from the trappings of a traditionalist style of political theory.

Andrew March, in his field defining essay, "What is Comparative Political Theory?", lists five subtypes of political theory: 1) normative political philosophy; 2) critical theory; 3)

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[2] Added to this, I decided not to include a chapter on Jacques Derrida.

history of political thought; 4) conceptual analysis; 5) discourse analysis (March 2009). This dissertation is an archetypal exposition of the history of political thought. Each study, save the chapter "Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism", hews closely to an introspection of a singular philosophical figure. As Deleuze once stated: "There is a great difference between writing history of philosophy and writing philosophy. In the one case, we study the arrows or the tools of a great thinker, the trophies and the prey, the continents discovered. In the other case, we trim our own arrows, or gather those which seem to us the finest in order to try to send them in other directions, even if the distance covered is not astronomical but relatively small" (Deleuze 1994: xv). Despite my desire to "do philosophy", this is *a series of readings* of philosophers and their thoughts. It is also a trace of my academic development. I was originally trained as a philosopher. There is a dominant tendency within the philosophy discipline, especially those working in what is called continental philosophy, to focus on particular figures (for example: G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, etc.). My background in continental philosophy is also, partly, to blame for my obsession with style. Continental philosophy is often mocked as jargon-laden, confusing, and aimless. At its best, continental philosophy exhibits valiant efforts at theory-fiction. The tradition within analytic philosophy, in heated contrast to continental philosophy, is to study philosophically defined problems (e.g., modal logic, free will, consciousness, standpoint epistemology, applied ethics, etc.). This mode of philosophizing is closely related to the description of political theory put forth by William Connolly in *The Terms of Political Discourse*. Connolly argued that political theory consists of debates over "essentially contested concepts", including, but not limited to: justice, violence, authority, disobedience, inequality, truth, freedom, the foundations of political societies, and political legitimacy (Connolly 1993). A predominant theme within the

essays herein is the institution of police. Even the chapters on Marx, Nietzsche, and fascism touch upon my interest in police and play crucial roles in the development of my thinking on the topic. Thus, this dissertation is, in part, an attempt at conceptual analysis. Mark Neocleous argues that police should be included as an essentially contested concept within political theory. "[I]t is through policing that the state shapes and orders civil society. 'Police' should therefore be as important a concept to social and political theory as 'sovereignty,' 'legitimacy,' 'consent,' 'social contract,' 'violence,' and all the other concepts regularly used by theorists grappling with the nature of state power" (Neocleous 2000: xi). Indeed, the history of political theory can be read as an enduring debate over the police powers of the state. The debate has often taken a veiled form. I analyze the disguising of police by Plato and Hobbes through their description of the guardian class and the imagery of the Leviathan. It is no accident that Robert Nozick's police state is decorously referred to as a Nightwatchmen State. One of my grievances with John Rawls is the absence of police in his defense of fairly administered justice. Sheldon Wolin notes the bad habit within political theory of "ingenious veil[ed] euphemisms [that] conceal the ugly fact of violence" (Wolin 2004: 197). To be fair, this tendency is due to the close linkages of the police with other essentially contested concepts. Police powers denote a chain of significations that include, but are not limited to: sovereignty, violence, justice, disobedience, legitimacy, etc. Police haunt the history of political theory as an all-pervasive, intangible presence, whose underlying force portends the worst excesses of violence.

Marx's famous eleventh thesis postulates: "philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it" (Marx 1978: 145). In Connolly's words, there is a distinction between descriptive and normative political theory. March's parsing of normative and critical theory is altogether preferable. I am averse to normative claims.

However, assuredly, this dissertation is an example of critical theory. Differing views on police are foundational for rival ideological positions. The existence of police institutions might be a social fact, but my interest in writing about police is to challenge their social value. This dissertation takes up a position *against police* without apology. Despite my aversion to normative claims, this attempt at theory is driven by established priors and opinions. This tendency amongst theorists is one cause of the informal hierarchy within the discipline. Political theory is castigated as an outlaw branch of political analysis largely because of its conspicuous display of partisanship and activism. Because of its lingering commitment to normative analysis, political theory is debased for its lack of objectivity and its evident biases. Even beyond the professional association conference circuit, the so-called activism, or often lack thereof, of so-called critical theorists is a running joke within movement spaces. Lea Ypi, in a recent well-reviewed monograph, takes up the charge of "activist political theory" (Ypi 2012). However, their account of the political avant-garde is noticeably lacking analysis of social movements and/or debates over strategy. Ypi's version of activist political theory refers more to an aesthetic than a commitment and is completely divorced from activism as it is being practiced on the ground. This dissertation playfully claims the mantle of activism through two registers. First, at its best moments, this study aspires to be movement driven research. Over the past two decades, I have been a student of the social movements taking place outside the classroom while also studying politics within the classroom. Social movements have taught me more valuable lessons than any political theorist. As Robin D.G. Kelley masterfully surmised: "Social movements generate new knowledge, new theories, new questions" (Kelley 2002: 9). The aspirational current of my research is to apply political theory to present-day debates involving movement strategies, popular culture, and slogans. My method largely

consists of my style, thus the repetitive forays into humor, poetry, polemics, and awe. I follow Deleuze and Guattari's advice to "write with slogans" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 24) and Benjamin's command "to coin slogans without betraying ideas" (Benjamin 1979: 67). Second, this dissertation is an attempt at what March calls engaged theory. My reasons for abandoning philosophy were largely due to a resistance to the narrow focus upon figures and abstract concepts. My subsequent interest in political science, but now also sociology, Global Studies, Black Studies, anthropology, and history, is driven by the need to connect theory with real-world problems and practices. This study takes up theory in the service of pressing political problems, drawing from a wide array of interdisciplinary sources. At its most aspirational, this dissertation desires to escape the bounds of political theory, while never quite completing the jump into flight. This effort is best seen in my latest work. My essay "Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism" is my first publication that is not about a particular figure but is an explicit engagement with present-day politics. While the *original* fascism debate amongst political theorists is an important framing device, the essay largely relies upon recent scholarship in International Relations and American Politics. My essay on David Graeber is a long exposé covering his entire academic career, while also being a springboard for me to preface my own contributions to police abolition in the aftermath of the George Floyd rebellion. The concluding excursus is an unfinished draft of a future book project that aspires to free political theory from the confines of academic prose. This is a dissertation assuredly fixed within the history of political thought, concerned with debates involving the abstract category "police", but it is also attuned to the most pressing of present-day political problems.

Political theory has long prided itself on its penchant for addressing contemporary concerns. There is no history of political thought without situating figures and ideas within

their historical context. The greatest epics of the genre are products of their age. Benjamin, recall, looked to history as a means of intervention upon the present. One of the field defining debates within political theory was occasioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Jeffrey Isaacs took the field to task for its "strange silence" on the most dramatic crisis of the time (Isaacs 1995). Isaacs overlooks the spirited debate, taken up by theorists, surrounding the so-called end of history. I am partial to Sheldon Wolin's rejoinder, where he argues that political theory is out of sync with political time (Wolin 1997). Wolin describes political theory as stricken by a kind of historical vertigo. One consistent paradox within this dissertation is the contest between transhistorical assumptions, historical analogies, and what remains unique about the present moment. Isaacs was not alone; like all political crises, the end of the Cold War precipitated a round of navel gazing across the discipline. John Lewis Gaddis, in a noted statement, called to task experts of International Relations for failing to predict the quick disintegration of the Soviet empire (Gaddis 1992). One reason for the fascism debate within the past few years was due to the surprise and shock amongst political experts when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. They doth protested too much, methinks! This dissertation decries the strange silence of the political science discipline to the most pressing contemporary crises. Political analysis has provided feeble tools for explaining and/or predicting political events. This is why Wolin brought attention to the instability of political time. Crises make their own history, as they please, regardless of circumstances given and transmitted from the past. Political theorists are not alone; it is monumentally difficult to write from the eye of the crisis. This is one reason why I maintain that Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies wrote the single greatest study of police and neoliberalism back in 1978. This dissertation is a far more modest attempt at engaged theory.

This dissertation describes police violence as a *long crisis*, that no one ought to be surprised about. This dissertation depicts climate change as a *slow catastrophe*, one that challenges the pertinence of the essentially contested concepts dominant within traditional political theory. This dissertation finds that far-right populism is evidence of *political dysfunction*, portending the death pangs of liberalism.

Isaacs, though, was quite right to call attention to the passivity popular within professional political science. In an effort to remain politically neutral, political science has forsaken the adversarial art of politics. A telling example is Erin Pineda's public statement "A Reckoning for Political Science" (Pineda 2021). Pineda called out the American Political Science Association for their evenhanded public statement in response to the storming of the U.S. Capital on January 6th, 2021. Pineda is certainly correct. The disciplinary ethos compelling political neutrality is myopic and dangerous. In my characteristic style of polemics, such neutrality precipitates, justifies, and excuses coming mass atrocities. However, somewhat uncharacteristically, let me emit a word or two of caution. Political theory should not be subservient to partisanship. More explicitly, the role of the political theorist, at least the role that I claim in these pages, is not to develop arguments in service of social movements. Theory should be grounded upon lived practices, but it is not a substitute for political action. More often than not, theory is a hindrance and not especially useful for social movements. There might not be any such thing as "the truth", but political theorists ought to at least be honest. Political theory should not conform itself to what is politically correct, fashionable, efficacious, or instrumental. Because of this, in this dissertation I practice a humble version of political theory far more interested in what remains unknown, mysterious, and brimming in complexity.

I claim the mantle of a vulgar abolitionism that is less interested in defending the cause than questioning its precepts.

One of the consistent features of this dissertation is the dismal tone. I want to reclaim a political theory of failure. Benjamin transverses this dissertation, while never meriting an extended essay focused solely upon him. In significant ways, he is an important voice in establishing a politics of failure. Nietzsche's apocalyptic tone is recast in the words of Benjamin. Benjamin's final essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", is written from the perspective of someone who cannot stop what is coming. Every time that I have read Benjamin I have read him differently, and, thus, I feel as if I have failed to ever read him at all. So too, every time I have written about a philosophical figure, I have failed to capture what was most remarkable about their thinking. I even failed to properly analyze 21st century fascism.[3] As a writer and so-called expert, I think it is important to center failure as a critical part of the learning process. Failures are indicators of growth and personal development. I prefer to think that I have achieved small successes in being a student. This is not the exposition of an expert, but of someone who writes in order to learn. This dissertation aspires to what Jack Halberstam calls the "queer art of failure" (Halberstam 2011). The focus upon low theory and crude humor throughout these essays is intended as a means of subverting capitalism and bureaucratic culture. More so, every attempt that I have made as an activist or organizer has resulted in failure. Nevertheless, the two issues that I have dedicated the majority of my time to advancing, democratic socialism and police abolition, are far more popular now than they were at the beginning of my graduate school career. What were once treated with smirks and eyerolls are

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[3] I say this despite accurately predicting Trump's suicidal brand of politics. My statement that "[t]he politics of Trump is that if he loses, may the nation also perish" (Johnson 2019b: 22) now reads as foreboding premonition of his unwillingness to concede the Presidency.

now regarded as real threats. That being said: the capitalist class remains firmly entrenched in power and police departments are receiving more funding than ever before.

One thing that I have found surprising is the enthusiastic response amongst young people when I speak openly about failure. The sense of failure is a widespread sentiment shared by many of those who struggle with what to do about a world tarrying with catastrophe. That human failings are universally experienced is comforting because this implies the need for gentleness and forgiveness, for oneself and others. There are those of us who do not know what to do because there is nothing to be done. By acknowledging failure, young students and/or organizers are not pressured into false expectations. Failure is, thus, a significant teacher. George Lipsitz's "The Struggle for Hegemony" is a remarkable text, remarkable largely because it says much in few words. The struggle for hegemony consists of how politics are won and lost. What I find most useful about Lipsitz's short essay is the difficulty, even inability, for social movements to identify their success and failures. To take but one example, the experience of civil rights leaders throughout the 1950s and 1960s was a sense that they were constantly failing. Only through the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act were these early failures reconstructed as success stories. However, from the perspective of the 1970s and 1980s, these successes were short lived and resulted in an aggressive backlash. For Lipsitz, the politics of failure is recast in an optimistic light. "Even in failure, social contestation changes the material and ideological balance of power in society" (Lipsitz 1988: 150). There is, thus, no success without failure. By reclaiming the promises of failure, this dissertation encourages experimentation and conviction, regardless of the consequences.

James C. Scott's monumental *Seeing Like a State* is rightly remembered for its theory of the state (Scott 1998). However, of substantial importance is the book's subtitle: *How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Scott's work is important because it showcases the similarities between liberal state projects and utopian projects by communist or decolonized states. For Scott, all attempts to ameliorate inequality and suffering result in failure. Just as crucial, if not more so, the worst excesses of state power and domination are doomed to fail. There is a small comfort in the fact that highly successful mass atrocities have never fully eliminated the targeted populations. As Cedric Robinson observed, referring to but one example: "Slavery gave the lie to its own conceit: one could not create a perfect system of oppression and exploitation" (Robinson 1997: 11). James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine* is another lauded contribution to the theory of political failures. Ferguson analyzes development projects in Lesotho and their failure to actually improve the living conditions of the recipient population. Ferguson recalls Michel Foucault's analysis of the failure of prisons as a focal lesson. Foucault argues that the depiction of prisons as failures ignores what is served by their malfunction. Social failure is the norm for state projects. These failures intensify the demand for state intervention and lead to windfalls for bureaucratic bodies. The failure of the state to meet the basic needs of their citizens is occasioned by massive increases in state agents and budgets. The bureaucratic apparatus is not a machine for eliminating poverty, it is a machine for reinforcing and expanding bureaucratic state power. For abolitionists, to speak of the failures of the police is to miss that they are working exactly as intended. Police institutions are not a means for eliminating crime, but a machine for reinforcing and expanding state power. Ferguson's slogan "the anti-politics machine" is intended to convey how the vast expansion of bureaucratic capacity is depoliticized, but

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ironically demonstrates the value of an anti-political position. Politics is not the solution to the problems that it creates. Put another way: one ought to oppose any and all state projects. This has formed the basis for my antagonism towards the bureaucratic power underlying police institutions. My position is not unique amongst abolitionists, but it does contribute to within-movement debate. By highlighting an expansive notion of police, I express skepticism toward calls for reinvestment in care-based institutions. My stance is measured; I have learned a great deal from comrades who advocate on behalf of the positive, world-making potential of abolitionist reforms. However, these are challenging issues that require debate, skepticism, and assessments of unintended consequences. There is no data-driven process for enacting justice. Justice is a slogan dreamed up by ancient philosophers to sell the necessity of police. Instead, I favor Andrew Dilts's contention that "justice is failure" (Dilts 2017). The impetus for Dilts's small essay is the apparent contradiction when abolitionists decry the failures of the (in)justice system to prosecute killer cops. Abolitionists ought not worry about being hypocritical as it was never our lot to become judges or juries. Injustice is the norm; justice is a dangerous illusion. At least for me, being *against police, against injustice,* is sufficient. This dissertation is an "anti-politics machine" because it desires a massive reduction in state capacity.

Many of the questions that I have pursued in this dissertation originated in frustration with popular liberal responses addressed to the burgeoning abolition movement. The classic response, one that I have heard an infinite number of times, is to express incredulity at the possibility of alternatives to police. Another kneejerk response is to question how abolitionists will deal with social monsters, i.e., the rapist, school shooter, serial killer, etc. Abolitionists have expended a lot of ink responding to these doubts. Surely, social movements, to be successful, must appeal to and aspire to change deeply entrenched common-sense beliefs.

However, abolitionists are put in an untenable situation when they must imagine possible worlds without police or defend the worst instances of social evil. Abolitionist hypotheticals have limited material force. I defend the need for a pessimistic imagination. A world without police is less probable than the continued hoarding of finite resources, ecological collapse, political dysfunction, maintained by ever-increasing and sophisticated forms of police violence and terror. Abolitionists should be expending some of their energies into the creation of police dystopias, as they are assuredly our future. Abolitionists need to speak more openly of the worst possibilities. The dark forces of reactionary politics will be victorious again. Lots of people are doing to die; they are dying *already*. There is value in the politics of fear. Reactionary forces have harnessed this political power for their ends. My efforts here are to harness an aesthetics of fear for an opposed purpose. The affective appeal of pessimism is rage, not despair. Rage is a more powerful political force than hope. Optimism is the opium of the masses. The promise of a politics of rage is that it might push people into action. If I were to be completely honest, my defense of a philosophical pessimism is, in part, a stylistic affect. In life, as in politics, there are few guarantees. Though things are not guaranteed to get worse, people are guaranteed to die. A pessimistic imaginary intercedes on behalf of harm prevention, collective survival, and impeding the absolute worst. By forcefully promoting the promise of pessimism and failure, I intercede into within-movement debates involving the role of rhetoric within political speech. For Robin D.G. Kelley, hope is the poetry that gives social movements their magic. According to Kelley: "People are drawn to social movement because of hope" (Kelley 2002). In the words of abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba: "hope is a discipline" (Kaba 2021: 26). Conversely, other black radicals have advanced a theory of afro-pessimism. According to these theorists, anti-blackness is an ontological fact. Black communities are

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sentenced to a perpetual social death (see Wilderson 2020). It is not my place to opine upon the ontological condition of blackness. I do, though, intervene into a debate concerning the necessity of hope. I argue that we are disciplined into hope. This dissertation, instead, follows the wisdom of Mike Davis. When asked in an interview about the supposed radicalism of hope, he replied:

> 'Hope' is not a scientific category. Nor is it a necessary obligation in polemical writing. On the other hand, intellectual honesty is and I try to call it as I see it, however wrongheaded my ideas and analyses may be. I manifestly do believe that we have arrived at a 'final conflict' that will decide the survival of a large part of poor humanity over the next half century. Against this future, we must fight like the Red Army in the rubble of Stalingrad. Fight with hope, fight without hope, but fight absolutely (Movaghary-Pour 2016).

This dissertation prizes action over dreams of deliverance. By raising the stakes and declaring police antagonism an existential struggle involving the survival of the human species, concerted direct action is made necessary. My position on this matter is not ideological but practical. The abolitionist movement will surely stumble and fail. The liberal science of muddling through promises to keep things the same by letting them gradually get worse and more intractable. The dismal politics to come will involve an intensification of crises and political failures without end. We are in the early stages of this cataclysm.

1. HEGEL'S *POLIZEI*

"The Police Should Have Oversight Over Everything"

G.W.F. Hegel once wrote, accusingly: "[J.G.] Fichte's state is centered on the police" (Hegel 1995: 212), referring to Fichte's dystopian and totalitarian passport police. So too, Hegel's state *is* the police. As Frank Ruda remarks, for Hegel "[t]he police are *the* decisive institution" (Ruda 2011: 24). Hegel's Monarch is clumsy and trivial; the Legislative Body is a means to channel the interests of the estates. The police are the *essential* state institution that intercedes into and supports civil society. Little has been written about Hegel's *Polizei* and the still-standard reading renders the police an ambiguous, feeble, and idealized institution. It was once a common refrain to deride historical debates about police as anachronistic. Translators and commentators have perpetuated a consensus that Hegel's *Polizei* is broad, vague, and distinct from our understanding of contemporary police institutions (Neocleous 1998a: 47). T.M. Knox's curt observation was that: "*Polizei*, translated 'police' here, has a wider sense than that conveyed by 'police' in English. Hence in what follows it is generally translated 'public authority'" (Hegel 1967: 360). Allen Wood's sole contribution mildly states: "This usage was in his day not the least idiosyncratic" (Wood 1990: 283). Wood, a towering expert in Hegel's political philosophy, has nothing more to add about "the usage in his day" or how such context might add to our understanding of the crux of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.

Mark Neocleous is one of the foremost authorities within police studies that has consistently centered the role of Hegel in his critical history of police power (see Neocleous 1996; 1998a; 2000 in particular). However, even Neocleous's learned studies limit the

discussion to the role of police in regulating the market. Lisa Herzog's essay upon Hegel's *Polizei* follows Neocleous' line. The role of the police is to police an anarchic market (Herzog 2015). The avoidance of the importance of police institutions for Hegel is symptomatic of the disguised place that police have played throughout the history of political theory. Using euphemisms such as guardians, nightwatchmen, and bureaucrats, many a philosopher have sought to conceal the violence their theories rationalize. Neocleous has argued that police power plays a foundational part in the history of political thought, and that contemporary political theorists need to place police at the center of political analysis. There is no theory of the state without a corresponding account of the forces and capabilities that give the state the power to act. However, for Neocleous, Hegel represents a philosopher holding to a historical, generalized conception of police. Hegel, anachronistic once again, is a thinker of the old police opposed to the new police (Neocleous 2006). Much like Neocleous's criticism of Michel Foucault, nothing is said of Hegel's thoughts on actually existing institutions of armed state agents. Neocleous's Hegel reverts to a police institution that is a stand-in for nebulous public authority. In an otherwise excellent essay, Paul Rosenberg refuses to name the police, instead hollowing out Hegel's concept through the empty signifier: the bureaucrat (Rosenberg 2021). The essay that follows is thus a risky reading of Hegel. My study situates the development of police institutions as the central theme (and the most interesting and perplexing) of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, incorporating Hegel's criticism and defense of the security state alongside his futile exhortation of the welfare state. Far from being an anachronistic idiosyncrasy, Hegel cryptically predicts the evolution of police into the repressive, potentially totalizing, state apparatus that haunts contemporary civil society.

What is Hegel's notion of the police? The police are commanded by the executive power, as an institution extended into civil society (Hegel 1991: 328). The police operate outside the confines of governmental offices and in the streets. The police *is* the state, embodied and in uniform, standing on the local corner. The police are externally constituted within the sphere of contingencies where anything may happen. Hegel delineates two different functions for his police apparatus. The present-day, narrow conception is that police are a law-and-order institution, characterized most conspicuously by their welding of violence and threat of force as a deterrent to deviant behavior. The historical, generalized conception is that police were an institution whose functions were limitless. Hegel specifies that the police provide for street lighting, bridge building, setting consumer prices, preventing fraud, inspecting the market, regulating industrial production, guarding against the overproduction of goods and resources, providing for the poor, managing the public health, supervision of hospitals, educating the youth, and the founding of colonies (Ibid: 262-269), going so far as to admit that "the police should have oversight over everything" (Ibid: 262). Hegel notes the dichotomy separating these dual roles: police prevent crimes and bring criminals to justice, but they also govern the private use of property (Ibid: 260). It is not accidental, rather quite purposeful, that Hegel's discussion of the police follows and mirrors a twofold division in civil society: the Administration of Justice and the System of Needs.

Herbert Marcuse claims: "The task of the police is a negative one, rather, to safeguard 'the security of the person and property' in the contingent sphere that is not covered by the universal stipulations of the law" (Marcuse 2000: 211). This is *inexact*. Hegel's two conceptions of the police, concerning at once security *and* welfare, the administration of justice *and* the system of needs, are separated purposefully. The prevention, detection, and

punishment of crimes is the *negation* of the wrongs that crime represents.[4] Hegel's includes a

positive obligation for the police to provide for the welfare of particular citizens and society as

a whole. The state has a positive obligation to set the conditions for the actualization of

freedom. Police do not merely administer justice regarding the uses and abuses of property,

they are responsible for the whole system of needs. The police maintain and oversee the roads

and public spaces of towns and countryside, they educate and provide for the health of the

people, and they closely regulate the vagaries of the market. "The livelihood and welfare of

individuals should be *secured* – i.e. that *particular welfare* should be *treated as a right* and

duly *actualized*" (Hegel 1991: 260). The police aim to guarantee and actualize what is only

possible and merely contingent. For Hegel, an idealized version of police is the means by which

the state can devote itself to meeting the needs and caring for its population. Basic needs met

through state mandated care work is defended as a political right.

Hegel says two vastly different things about the negative and positive conceptions of

the police. Hegel is wary of the increased emphasis and obsession with imposing security.

Hegel's distrust is best represented by his dismissive criticism of J.G. Fichte. However, despite

his own suspiciousness, Hegel refuses to limit the security purview of the police. On the other

hand, Hegel is an enthusiastic spokesman for welfare provisions. Hegel's devotion to a robust

and activist state is a veiled critique of Adam Smith's free-market liberalism. For Hegel, the

greatest danger to the security of the state is the inescapable inequality produced by the market,

mass poverty, and the possibility that these conditions will cascade into a breakdown in the

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[4] The judiciary system is not possible without the police. How they are separated or how they cooperate is left unexplained in the *Philosophy of Right*. In his *1817-18 Heidelberg lectures* Hegel is more specific. The police and the judiciary *are* separated and have respective and different roles: "The role of the legal system is to annul infringements of rights; that of the police is to prevent them" (Hegel 1995: 166). The separation of powers is the axis that distinguishes the three theories of state developed within German political science: *Polizeistaat*, *Rechtstaat*, and *Justizstaat*.

general welfare of civil society. Despite his zeal and apprehension, Hegel admits the alleviation of poverty can never be fully guaranteed. Hegel wants to limit the security state and expand the welfare state, but between these two poles, he can do neither. Hegel is caught in a trap of his own making: *reluctantly permissive* to the increasing needs of security and *enthusiastically powerless* to provide for the general welfare of the population.

The polarized reception of Hegel's political philosophy as endorsing either an authoritarian state or a progressive liberalism is of the utmost importance (see Popper 1945 and Marcuse 2000 for the two classic, but opposed, statements).[5] The absence of the police in assessments of Hegel's political thought is to critically misread his liberal inclinations or authoritarian endorsements. By centering the role of the police in Hegel's political system, this essay rereads Hegel in a new light. Moreover, this reading resurrects the spirit of Hegel's ideas in service of present-day debates. In response to unrelenting police violence and abuse of power, an abolitionist social movement has advocated for public policies that a) divest money away from police institutions and b) reinvest that money in welfare maximizing institutions. Hegel is a sympathetic thinker to call upon: his defense of police is rooted in a mandate to oversee a system whereby everybody's needs are met. However, this one-sided reading neglects the important role of the police in administering state punishment and suppressing political activity. The dual role of police is crucial for within-movement debates about defunding the police. The repressive mandate of police is justified by their purported mission to protect and serve the public interest. Hegel is an iconic spokesperson of this position. Precisely because Hegel appoints police officials to do care work is reason for some skepticism

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[5] Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* is the iconic defense of Hegel's political project; however, Marcuse attacks the *Philosophy of Right* for betraying the ethos of freedom established in earlier work. We will return to this debate again, but according to Marcuse: "the government is totalitarian" (Marcuse 2000: 413).

about calls for reinvestment. By rereading Hegel on the police, I hope to unveil a new Hegel that can impart lasting lessons upon the most pressing of present-day political problems. Hegel's *Polizei* is not anachronistic but portends a proleptic warning for future generations. Our reading of Hegel holds dire consequences for social movements seeking to diminish the political power of police.

From the Police Censor to Fichte's Police State

In the summer of 1820, immediately prior to the publication of the *Philosophy of Right*, during a time of intense and worsening political circumstances, with his students being arrested all around him, Hegel went on vacation, to the city of Dresden, with a friend, Friedrich Förster, who happened to be *one more* acquaintance caught up in the political troubles of the day. At dinner with many of his students, on July 14th, Hegel ordered the most expensive bottle of champagne, raising his glass to toast the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. "Although Hegel probably did not know it, the Dresden police were also keeping secret records on his movements in Dresden during this trip" (Pinkard 2000: 452).

Hegel was no doubt familiar with real police forces operating everywhere around him. The central failing of the traditional reading of Hegel's *Polizei* as anachronistic rests is the ahistoricism regarding the formation and development of modern police institutions. The London Metropolitan Police Department was created in Hegel's lifetime, only a few years after the publication of the *Philosophy of Right*. This inaugural event followed several centuries of experiments in policing. The centralization of state power and institutionalization of police transformed existing communal, private, and colonial organizations involved in administering

justice and imposing social control. Hegel's discussion of police is an engagement with one of the pressing political issues of his day.

Germany, at the time, was divided amongst autonomous states. The Prussian Legal Code, created in the last years of the 18th Century, was replaced, for a short time, under occupation, by the Napoleonic Code. In the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat, supporters of both liberalism and nationalism sought to fill the vacuum, engaging in a contested struggle to control Germany's political future. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* responds to public debates between liberals and conservatives, reformers and reactionaries, nationalists, supporters of unification, opposed legal experts, disputes between the estates and the King, and, finally, between the forces constituted to protect the order and those that actively sought to change it. The increasing intensity of such disagreements, along with the precariousness resulting from a decade of political upheaval, precipitated police intervention into these debates.

Universities were subject to particularly intense supervision. The Enlightenment was deemed dangerous. Upon assuming Fichte's Chair in Philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1818, Hegel was enveloped in a series of public scandals and controversies that threatened to implicate him. An account of the importance of police for Hegel's political thought must retell this history; it is complicated and multifaceted.

First, increasing numbers of university students were forming social groups (*Burschenschaften*). These secret societies were aligned with and modeled after Jacobin groups in France. At first, many of these German fraternities promoted nationalist sentiments, modeled upon thoughts espoused by J.F. Fries. A turbulent public demonstration involving book-burning brought Fries under police surveillance, resulting in his public disgrace on charges of

anti-Semitism in 1817.[6] The *Burschenschaften* gradually fell under the sway of Hegel. As Allen Wood notes: "Hegel was himself a professorial sponsor of the *Burschenschaften* both in Heidelberg and Berlin" (Hegel 1991: 385).

Second, Karl Sand, a notable member of the *Burschenschaften*, killed August von Kotzebue, a reactionary playwright. Gustav Asverus, a student and friend of Hegel's, was subsequently arrested for praising Sand in a private letter. Asverus was detained without contact from the outside and Hegel would use his status to petition for his release. In the same letter, which had been incepted by and instigated the ire of the police, Asverus praised Hegel alongside Sand. Hegel's biographer Terry Pinkard imparts the degree to which this negatively reflected on Hegel. "[E]ven worse, it was one of *his* students who had mentioned *his* name in the intercepted letters in contexts that might have made the somewhat overly zealous authorities suspicious of *him*" (Pinkard 2000: 438).

Third, Kotzebue's assassination provoked fear amongst nobles and the ruling elite, resulting in a backlash against political reformers. The Karlsbad Decrees declared that "dispositions dangerous to the state" would no longer be tolerated. The new law established four provisions. 1) Anyone accused of politically subversive thinking could be dismissed from the university; a government appointed supervisory committee would oversee both faculty and students; 2) an independent investigatory committee would ferret out potential demagogues; 3) a new press law established a central commission to censor all publications; 4) strong executive powers would force member states to comply (Hegel 1991: 389).

Fourth, soon thereafter, a fellow professor, Wilhelm de Wette, was removed, due to the new police powers formed by the Karlsbad Decrees, from his teaching position in Berlin after

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[6] The demonstrations openly opposed the Prussian *Polizeistaat*. The Napoleonic Code and the Prussian Police Laws were among the documents burnt.

refusing a police interrogation. He had written a sympathetic letter, which was intercepted by the police, to Sand's mother. Hegel publicly supported de Wette at the time.

Fifth, Hegel was granted a teaching assistant at the University of Berlin. His first choice, Friedrich Carové, was refused on charges of demagoguery. Carové would be exonerated and then re-charged, eventually being banned from academic life. Hegel's second choice, Leopold von Henning, was also arrested abruptly. This would result in one of the more curious and amusing stories of Hegel's life, where, under cover of night, he secretly, by way of boat, conversed, in Latin, so that the prison-guards could not understand what was being said, with von Henning outside his prison cell.

The Karlsbad Decrees signified the casting of a new order in the day-to-day functioning of local and regional police. The Karlsbad Decrees inscribed a narrow focus on security, including a dampening of all political dissent, as the primary tasks of the police. The university, political life, and coalescing ideas of the *Aufklärung* would now be administered and supervised by police forces. The Republic of Letters consisted of rampant police inspection of letters. Hegel was right in the middle of this transformation. Once again, Pinkard colorfully captures why this chain of events threatened Hegel personally. "The writing was now starting to appear on the wall: Hegel's students were being arrested, his choice[s] for teaching assistant [were] being denounced, and he himself was precariously close to being denounced along with [them]" (Pinkard 2000: 448).

The *Philosophy of Right* was subject to the police censor. Commentators frequently explain Hegel's aggressive attack on liberals in the *Preface* as an appeal to his state-sponsored readers. Hegel had reason to "fear that the kind of arbitrary state intervention at work in their dismissals could lead to others, maybe even himself, being unwittingly sucked into the

maelstrom" (Ibid: 467). We cannot so easily let Hegel off the hook. Despite public acts defending them, Hegel eventually supported the dismissal and imprisonment of subversive academics, including his friends, students, and colleagues. The *Philosophy of Right* argues in favor of the Karlsbad Decrees and legitimizes the censoring of dissenting opinions. Hegel's experience of heightened police repression in the years leading up to the publication of his focal statement upon political affairs elicited the meekest of apologias.

Section § 319 of the *Philosophy of Right* claims that the state is right to restrict and prohibit public communication. Such laws are "upheld by the police, which prevent or punish its excesses… [and] consist of measures taken by the police to prevent crime, or of punishment proper" (Hegel 1991: 356-357). Hegel notes his preference: the freedom to say whatever is wanted. He hoped that public speech would prove innocuous, because the assemblies would give expression to all the reasonable political ideas in circulation, leaving nothing else to add, and unreasonable viewpoints would swiftly be dismissed. However, Hegel was wary of hyperbolic exaltations of freedom without restraint. The absolute freedom to say "*whatever one pleases*," which is no different than the freedom "*to do whatever one pleases*," "is the product of completely uneducated, crude, and superficial thinking" (Ibid: 356).

Hegel takes seriously the suggestion that speech does not constitute action. Even the vilest of stupidities is not yet a deed. Hegel wonders whether "it is not an act at all, but only *opinion* and *thought* on the one hand and *talk* on the other" (Ibid: 357). Hegel, though he gives it an earnest hearing, is unconvinced. Opinions, thoughts, and talk are not victimless or innocuous, rather, they are, as Hegel refers to them, "injurious acts."

> But the substantial [issue here] is and remains the fact that all injuries to the honour of individuals, slander, abuse, vilification of the government, of its official bodies and civil servants, and in particular of the sovereign in person,

contempt for the laws, incitement to rebellion, etc., are crimes and misdemeanours of widely varying degrees of gravity (Ibid).

Hegel pardons science from inquisition or censorship, but political speech is subject to the strictest police supervision and control.

What is to prevent Hegel, according to his own reasoning, from being subject to punishment for his political philosophy? As we know, this was something he considered and was duly frightened over. While Hegel defends the need for censorship, he questions the limits of its application. Hegel opposed abuses of power and the arbitrary way the state characterizes any and all speech as potentially threatening. In private letters, Hegel laments the thoughtless way that bureaucrats mechanically reproduce standard operating procedure (Friedrich 1980). Nevertheless, Hegel is unwilling to set limits on police censorship. Such limits are incapable of being exactly determined and impossible to objectively set.

> This indeterminacy of the material and its form makes it impossible for laws on such matters to attain the determinacy which the law requires; and since any misdemeanor, wrong, or injury [*Verletzung*] here assumes the most particular and *subjective* shape, judgment on it likewise becomes a wholly *subjective* decision (Ibid: 356).

By refusing to set limit upon state behavior, Hegel abandons political rights to the supremacy of bureaucratic judgments. Hegel authorizes the censorship of public communication and political dissent but prefers only the most egregious cases be prohibited or punished. This will be a recurring and insurmountable contradiction for Hegel. While we might applaud Hegel for his sacrificial fidelity to philosophical method, any request that we should sit back and allow the state and/or its police forces to self-apply reasonable standards of constraint is altogether unreasonable. History proves that all states, as if by dialectical necessity, attempt to exceed limitations on their power. According to his own logic, nothing prevents the police from arresting Hegel on charges of political subversion.

Hegel's *Preface* is an aggressive attack on radical liberal individualism. Hegel names J.F. Fries as his principal antagonist, calling him the "leader of this superficial brigade of so-called philosophers" (Ibid: 15). Hegel finds his populist appeals to be empty sophistry. Hegel dismisses the argument that "freedom of thought" "can be demonstrated only by divergence from, and even hostility towards… *the state*" (Ibid: 12). Hegel defines radical liberalism, despite its lofty appeals, as "hatred of law" (Ibid: 17). Hyperbolic free expressions are not private but serve as public challenges that Hegel feels the state has every right to police.

> There is even less cause for surprise that governments have at last directed their attention to such philosophizing, for philosophy with us is not in any case practiced as a private art, as it was with the Greeks, for example, but has a public existence [*Existenz*], impinging upon the public especially – or solely – in the service of the state. Governments have had enough confidence in those of their scholars who have devoted themselves to this subject to leave the development [*Ausbildung*] and import philosophy entirely to them… But their confidence has frequently been ill repaid… It may initially appear that this superficial philosophy is eminently compatible at least with outward peace and order… it would thus have no cause to fear police intervention, at least initially… But superficial philosophy leads automatically… to the destruction of inner ethics and upright conscience, of love and right among private persons, as well as the destruction of public order and the laws of the state… [C]ircumstances have again led governments to attach to the way in which philosophers conduct their business, there is no mistaking the fact that the study of philosophy now seems in many other respects to require an element of protection and encouragement (Ibid: 17-18).

Protection and encouragement, in other words, restriction, prohibition, and punishment of criticism.[7] Convictions can be criminal (Ibid: 19). As such, radical opinions cannot be tolerated. By attacking law and the state, radical liberals threaten the ethical order of civil society. Such superficial thinking is dangerous, injurious, and destabilizing. Tolerance would be akin to tacit consent (Ibid: 18).

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[7] This whole conversation is tinged with irony when one considers that it was Socrates, and not the sophists, who was put to death for subversive thoughts. Socrates is the single worst example Hegel could have drawn upon. One must wonder whether Hegel was aware of this, apparent and obvious, ironic contradiction.

The Karlsbad Decrees were the result of factional political struggles, whereby reactionaries sought to curtail reformists. The public reaction to the publication of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* interpreted his aggressive *Preface* as defending the cause of the reactionaries. Hegel's passionate attack on the radical liberalism of his day cannot be explained away as mere flattery intended to appease the watchful eyes of police authorities. Hegel is philosophically opposed to a liberal tradition based upon ruthless criticism. The *Philosophy of Right* is devoted to repudiating activism by philosophers or the general public. Hegel maintains there is nothing criminal about his political philosophy. Hegel's reformism rejects the hyperbolic liberalism which seeks to overthrow the order (e.g. his harsh criticisms of Fries), as well as the staunch reactionary conservatives who sought to stamp out any semblance of political reform (e.g. his equally harsh criticisms of Karl Ludwig von Haller). Hegel's characteristic tendency is to chart a middle course between upholding the political order and improving its rational precepts. One is left with the impression that Hegel's political opinions are so unthreatening largely because all traces of politics have been excised. Gilles Deleuze ridicules the subservience that philosophers have long shown the state. By parroting state thinking, Hegel is a "bureaucrat of pure reason" (Deleuze 1985: 148).

Another so-called liberal that Hegel takes extraordinary pains to criticize is J.G. Fichte (Ibid: 383-384). Fichte is a recurring foil for Hegel; Fichte's individualism is the iconic exposition of subjectivity that Hegel opposes. However, Hegel's criticism of Fichte in the *Philosophy of Right* is not focused on his individualism or liberalism, but rather the opposite, the totalitarian nature of Fichte's passport *Polizei*.

Fichte's police prefigure a dystopian future, our present. Fichte defends the narrow conception of police as a law enforcement agency, another clue that disproves charges of

anachronism. Like Hegel, Fichte's police are the external embodiment of the state present in civil society: "the *police* is just this link" (Fichte 2000: 254). Fichte is clear in his description of the relationship of the police with the judiciary system. The police are judicial through and through. They not only enforce the laws but are present in the courts and in charge of the prisons. They are not to torture criminals, or imprison them for their entire lives, but are free to execute them, enthusiastically it would seem: "Let the wrongdoer be strangled or beheaded in prison!" (Ibid: 243).

The distinctive feature of Fichte's police is the surveillance methods employed.[8] The police provide security by watching over everything; nothing escapes their gaze. Much as Hegel sees the police as a response to growing urbanization (Hegel 1991: 273), Fichte gives special attention to the superintendence of all manners of modern urban life, including: roads, streets, highways, rivers, canals, public spaces, private homes, assemblies of any kind, etc. Fichte claims to respect the privacy of residences, but the police are to be waiting outside, watching diligently, checking the papers of all those that leave and enter to make sure nothing amiss is afoot. The public is the police's domain, and for Fichte, there is no expectation of privacy. Through the constant motif of patrolling highways, roads, and streets, Fichte forecasts the modern patrolman. The police put up traffic signs, alerting those on the roads to possible dangers. At night, police must continually patrol the streets and prevent break-ins. The policing of roads and highways guarantee state control over all manners of movement into, inside, and out of their territory. Public thoroughfares permit police monitoring. Even Fichte's apparent

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[8] Fichte addresses the policing of public health and sexual conduct, but the way he does so is predicated upon security needs, not public welfare. Police patrol pharmacies and verify medical certificates to prevent quacks. Police do not provide for public health; they enforce legal standards. Fichte is happy to let sex workers and those that frequent them suffer from their own behavior. Police should be alert, though, to the comings and goings of private residences and prohibit unseemly habits, such as illegal cohabitation, orgies, and/or homosexuality.

concern that there should be no secret police or use of spies (all officers must be uniformed) serves a foreboding purpose: everyone knows that nothing escapes the gaze of the police, who are present everywhere.

Police must be everywhere, watch over everything, because, for Fichte, no crime can go unpunished. Fichte's utopia is a world without crime, or more precisely, a world without a single *unpunished* crime.

> The exclusive condition of the law's effectiveness and of the entire apparatus of the state is that every citizen know in advance and with absolute certainty that, if he violates the law, he will be discovered and punished in the manner clearly prescribed… And then it would also be manifestly unjust to punish with the law's full rigor the few who happen to get caught. For in seeing others around them go unpunished, did they not have reason to think that they, too, would escape punishment? How could they be deterred by a law that they couldn't help but regard as invalid? ... The requirement that the police, as servants of the law, apprehend every guilty party without exception is absolutely necessary (Fichte 2000: 261).

Crimes unnoticed and unpunished invalidate the nature of law itself. The total abolition of crime is an impossible requirement for any state, then or now. However, the difficulty of the assignment is Fichte's principal concern: totalizing punishment is only possible with totalizing surveillance. In a harrowing line, Fichte establishes the dream of all police utopias: "[T]he police know fairly well where each one is at every hour of the day" (Ibid: 262-263).

To actualize his dream of totalizing surveillance, Fichte proposes a complex identification system that tracks and controls people's comings and goings. Watching requires identifying. All citizens are required to have identifying papers, which establish their living arrangements, recent movements, and provide a detailed description of their appearance (even going so far as to require painted pictures).

> The principal maxim of every well-constituted police power must be the following: *every citizen must be readily identifiable, wherever necessary, as this or that particular person*. Police officers must be able to establish the

identity of every citizen, which can only be accomplished as follows. Everyone must carry an identity card with him, issued by the nearest authorities and containing a precise description of his person; this applies to everyone regardless of class or rank (Ibid: 257).

The legal precedent for passport requirements is the creation of *police laws*. Police laws are differentiated from state laws. The state can specify that stealing and robbery are illegal. The police, fulfilling their duty to prevent criminal activity, can then require that no one wears masks. Fichte's example is that no one can be out at night without a light.[9] Obviously, donning a mask or strolling around at night are not inherently criminal activities, but crimes are easier to commit in the dark if victims cannot see the faces of their attackers. Police are empowered to create their own legal order to secure a society free of crime. This *includes* the strict enforcement of mandatory identifying passports for all citizens and foreign visitors. Fichte provides one strict limitation to police authority: officers, upon pain of punishment, must not demand to see identification passports out of whim or curiosity. However, this stipulation is hollow and contradicted by Fichte's own logic. By giving police the power to create a dual legal code, mere suspicion becomes a warrant to stop and frisk. Such discretionary power legitimizes police behavior after the fact.

The police also monitor the market and protect private property. Police must prevent the circulation of counterfeit monies and fraudulent transactions. It is the responsibility of citizens and shopkeepers to be vigilant in spotting counterfeit currencies. More interesting is Fichte's desire to regulate bills of exchange in hopes of stamping out marketplace fraud. Bills of exchange are pieces of paper that entitle the holder a certain amount of money from the originator (Chamayou 2013). They are a type of debt, similar to our use of checks. Upon receiving a bill of exchange, someone can purchase consumer goods by signing it over to

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[9] See Koslofsky 2011 for a historical account of the problem that nighttime posed for early police.

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another party. Bills of exchange can change hands a limitless number of times. Eventually, someone will return with the bill of exchange demanding payment. The problem with this type of transaction is the ease of swindling naïve and unsuspecting counterparts: "a person can give a false name. As soon as one begins to look for him, he is nowhere to be found" (Fichte 2000: 259). Fichte's solution is to supplement the requirement of passports with the surveillance of public thoroughfares. This results in an iron-cage of police surveillance.

> The recipient of the bill has a duty to look at the identity card and to recognize the transferor accordingly. On the back of the card… he will simply add: with an identity card from such and such an authority… Now if the bill of exchange turns out to be a counterfeit, and if an investigation points to a particular person, then where is he to be found? Given the constitutions of police powers, no one is allowed to leave one locality (he can be stopped at the city gate) without specifying the place he intends to travel to, which will be noted in the register of the place and on his identity card… [S]o there will be a continuous record of his whereabouts (Ibid).

Fichte's police system is elegant in its effectiveness. Through identification and contact tracing, police can aspire to an all-encompassing knowledge of civic life. What appeared impossible and like science fiction in Fichte's time, is all the more chilling for how closely it resembles today's police forces.

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, as interpreted by Michel Foucault, is an exemplar of wholesale transmutations in the application of state power in the 19th Century (Foucault 1977). However, according to Grégoire Chamayou: "this type of technology of power is markedly different than the one described by Foucault under the name of Panopticism" (Chamayou 2013). Fichte's passport police, according to Chamayou, is an uncanny premonition of our world of networked surveillance by means of data-power.[10]

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[10] A glaring absence is that neither Grégoire Chamayou nor his translator Kieran Aaron mention Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on Societies of Control" (Deleuze 1992). Deleuze's essay sets up a schematic whereby Foucault's disciplinary society is replaced by a new system of social control. The references to codes, data, traces, modes of identification, and networked power is already present in Deleuze's short essay.

> The idea is that the multiplication of control points will render these old forms of surveillance superfluous. We no longer need to directly follow someone, we now follow at a distance, by traces, through the aggregation of a series of written notations rather than through the continuity of a look. The model is no longer that of a central eye, but rather one of a chain of hands, a vast network of writing (Ibid).

The police record all movements and action into a vast archival database. By controlling access points, police multiply the amount of information they obtain. The police database traces all public action, making them accessible to a future webmaster. The record of the past is now fully detectable, but more frightening, it is "a power over the *future* and over the *possible*… Traceability consists in organizing within the present the future capability of rereading the past" (Ibid).[11] This is not a system of discipline or mere surveillance, but a system of total control.

For Hegel, Fichte's state *is the* police: "Fichte's state is centered on the police… such a state becomes a world of gallery slaves" (Hegel 1995: 212). In opposition to Hegel's political philosophy, Fichte contends that rights can only be protected through laws of compulsion. Despite Fichte reputation as a defender of individualism, this gives rise to the greatest totalitarianism. Hegel criticizes Fichte on this very charge: Fichte's state is coercive, unfree, spiritless, and mechanical. In his lecture course which served as the basis for the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel criticizes Fichte for imagining the state as a machine. "But that state as conceived by the intellect is not an organization at all, but a machine; and the people is not the organic body of a communal and rich life, but an atomistic, life-impoverished multitude" (Hegel 1977a: 148-149). Fichte's *Polizei* are commanded as mechanical instruments which enforce laws according to strict procedure. Fichte does not rely upon real people making impactful decisions; his civil society is a lifeless order. Hegel, for his part, conceives of his

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[11] This is the method used by National Security Agency in their accumulation of metadata.

own system as organic. Hegel's *Spirit of Christianity*, one of his earlier writings, is an attack

upon the transcendental privilege afforded law by Immanuel Kant (Hegel 1970). Obedience to

empty and formal laws provides no flexibility for situations as they occur. The spirit of the law

is preferrable to blind adherence to a strict adherence to the letter of the law. Laws, for Hegel,

are communal creations; they are immanently derived through religious institutions, families,

and civil associations. Hegel's organicism is a pretext for familial paternalism and

communitarian authoritarianism (Morefield 2002). It is worth noting that fascist theorists, such

as Alfred Rosenberg and Carl Schmitt, criticized Hegel for his statism, valorizing instead

populist appeals to the *Volkheit*.

According to Hegel, Fichte's political philosophy is not properly philosophical.

Philosophy shouldn't trace the proliferation of life in its infinite multiplicity. In his *Preface,*

Hegel argues that Fichte's passport police are neither rational nor possible.

> Plato could well have refrained from recommending nurses never to stand still
> with children but to keep rocking them in their arms; and Fichte likewise need
> not have perfected his *passport regulations* to the point of "constructing," as
> the expression ran, the requirement that the passports of suspect persons should
> carry not only their personal descriptions but also their painted likeness. In
> deliberations of this kind, no trace of philosophy remains (Hegel 1991: 21).

Hegel's critique is a snide jeer, being unphilosophical is the paramount insult. Hegel accuses

Fichte of a regressive logic. This repeats Hegel's criticism of Fichte two decades earlier.

> In the Prussian army a foreigner is supervised by only one trustee. In Fichte's
> state every citizen will keep at least half a dozen people busy with supervision,
> accounts, etc., each of these supervisors will keep at least another half dozen
> busy, and so on *ad infinitum*. Equally, the simplest transaction will cause an
> infinite number of transactions (Hegel 1977a: 148).

The rendering of a painted likeness for all citizens would be a Sisyphean task. Police

administrators can now thank the heavens for photography. The establishment of numerous

city gates, each with its own police gatekeeper, requires an expansive infrastructure. The

number of watchers would outnumber the watched. So too, by this logic, Hegel's political philosophy is not properly philosophical. Police are the technical means of statecraft. No detail is too small that it can escape regulation or be codified. By giving the police the power to oversee everything, Hegel excuses all needless interventions into private life. Hegel's police censor is the mirror image of Fichte's passport police. Whereas Fichte mandates identification *a priori*, Hegel authorizes appraisal and judgment *a posteriori*.

Despite his disdain, Hegel refuses to constrain the security mandate of the police. Hegel realizes the totalizing teleology Fichte forecasts, but Hegel provides no means of constraint.

> No boundary is present *in itself* between what is harmful and what is harmless (even with regard to crime), between what is suspicious and what is not suspicious, or between what should be prohibited or kept under surveillance and what should be exempted from prohibitions, surveillance and suspicion, inquiry and accountability… [T]he police may tend to draw everything it can into its sphere of influence, for it is possible to discover some potentially harmful aspect in everything. On such occasions, the police may proceed very pedantically and disrupt the ordinary life of individuals. But however troublesome this may be, *no objective boundary line* [my emphasis] can be drawn here (Hegel 1991: 261).

Here, as before, Hegel accepts what he would rather not. Police provide for security and, in so doing, routinely overstep their bounds, subjecting the innocent to suspicion, surveillance, and even false charges. Despite predictable abuses of power, Hegel refuses to limit the police, because doing so would undermine the ability of the state to secure civil order.

This refusal to limit the state is not accidental. Chamayou brilliantly refers to dialectical logic as bounded by *antinomies of unlimited limitation*. Fichte's dream of the complete abolition of crime is infeasible. Even in our era of invasive technologies, there will always be blind spots, evil deeds unnoticed, and perpetrators who escape. In securing freedom, Fichte must ceaselessly limit all freedom. In limiting the purview of the police, so that their only concern is security and law enforcement, Fichte has vested it with a limitless and totalizing

power. Regarding both the police censor and Fichte's passport police, amidst the troubling escalation of a state obsessed with security, Hegel acknowledges deep reservations and misgivings, but, out of principle, is permissive.

In Hegel's time, Fichte's passport police appeared as a foreboding *prolepticon*.[12] There was no rational way to make passport regulations actual. Hegel admits as much when he claims it is "foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world" (Hegel 1991: 21). In hindsight, we contemporary readers see Hegel's police as anachronistic and Fichte's as uncannily familiar. Whereas both thinkers recognized "reason as the rose in the cross of the present," Fichte's non-philosophy "transcend[s] his own time… [and] builds itself a world *as it ought to be*," and Hegel's philosophy, being truly philosophical, "comes too late… paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated" (Ibid: 22-23). The police censor is a relic of a bygone age. Passports are now a mandatory feature of life. It is criminal to be *without papers*. According to Slavoj Žižek, the terrifying emergence of a digital police state is Fichte's final revenge upon his adversary Hegel (Žižek 2019). This reading makes Hegel a thinker clinging to a past quickly passing him by.

My reading differs in several crucial ways. Hegel criticizes the feasibility of Fichte's passport police, not its legitimacy. Hegel's philosophy of state is not prevented from taking up Fichte's suggestion. Hegel is dismissive of the future that Fichte imagines, while co-signing the tyrannical police powers targeting many of his closest friends and colleagues. The most sympathetic reading is that Hegel defends a rational state over a totalizing state. This difference is a minor distinction. The rational state tends towards totalizing control. Hegel's defense of constitutionalism provides few constraints upon abuse of power. Hegel's rational state is an

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[12] Andrew Cutrofello once recommended this phrase to me, and in his honor I repeat it throughout.

idealized state, an abstract state divorced from historical reality. Hegel's thinking is premised upon a naïve hope: the state ought to serve the public interest. This is why the ambiguity underlying the form of the state in Hegel's thought is a dispute of paramount importance. A liberal reading of Hegel categorizes him as spokesperson for the *Rechtstaat*, giving overdue attention to the reception of Left Hegelians, notably Lorenz von Stein, Robert von Mohl, and Rudolf von Gneist (Emerson 2015). The existence of Left Hegelians implies the existence of Right Hegelians, such as conservative Julius Stahl. Hegel was a defender of the monarchial restoration. While liberals are comforted by Hegel's powerless monarch, the erasure of the police is especially glaring. Hegel was a leading figure in the formation of a German *Polizeistaat*. The Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt claimed that German theories of the state were entirely indebted to Hegel (Schmitt 2007: 24). Schmitt criticizes Hegel as a theorist of a totalizing state. Schmitt has a point. The principal role of the police in the Hegelian state is to depoliticize social conflicts. Factional democracy is anathema to Hegel. Hegel's *Polizeistaat* is a well-ordered administrative state.[13] However, and of critical importance, for Hegel the rule of police is not subservient to the rule of law; rather, the rule of law is secondary to the discretionary rule of police bureaucrats. No particular right is absolute, expect for the right of the state to intercede into public affairs as deemed necessary. Hegel never describes the education or civic virtues necessary for the universal class of police guardians. Hegel does not consider blind adherence to unjust laws or abuse of power as insurmountable contradictions. Much is made of Schmitt's comment a few years later that the inauguration of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany on July 30th, 1933 represented the final death of Hegel (Schmitt 1933).

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[13] See Chapman 1968, Raeff 1983, and Neocleous 2000 on the German notion of *Polizeistaat*, which is at odds with the common sense understanding of police states. Whereas Neocleous describes the *Polizeistaat* as a "policy state", administrative state is a closer approximation to Hegel's usage.

This is cited as evidence of the incomparability of Hegel's political philosophy with fascism. In hindsight, Hitler's ascendance did not mark the death knell of the state, but a subsumption of its administrative capabilities. Brian Chapman, in the definitive account of police states, demonstrates that the *Polizeistaat* establishes administrative capacity that prefigures the National Socialist state. In his haunting words: "The powers of the police are always proportionate to the authoritarianism of the regime under which they are working" (Chapman 1968). The autonomy and power that Hegel affords his police institution is of extreme consequence. Hegel's *Polizei* is not anachronistic, rather quite proleptic. By reluctantly permitting the rule of police bureaucrats and the absolute supremacy of the security interests of the state, Hegel portends, as if by dialectical necessity, why liberal states will forever tarry with authoritarianism.

From the Visible Hand of the Market to Policing the Rabble

Fichte's passport police are justified as a necessity for free markets. Passports, contract tracing, and police are a deterrent to fraud in the marketplace. Bills of exchange are used to *buy* items. The validation of bills of exchange does not protect the consumer; *it safeguards the merchant*. Fichte's dystopian police state secures a capitalist economy. At his most callous, Fichte retorts: "Everyone must work… there are no vagabonds" (Fichte 2000: 262-263). No commentators describe Fichte's conceptualization of the police as anachronistic. The origin of police coincides with a criminalization of vagrancy. In the words of Mark Neocleous: "vagrancy laws *constitute the quintessential police power*" (Neocleous 2021: 24). In part, Hegel's analysis of capitalism is diametrically opposed to Fichte's. Hegel's police safeguard

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everyday consumers; theft and marketplace fraud is hardly mentioned. Most readings of Hegel's *Polizei* focus on their role in administering an unwieldy market. Hegel's administrative state is an interventionist state. Hegel can rightly be applauded for being one of the first to assert that states have a positive obligation to meet the welfare needs of their people; however, Hegel is still a stalwart defender of the market economy. The primary mandate that Hegel assigns his *Polizei* is the policing of the poor. Mass poverty is the insurmountable contradiction that animates Hegel's political philosophy. Shlomo Avineri was one of the first to note that Hegel never offers a solution to the problem of poverty.

> This is the only time in his system where Hegel raises a problem – and leaves it open. Though his theory of the state is aimed at integrating the contending interests of civil society under a common bond, on the problem of poverty he ultimately has nothing more to say than that it is one of the "most disturbing problems which agitate modern societies." On no other occasion does Hegel leave a problem at that (Avineri 1974: 154).

Avineri is correct; Hegel is not convinced that the state can meet everyone's basic needs or assuage the destitute masses. However, *as a matter of perspective*, there is no other issue which concerns Hegel more or that he is as willing to throw the full powers of the state into mitigating. The police are the means in which states attempt, but fail, to resolve this contradiction.

Elizabeth Anderson recently asserted that the ideal of a free market society was originally a cause of the left (Anderson 2017: 1). Anderson's revision of modern political history finds no place for Hegel. Hegel sees the market as a social fact while cognizant of the dangers it poses. In France, the Physiocrats advocated a *la police des grains* (grain police) that would establish and verify production quotas and price controls (Johnson 2014). Police institutions, for early political economists, were necessary to regulate and oversee all manners of public and economic life. Police are the central institution in the creation of an administrative state necessary for a capitalist economy. German Cameralists, following the French

Physiocrats, coined the term *Polizeistaat* as their version of the *la police des grains.* Gone is the explicit focus on agriculture. Moreover, the absolutist defense of Monarchial supremacy is substituted for bureaucratic expertise. Michel Foucault observed: "[T]he *Polizeiwissenschaft*, the science of police.... is an absolutely German specialty" (Foucault 2007: 318). *Laissez faire* liberals, particularly those associated with the Scottish Enlightenment, challenged the effectiveness of police intervention and market regulations; they blamed the tumultuous French economy of the 18th Century, an era of constant inflation and famine, on the over-active hand of police bureaucrats. Far from being anachronistic, Hegel's discussion of police is grounded in a spirited debate over the ideal form of an emerging capitalist state.

Adam Smith's pin-factory originally appeared under the heading "Police" in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. Police is discussed positively, as necessary for sustained prosperity (see Neocleous 1998b: 47). By the time of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations*, Smith would negatively deride the Physiocrat's notion of police: "This limitation has given occasion to several distinctions which, considered as rules of the police, appear as foolish as can well be imagined" (Smith 1981: 137). Forced to choose between a self-regulating market and a state regulated market, Hegel endorses the latter. In response to Smith, Hegel emphatically retorts:

> Two main views are prevalent on this subject. One maintains that *the police should have oversight over everything* [my emphasis], and the other maintains that the police should have no say in such matters, since everyone is guided in his actions by the needs of others… [T]he public also has a right to expect that necessary tasks will be performed in the proper manner… [T]he freedom of trade should not be such as to prejudice the general good (Hegel 1991: 262-263.

By advocating for a robust interventionist state, Hegel sides with the Physiocrats and Cameralists and against Smith's free-market liberalism. The market is prone to turmoil, perpetually disrupting social life. In an early text, Hegel refers to the free market as a wild

animal in need of taming. "This system moves hither and thither in a blind and elemental way, and like a wild animal calls for strong permanent control and curbing" (Avineri 1974: 95).[14] This natural state of disorder requires a *political ordering* of market life. Self-regulation is a dangerous myth; a highly visible hand is necessary to administer the marketplace. The police are necessary to moderate the most deleterious effects of an unruly economy.

Laissez faire ideology is predicated upon a separation of the state from economic life. The state must not intervene in the market. For Hegel, however, the state can never be separated from civil society. Hegel's strong state is necessary for a free civil society. The establishment of private property and free exchange is made possible through a sophisticated legal infrastructure. A capitalist economy requires a universal authority to guarantee credit, titles, and everyday transactions. Police oversee the conditions necessary for the possibility of public life. The rational actuality of the state is assured only by *supporting* civil society. Hegel's police assist the system of needs by setting consumer prices, inspection, preventing fraud, regulating industry, guarding against overproduction, directing welfare provisions, and keeping a close eye upon the poor.

Despite the best effort by police to instill a rational and calm order in the marketplace, the Rabble [*Pöbel*] threatens to upend the political order. The Rabble represents the ever-present possibility of absolute disorder. The Rabble is conditioned by mass poverty, but, it is important to note, it is not poverty itself. Rather, it is *a disposition* of "inward rebellion against the rich, against society, the government, etc." (Ibid: 266). Even (*perhaps* especially) the rich can exhibit a Rabble-mentality. Economic inequality produces polarized responses: the poor are resentful of the rich as the political system is rigged in their disfavor, and the rich denounce

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[14] Quoted by Avineri; from the *Realphilosophie I* (239-40).

the poor as lazy and responsible for their own misery. Imitating Plato and foretelling the coming of Karl Marx, Hegel describes class conflict as *the* ontological conflict confounding the state. Industrialization was, at this time, producing more wealth than any previous period in history. Puzzlingly, mass poverty intensifies the richer a society becomes. "[D]espite an *excess of wealth*, civil society is *not wealthy enough*" (Ibid: 267). For Hegel, the wealth of nations is paradoxical: the richer a country the poorer its citizens. Prosperity exacerbates inequality and destitution. Mass poverty is *the problem* which confounds modern politics. "The important question of how poverty can be remedied is one which agitates and torments modern societies especially" (Ibid). Solutions to mass poverty are equally paradoxical. Potential solutions violate the essential principles which ground civil society, namely sacrosanct rights to private property. A consequence of a society founded upon economic freedom is that everyone must take care of oneself through their own labor. The state violates the basic premise of civil society by forcing the poor to work or by compelling the rich to provide for the poor. The modern state and civil society contain within its very constitution its own inner limit.

Frank Ruda points out that Hegel offers seven propositions which broach possible solutions to the problem of poverty: 1) the treatment of the poor by civil society itself, such as poorhouses, giving alms, charitable organization, etc.; 2) public begging; 3) the right to distress; 4) colonization; 5) redistribution of labor; 6) the corporation; 7) the police (Ruda 2011: 15). It is not accidental that Hegel proffers each solution, one after the other, under the heading "Police," because, for Ruda, "the police are *the* decisive institution" (Ibid: 24). Every solution proves insufficient by itself. Civil society is never rich enough to take care of everyone. Feeding those that can't feed themselves robs them of their honor, dignity, and ambition. Begging and giving alms are both cures conceivably worse than the disease. The

right of distress allows the poor to break the law. The poor can steal a loaf of bread to survive, but this reduces them to their basic drives, making them irrational and unfree, like animals. Colonization offers a temporary postponement to indigent conditions. Forcing the poor into jobs undermines their freedom to choose their vocation, depriving others of jobs, and risking the overproduction of goods. The corporation, by design, is exclusive to a skilled class of workers. The police subsume all the various means which attempt to mollify mass poverty. Where the corporation provides for those internal to its own organization, the police sustain all those that remain. They help adjudicate between real criminals and those that thieve out of distress. In so doing, they patrol all public begging. By not referring to vagrants as quintessential criminals, Hegel makes a decisive break with the historical mandate of police. While Churches and private individuals may aspire to organizing charitable institutions, the police run the public poorhouses and manage the hospitals. Police serve as colonial administrators.[15] In regulating the market, the visible hand of the police guards against unexpected travesties, economic crisis, and social unrest. The police lessen the number of poor to as few as possible and provide basic necessities to those who cannot meet their own needs.

Hegel's police are entrusted with more responsibility than merely controlling prices, monitoring grain production, regulating industrial externalities, and/or preventing marketplace fraud. The police are the external evidence of an activist state in charge of a whole host of welfare provisions. The police are more than just a visible hand; they are a helping hand. The system of needs forever tarries with looming catastrophe. Modern economies require hospitals,

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[15] Let me belabor the point: far from anachronistic, Hegel was familiar with actually existing police institutions. The Eurocentric historiography of police often ignores their inception as a vital instrument for colonial occupation. Peel, the so-called father of modern British police, established his political notoriety through the creation of the Royal Irish Constabulary (see Brogden 1987). If Susan Buck-Morss can fancy the Haitian Revolution as an inspiration for Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic, then others cannot discount Hegel's awareness of experiments in policing throughout the Americas (Buck-Morss 2009).

poorhouses, social services, but also public education, well-lit streets, sturdy bridges, and assistance for those who act against their own interests. The police are endowed with a positive mandate but are limited in how much and what they can provide. They cannot violate the founding ethos of civil society; they must allow people the freedom to live their own lives, even if the consequences are disastrous. They can only intervene to foster freedom, not inhibit it. The police *condition* the *functioning* of civil society. Hegel claims that: "the individual [*Individuum*] becomes a *son of civil society*" (Hegel 1991: 263). A little later he asserts: "society has the duty and the right to act as guardian" (Ibid: 264). Hegel's interest in political economy is evidence of a shift away from the ancient Greek *polis*. Modern life entails the constant interaction of strangers. Hegel provides a realist account of ethical life amidst social dislocation and mobility. For Hegel, this requires a transition from a familial order to a political order. The paternalistic image of states acting as a big brother figure coincides with humanity's arduous emergence from self-incurred immaturity.

The interpretation put forward by Avineri is that Hegel's solution to the problem of poverty is to have the poor fend for themselves, creating a permanent beggar class. Avineri points to Hegel's remark:

> There (especially in Scotland), it has emerged that the most direct means of dealing with poverty, and particularly with the renunciation of shame and honour as the subjective bases of society and with the laziness and extravagance which give rise to a rabble, is to leave the poor to their fate and direct them to beg from the public (Ibid: 267).

Frank Ruda's interpretation of the police is pointedly opposed to Avineri's thesis. He argues that the state assimilates all the half-measure solutions into a coordinated police intervention. While no one solution solves the problem, all the solutions pursued in tandem, diligently and consistently, serve as a stout bulwark against the growing impoverishment of civil society.

Despite such concerted efforts, there is no guarantee that the police can prevent, alleviate, and/or rid society of mass poverty. Ruda concludes:

> [T]he police constantly struggles with the tendencies and the effectivity of civil society, under conditions that *a priori* make it impossible for it to win. Because it permanently attempts to stem the dangers of economic excesses and of economic disintegration it becomes clear that as a "medium of administration" it is directed against the "existence of the rabble." The rabble then no longer represents, as it did for the "philosophical tradition of politics," the "positive limit" with which state justified itself historically, but the element that it attempts to "integrate"… [T]his attempt permanently fails due to the *structural irresolvability* [my emphasis] of the problem of poverty (Ruda 2011: 31).

In the end, regardless of his claims otherwise, Ruda must concede, in part, Avineri's position. Hegel never resolves the problem of poverty. There is nothing in the *Philosophy of Right* that proves otherwise. As Yizhak Melamed provocatively puts it: "the problem of poverty is left as an open wound" (Melamed 2001). Hegel's strong state is actually quite powerless. Hegel is evidently pessimistic, stating that the problem of poverty persists. Just as crime does not disappear because of crime prevention, mass poverty cannot be abolished through welfare provisions. Hegel refuses to establish a minimum limit of sustenance citizens are due by right. Despite his contention that no right is absolute, Hegel privileges property rights *as if* they were absolute! At the critical juncture within the text, the negative constraint against governmental seizure is an inviolable principal regardless of the positive obligation to assure the public welfare.

Conversely, Ruda determines the rational kernel underlying the role of the police in Hegel's political system: its relationship to the Rabble. The police can do all they can, and this may prove fruitful at the margins, but the problem of poverty is a paradox, *an antinomy of unlimited limitation*, structurally irresolvable, that forever confounds the state. The police's principal concern, lofty and extensive though it might appear, is not the alleviation of mass

poverty. Mass poverty produces the Rabble, but the Rabble, proper, is a mass of people who share an attitude that the state is the cause of their misery and does not provide for their common welfare. "It is not just starvation which is at stake here; the wider viewpoint is the need to prevent a rabble from emerging" (Hegel 1991: 264). The Rabble is a pre-revolutionary disposition, a national temper caused by economic inequality and mass immiseration. The emergence of a Rabble poses the greatest risk to the state and civil society, serving as the tipping point whereby pre-revolutionary agitations accelerate towards a full-blown breakdown in the political order. Despite the prominent place the police play in the alleviation of poverty, their role within Hegel's political philosophy is remarkably familiar. Hegel calls upon the police not just to alleviate poverty, but to serve as an armed institution in the final instance. The prevention of a Rabble is wholly different than the alleviation of poverty. The means of preventing social unrest, even outright insurgency, are a silent remainder haunting what Hegel chooses not to say. The awesome and monstrous powers of the state are not limited to censorship and surveillance. What makes Hegel's conception of the police appear anachronistic is that their capacity to weld tremendous violence is entirely missing. Nevertheless, police are mandated to ensure order and security, shielding the state and targeting political subversives. The problem of poverty is a security issue. Poverty portends turmoil. Hegel disguises his foremost security concern as an issue of public welfare. The police are placed at the cross-section between two opposed, but conjoined, mandates. The police must provide for the general welfare to secure the state and its inhabitants. The greatest threat to security is a breakdown in the general welfare. To secure, the state must provide. If the state does not provide, it is not secure. Far from anachronistic, in the final instance, police are not the stewards of social security, despite Hegel's zeal and enthusiasm, but the well-known foot

soldiers of state repression and domination. Hegel's *prolepticon* portends a police that is powerless to meet everyone's social needs but powerful enough to pacify popular social movements.

Booking and Processing

Hegel's *cause cèlébre*, the storming of the Bastille, whose anniversary Hegel annually commemorated, was ironically his foremost worry. The Parisian prison was a symbol of the worst abuses of arbitrary royal authority. The storming of the Bastille explicitly targeted the crown's capacity to project police power. Its fall was a flashpoint for the emergence of a revolution. While the storming of the Bastille was a pointed swipe at an emblem of political repression, the French Revolution emerged, in part, because of feelings of dissatisfaction among the most destitute classes. The French Revolution stands as a warning against the excesses of security and the dangers of mass poverty. Hegel's treatment of the French Revolution has long been a source of academic interest (see Smith 1989; Schmidt 1998; Comay 2011; Norris 2012). In both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel alludes to the aftermath of the revolution, particularly the period of sham tribunals and public executions carried out by the Committee of Public Safety, colloquially known as the Reign of Terror, as the primary peril of freedom run amok, resulting in a "fury of destruction" (Hegel 1977b 359; Hegel 1991: 38). In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel demeans unqualified expressions of freedom as the "coldest and meanest of all deaths" (Hegel 1977b: 360). Nevertheless, as he was putting the finishing touches upon his magnum opus, the Battle of Jena within eyesight, Hegel remarked, in a private letter, of his encounter with the newly crowned

French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte. "A truly wonderful sensation to see… this soul of the world" (Hegel 1985). Nothing is said of the chilling deaths that followed. Nor the ferocity that accompanied sham tribunals and public executions by states and their police forces. That the same thinker could annually raise a toast to the storming of the Bastille and then celebrate a dictator in pursuit of military conquest is a blatant contradiction underlying the poverty of Hegel's politics. In scholarly treatments of Hegel's appraisal of the French Revolution the police are missing; in the few investigations of Hegel's conceptualization of police, state terror and revolutionary terror are never addressed. That Hegel bemoans the violence of a revolution consumed by fury and excess, while erasing any mention of state (and police) violence is the unsaid secret haunting Hegel's so-called liberalism.

Just as Hegel derided Fichte's passport police as encapsulating his theory of state, so too we may identify Hegel's *Polizei* as the essential state institution. Hegel's Monarch is clumsy and trivial. The Legislative Power is a channel for the estates to have *their* voices heard and needs met. The police are the central governmental body which intervenes into, supports, and is intended to reinforce civil society. Zdravko Kobe, a Slovenian philosopher, has one of the best accounts of the centrality of the police in Hegel's political system. "In short, the state withers away. What remains is civil society pure, and its police. We are left with a police without a state, with a police that has assumed the role of the state" (Kobe 2019). Police serve as the vital synthesis connecting the state to civil society. Hegel's theory of the police exhibits Robert Peel's famous adage: "The police are the public and the public are the police." Whereas Hegel's multifaceted bureaucracy sometimes appears mechanical and predicated upon an empty formalism, it is the police institution which determines the lived content of people's

lives, guaranteeing their freedom, and thereby contributing to the rational actualization of an upright state.

Hegel is *reluctantly permissive* in granting the state an absolute right to enforce security. The police are the primary institution of last resort, equipped to respond to all manner of misconduct and/or emergencies. However, in fulfilling their duties, the tendency amongst police is to surpass the limits of what is rationally required, to abuse their powers by spying everywhere and upon everyone, such that everything and everyone is potentially harmful and dangerous and worthy of suspicion. Simultaneously, Hegel is *enthusiastically powerless* for his state to satisfy the needs and general welfare of the population. The police are the central state institution authorized to intervene into and meddle with civil society. However, they are limited by what and how much they can do. The police cannot fully satisfy the system of needs. The police can set rules, prices, and regulate general conditions on all types of civil institutions and businesses, but they cannot compel people to live their lives differently. Hegel wants to limit the security state and expand the welfare state, but between these two poles, he can do neither. The security mandate of the police is driven to excess but is ultimately required. The obligation whereby the state *ought to* provide for welfare of its citizens is, in contrast, forever deficient. Between security and welfare, two opposed, but conjoined, functions, Hegel attempts to charts a middle path, a golden mean betwixt excess and deficiency. The two conjoined but opposed roles for the police epitomize Hegel's moderate politics. One function he wants to limit but cannot, and the other function he wants to expand robustly but he refuses. In the end, these directives feedback into each other, in a dialectical logic of opposition, limitations, expansion, and reconciliation. The greatest threat to state security is a breakdown in the general welfare of civil society. While this description of police is broad and complex, it is most

assuredly not anachronistic, but actually quite proleptic. Hegel predicts how and why the security interests of the state will supersede its obligation to satisfy the welfare needs of the general population.

Hegel was at the cross-section of a momentous transmutation in the state and the civil society it ruled over. The police institutions of early modern Europe were hardly gentler or all that different from our own; the police were still a pernicious body, armed and strategic, spying upon the population, arresting dissidents, wielding extreme violence with impunity, and criminalizing vagrancy and public poverty. So too, contemporary policing involves excessive markets regulations, controlling urban spaces, monitoring public health, patrolling hospitals and schools, and disciplining welfare recipients. Economic conditions and state repression trigger cyclical periods of urban unrest necessitating ever more heavy-handed displays of state power. Similarly, the administration of public health, social welfare, and the marketplace in our day remain central concerns for governments. Far from being unpoliced, neoliberal markets are heavily supervised and disciplined. In a provocative reversal of economic dogma, Bernard Harcourt asserts: "The eighteenth-century police regimen was far more free than we tend to characterize it today; by the same token, our modern free markets – the Chicago Board of Trade, for instance – are far more disciplined that we tend to admit" (Harcourt 2011: 25).

Readers of Hegel have long struggled to situate his thought within defined political ideologies. Hegel's politics are something of a Rorschach test where most interpretations end up projecting the ideological preferences of the reader. This reading is no different. This essay is a risky reading largely because it targets a popular reading of Hegel as a progressive liberal. Liberal interpretations are so committed to reclaiming Hegel as one of their own, that they willfully ignore the dangerous consequences of Hegel's positions. Herbert Marcuse is one of

the first post-Marxists thinkers to attempt a salvage of Hegel's thought for the left (Marcuse 2000; see also Anderson 1993). Marcuse's Hegel is something of early anti-fascist; however, it is worth noting, he qualifies this reading by describing the *Philosophy of Right* as a betrayal of his earlier work. Kevin Anderson cites the importance of Hegel's dialectical method and ethical humanism as an influence for Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and the New Left (Anderson 1995). Brian Lovato goes so far as to describe Hegel as a revolutionary (Lovato 2016). For Allen Wood, Hegel is "a progressive liberal", "opposed to every conservative force" (Wood 1993). Describing Hegel as a "progressive liberal" has the same clarity and conviction as Elizabeth Anderson's provocation that free market libertarianism was once the cause of the left. Hegel consistently, from his appearance on the world-historical scene, to his final years in Berlin, found favor with conservative forces. At least Axel Honneth, when he describes the *Philosophy of Right* as an attempted theory of justice, uproots the fundamental problem with Hegel's system: the over-institutionalization of ethical life (Honneth). To more precisely define Hegel's political philosophy, readers have each coined their own euphemisms for Hegel's moderate ideology: the family state, paternal authoritarianism, and, my favorite, conservative liberalism. J.R. Christi's comical oxymoron is a faithful reading. In an effort to reconcile freedom and authority, Hegel's conservative state is dialectically derived from liberal principles (Cristi 1989). Hegel's moderate liberalism is symptomatic of liberalism generally. Hegel is willing to invite an authoritarian police state and apologize on its behalf. James Bohman, like many, labels Hegel a proto-Republican (Bohman 2010). He concludes that Hegel does not account for domination by political institutions, citing marriage, markets, and deliberation as his three favored examples. Bohman says nothing of the police despite it being the primary state institution elected to intervene into and dominate civil society. Police are the

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means of state domination, both in Hegel's day and our own. The silence on the role of police is Hegel's thought is an unstated rejoinder to the receptions of Hegel's politics by liberals and conservatives alike.

Hegel is the last of a line of philosophers championing liberal police and his follower Karl Marx one of the first to criticize police as a repressive institution of state power. Marx's reading of Hegel is comparable to mine. Marx's criticizes Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* precisely because of the power afforded to the police. Marx contends that the state does not support the general interests of civil society, but stands against it, opposed in every way. The capitalist state is captured by particular interests. The state machinery, meaning police, is assembled to repress and control the impoverished masses. "The 'police', the 'judiciary', and the 'administration' are not the representatives of a civil society which administers its own universal interests in them and through them; they are the representatives of the state and their task is to administer the state against civil society" (Marx 1975: 111). The state is not a neutral arbiter in the realization of human freedom, but characteristic of a fundamental contradiction between the state and civil society. Civil society is divided against itself; the state surveils, censors, disciplines, and represses the social forces it claims to serve. Marx denounces the myth of the liberal state. The police do not serve the public interest but state interests and the interests of capital. The avoidance of Marx's criticism is due, in part, to the disjointed role of the police in Marx's life and work. Marx was pursued across Europe by actually existing police forces. He is ceaselessly monitored, arrested, and banished. From Berlin to Paris to Brussels to Cologne, Marx is refused safe haven. An attack on capital is now the same as an attack on the state. The police appear throughout Marx's texts at critical moments: as part of the holy alliance targeting communists, as the butchers of the Paris Commune, and as the secret of

primitive accumulation (Marx 1972: 473; 640-641; Marx 1976: 896; 931). Nonetheless, Marx expelled the lumpenproletariat from inclusion in the revolutionary class (see Barrow 2020). The lumpen included vagabonds, sex workers, maroons, criminals, hustlers, and bohemians; in other words, many of my friends and comrades. For Marx, this dangerous class is more easily susceptible to false consciousness and reactionary propaganda. The lumpen bear noticeable similarities to Hegel's Rabble, and, in the final instance, by retaining the police, Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat portends the worst excesses of violence. The disavowal of the lumpen permits their eventual disposability.

Hegel's political philosophy, being true philosophical, does not come too late; it can be rejuvenated and transcend its time. Hegel's *Polizei* is a foreboding *prolepticon*. Hegel exposes the structural contradiction within liberal theories of police. The expansiveness of welfare policies will forever be constrained by security concerns. Authoritarians rely upon the liberal myth of police to disguise the secret war waged against civil society. The spirit of Hegel's "progressive liberalism" is haunted by the enthusiastic permission he grants police and the reluctant powerlessness afforded authoritarian dangers. One does not have to misconstrue Hegel as a proto-fascist, to recognize that his theory of the state is indifferent to mass atrocities. Fascist states, authoritarian regimes, liberal democracies, and communist dictatorships have each assembled police states throughout history. The present-day German Republic is now cited as the exemplar case for liberal counterarguments involving police reform (Breenhold and Eddy 2020). In a classic statement, Peter J. Katzenstein established a comparativist case against police abolition through a close study of post-war German and Japanese police institutions (Katzenstein 1996). Through changes in organization culture, according to Katzenstein, police can become *less* repressive. Low rates of police violence and incarceration

within many social democracies have been taken as evidence of an "abolition of degradation" (Whitman 2003). The police censor that Hegel confronted no longer exists. However, present-day Germany enforces strict censorship. While this is intended to prevent the dissemination of fascist propaganda, anti-Semitism laws have been successfully exerted against Palestinians and their allies (including many Jewish anti-occupation activists). Passports are now mandatory requirements in most states, Germany included. Germany, though, allows free movements between its contiguous borders. While this is supplemented by complex forms of surveillance and contact tracing, Germany has established strict limits on the private and public collection of digital data. An abolitionist critique of the present-day German Republic's rational police state undermines liberal apologies for police authoritarianism.

The George Floyd uprisings were the largest set of protests in United States history. Galvanized by a horrid video showing the extra-judicial execution of Mr. Floyd by Minneapolis police, the public rallied around the slogan "Defund the Police" as a focal demand. The assertion of a Divest-Reinvest strategy is the result of sustained organizing and debate by abolitionist thinkers and activists (Kaba 2021: 70-71; *Critical Resistance* 2021).[16] This approach to defunding or abolishing the police demands a shift in budget priorities away from law enforcement and into social services. Police officers and their spokespeople regularly complain that they are overextended and asked to perform duties that lead them far astray them from their primary objectives. Defunding the police would be welcomed and surely efficacious. However, there needs to be a high degree of skepticism attached to calls for reinvestment. The demand to reinvest public funds in social services, or to rebuild police into

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[16] I subscribe to the view that there are multiple abolitionisms (James 2021). I have heard multiple variations, but a noted series of abolitionist demands of police is to see them demilitarised, disarmed, defunded, disempowered, and disbanded (see McDowell and Fernandez 2018).

a network of specialized services, endangers marginalized communities. Policing has spread and infected nearly every manner of social life. The "police powers" of the state, a principal of U.S. constitutional law based upon the historic European conception of police, determine the extent and limits of state intervention upon private businesses. Politicians have built state bureaucracies into vast policing schemas whose primary role is to surveil and regulate provisions. Bureaucratic agencies not normally associated with law enforcement, such as the Federal Drug Administration, the Federal Communication Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, etc., are tasked with police duties. The social benefits of state regulations upon meat production, milk pasteurization, and/or pharmaceuticals, for example, or the social benefits (and harms) of contact tracing in response to pandemics, should be open for within-movement debate amongst abolitionists. So too, contemporary neoliberal governance has been symbolized by a general lack of administrative oversight. State-sponsored private associations, such as the Chicago Board of Trade, are entrusted to self-regulate futures trading. One way of interpreting the lessons of Critical Race Theory is that formally illegal acts of racial discrimination, for example in the housing sector, are difficult to prevent or punish because the federal government did not create enforcement powers (Lipsitz 2012). Policing duties have also spread to state and non-state institutions responsible for social services. The public school system has adopted policing practices as a core aspect of their mission (Rios 2011). Welfare agencies and their caseworkers utilize police practices to discipline the poor (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). Child and Family Protective Services terrorize black and trans communities (Spade 2015; Roberts 2022). Abolitionists, such as Dean Spade and Dorothy Roberts, have been vocal critics against substituting social workers for police officers (see also: Jacobs et al 2021). The dissolution of police should not be premised on their being rebuilt. An expansive,

historical understanding of police, such as Hegel's, is a challenge for the contemporary police abolition movement, precisely because law enforcement is a single prerogative amidst an indefinite set of police duties. An expansive, historical understanding of police calls into question the entire administrative state. While such a description of police is broad and complex, it is most assuredly not anachronistic. Police abolition, while seemingly a universal and seemingly uncompromising demand, is a contested concept. "Defund the Police" is a public policy friendly slogan, one that effectively distills the strategy and reasonableness of abolitionists. However, it also inadequately translates public anger over state-sanctioned police executions into a budgetary dispute. The long abolitionist struggle against slavery, Jim Crow, and structural racism serves as a necessary counterpoint to universal and uncompromising slogans. The most disastrous effects of institutional racism and global capitalism will not necessarily be impeded by government retrenchment and state devolution. Should the police have oversight over nothing? *Well… they certainly should not have oversight over everything!*

2. MAGIC, MONSTERS, AND MACHINES: CONCEPTUAL PERSONAE IN MARX'S GOTHIC NIGHTMARE

1.1: *Prelude to a Horror Story*

The factory does not hasten humanity's emergence from self-incurred immaturity. It houses a miserable lot of folks, lives of pain and despair, gathered together, imprisoned to a living death. There is a fog polluting the air; the clouds of industry choke the huddled masses, portending the slow coming of catastrophe. All is black and white. There are no colors, or paintings, or flowers in the Gothic architecture of industry. Utility demands a colorless hue. The workers are not the image of propaganda, flexing with muscles and slogging hammers. Instead, they are a sack of bones, skeletons tarrying with mortality, starved of food, exhausted by work, and barred from slumber. The workers have hunched shoulders, beaten down as an abused animal, as they monstrously repeat the same motions again and again. The machine grinding ever still. Even small children are forced into toil, a cheap replacement for aged muscles worn thin and losing their importance in a world where metal and gears do the heavy lifting. The automatic repetition of motions in the factory continues in the sunless marketplace. The deadeyes of the sellers, constrained to their respective corners of the market, look for eager and tacit victims. This for that, and that for this; everything has a price, switches hands, changes values, shifting its shape from one form to another, the things themselves dancing about the market as they are sold from here to there and back again. All the while, evil lurks. It is there always. Sometimes a vampire, other times a werewolf, a one-eyed colossus, a creature of our making, a grotesque puppet, a verifiable monster, waiting in the darkness to drag prey into the

shadows. Nothing is as monstrous as the machine gathering steam, inching ever closer, moving according to its own force, gnawing its teeth, pushing everything aside, crushing all beneath its unstoppable power. Finally, in our taxonomy of monsters is a magic force that wakens the dead, makes 2 + 2 = 5, that distracts with one hand so as to pick the pocket with the other, that hides an ugly reality with a colorful show of false appearance. No matter the form, evil has been institutionalized, turned on, brought to life; it calls its garments money, its home the factory, and its food profit. Political evil has a structure, a reoccurring and continuous set of actions, and a face. Its name is Capital.

When Karl Marx observed the fast-changing world around him, the world of the 19th Century and its Revolution Industrial, he did not see the same enlightened age as his contemporaries. Marx's Age of Enlightenment was a terrifying Dark Age.

> Every sense organ is injured by the artificially high temperatures, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise… [the factory] is turned in the hands of capital into systematic robbery of what is necessary for the life of the worker while he is at work, i.e. space, light, air, and protection against the dangerous or the unhealthy concomitants (Marx 1990: 552-553).

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer referred to Marx as one of the contrarians of his time, a thinker of the Dark Enlightenment.

> The dark writers of the bourgeoisie, unlike its apologists, did not seek to avert the consequences of the Enlightenment with harmonistic doctrines. They did not pretend that formalistic reason had a closer affinity to morality than to immorality… the bearers of darker messages pitilessly expressed the shocking truth… The essential character of prehistory is the appearance of the utmost horror in the individual detail. A statistical compilation of those slaughtered in a pogrom, which also includes mercy killings, conceals its essence, which emerges only in an exact description of the exception, the hideous torture. A happy life in a world of horror is ignominiously refuted by the mere existence of that world (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 92-93).

Marx's Gothic nightmare was no dream. It was the real world he saw all around him. It was ugly, and dark, and evil. The stakes were life and death. The grotesque husk of labor within

things, machines granted life, and the lives never afforded to anybody because we all have to work instead of live. Enthralled by the magic of money and the religion of capital, voluntarily chained to drudgery, fodder for the gears of machines and the new spirit of technological control, passive observers to the evil of social monsters that chew through friends and comrades, we have no better prophet of the horrors of that age, and of our own, than the bearded *Saint of Trier*.

In this essay, I analyze Marx's world of monsters, machines, and magic; a motley and fascinating cast of characters which populates his 19th Century Gothic landscape. Each of these conceptual personae are entwined in a common drama but are called upon to represent distinct themes and singular movements that Marx brings into a whole in *Capital, Volume One*.[17] This essay offers yet another *reading* of Marx's magnum opus.[18] Perhaps, no text has been *read* more often or more thoroughly; for a heavily abridged bibliography, see Althusser and Balibar 2009, Cleaver 1979, Harvey 2010, Jameson 2011, and Roberts 2017. This essay offers a relatively *modest reading* in comparison. Unlike Harry Cleaver, this study examines the whole of *Capital, Volume One*. Much like Louis Althusser and David Harvey, this cast of characters reveals a complex cosmology within the text. Marx's tome is its own living structure where each persona plays a vital role and specific function. William Clare Roberts' recent study of Marx's *Capital*, read alongside Dante's *Inferno,* is a focal inspiration for many of the themes explored herein. Dante's descent into hell was the original Gothic nightmare. Alongside Dante, we must read Marx as a companion and imitator of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; Or, the*

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[17] I appropriate "conceptual personae" from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *What is Philosoph*y? (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Conceptual personae refer to the mythological and aesthetic figures, psychosocial types, and intensive qualities that philosophers and theorists call upon to give life to their ideas.
[18] In jest, Stuart Hall once opined: "There is a view that everything that Marxism needs is already there in *Capital*: and that, if you stare hard enough at it, it will - like the hidden books of the Bible - yield up all its secrets, a theory of everything" (Hall 1977: 43).

Modern Prometheus, her cabinmate John William Polidori's "The Vampyre", Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, as well as more realist fare such as Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*.[19]

As stated by Robert Paul Wolff: "To read the opening chapters of *Capital* is to be plunged into an extraordinary literary world, quite unlike anything in the previous, or indeed subsequent, history of political economy. The text is rich in literary and historical allusions to the entire corpus of Western culture… Marx invokes religious images, Mephistophelean images, political images" (Wolff 1988: 13). I would not go so far, as have others, to pigeonhole *Capital* as an escapist foray into "imaginative literature" (Hyman 1962: 133). The history of political theory is riddled with conceptual personae. Mythological beasts and otherworldly analogies roam the archives. Marx's magic acts, monsters, and infernal machines are no side-show performances intended to attract bored onlookers. Marx's literary style is more than fanfare or flamboyant imagery; rather Marx's allusions and metaphors express real ontological structures and hint at a mysterious world hidden beneath the surface. In the immortal words of Althusser: "A metaphor cannot be spun out indefinitely" (Althusser 2007: 166). More recently, Claire Reddleman eloquently established the stakes of Marx's *style*: "metaphorical violence is a representational strategy" (Reddleman 2015). Cleaver, as one example, notes that Marx wrote his epic not for fellow philosophers but for consumption by the working class. My project is animated, in part, by the belief that the language of horror and a politics of fear is more powerful than the failed promises of hope and emancipation. Marx's Gothic iconography surely speaks the language of popular culture; however, Marx's intended audiences were

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[19] According to his daughter Eleanor, Marx was an avid reader of horror stories. One revealing, and heartwarming, anecdote is her recollection of her father's habit of describing his work in the form of bedtime stories (Holmes 2016).

manifold and *Capital*, as one of the masterworks of political philosophy, is shrouded in bookish esotericism. Marx was trying to warn passing spectators of this enigma in his "Preface to the First Edition." "Perseus wore a magic cap so that the monsters he hunted down might not see him. We draw the magic cap down over our own eyes and ears so to deny that there are any monsters" (Marx 1990: 91). Ye who enter here, do not be fooled by illusions or deceit or false comforts: there are *real* monsters lurking about.

This tripartite structure, magic, monsters, and machines, signal crucial moments and transitions that delineate the entire scope of *Capital, Volume One*. These three conceptual personae correspond to three themes. Magic denotes the production and circulation of commodities, the creation of money and value-form, and the sleight-of-hand that produces the first instances of surplus-value. Machines characterize the revolution in the technical process of labor, the historical transition from manufacture to the factory, and reveal the exploitation of workers and their labor-power by capital. Monsters exemplify capital itself, the structure of accumulation that feeds and perpetuates it as a suicidal process, and the capitalists in the background whose guilt is never beyond doubt. I am not the first reader of Marx's *Capital* to call attention to his use of literary devices (see Prawer 1978 for one of the first). Jacques Derrida inaugurated an industry of scholarship upon Marx's use of ghosts, spirits, and specters (Derrida 1994). Marx's allusions to capitalist vampires have been the focus of a similarly crowded library of studies (Neocleous 2003). The role of machines in *Capital* cannot and has not been ignored (MacKenzie 1984). This modest reading builds upon the work of others. One unique feature of this reading is that all of Marx's monsters are brought together, at last, to commune, to spell out a structural narrative, revealing a unified system than cannot be read in isolated chapters. Marx describes his book as a series of successions, sequences, and links; this

study takes up that suggestion by connecting magic, monsters, and machines as an ensemble of relations (Marx 1990: 101). In a letter to his frequent coauthor, the General, Frederick Engels, Marx intimated at the myriad readings cryptically hidden throughout his book. "If I were to *cut short* all such doubts *in advance* I would spoil the whole method of dialectical exposition. On the contrary, this method has the advantage of constantly *setting traps*" (Marx and Engels 1975: 179). In another letter, written when Marx was much younger, but no less wise, addressed to his friend Arnold Ruge, the constant unending exchange of ideas amongst friends and comrades is depicted as the entrée to a higher form of solidarity. "Nevertheless, you have infected me, your theme is still not exhausted, I want to add the finale, and when everything is at an end, give me your hand, so that we may begin again from the beginning" (Ibid: 134). It is these invitations which beckon us forward to yet another reading of Marx's masterful *Capital*.

2.1: *Magic, where appearances are not what they seem*

Commodities are represented by value, exchanged for money, and then circulated to create capital. From Part One through Part Two, Chapter One to Chapter Six, Marx sets the stage for capital's grand entrance. "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" acts as a skeleton key for this sprawling section. It reveals the magic whereby the appearance of commodities, money, and value do not reflect their reality.

2.2: Commodities, the thing-in-itself

Marx begins, already thrown into the world, beyond sense-experience and self-consciousness, in the capitalist state-of-nature. Let us imagine that Virgil has led us into a grocery store, or, better yet, a bougie farmer's market. There are designer soaps, specialty jams, and the latest in tie-dye ware. By beginning in the marketplace, Marx takes up the idyllic setting imagined by political economists so as to launch his critique on their terms. The marketplace of free exchange conjured up by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Jean-Baptiste Say, and Thomas Malthus, amongst others, is not real. The trans-historical myth of the individual consumer in the marketplace, face-to-face with the seller of commodities, able to form a basis for mutual recognition, for the purpose of exchanging goods, on fair and free terms, inscribes capitalist ideology through a neutral description of the world as it supposedly is. According to Stuart Hall: "Political Economy tends to etherealize, universalize, and de-historicize the relations of bourgeois production" (Hall 2003: 117). Marx, ever the realist, introduces us to the real market built on more concrete foundations. The farmer's market is very real; you can walk there if you want. Marx picks up the soap, the jam, or the tacky tapestry to investigate it further. The commodity is the simplest of things. It is an external object you can lay your hands upon, touch, smell, taste, and/or list its many qualities. Each commodity is its own unique thing. The metaphysicians would have us stare into its soul to abstract its essence. The commodity while appearing to be a thing-in-itself is full of mysteries. This particular thing happens to be a thing produced, made, not originally of this world, and now, against all odds, it has found itself in the marketplace, for sale, and tagged with a price. That it is for sale, that it has a price, is what makes this thing a commodity.

The commodity has value; that is why it is for sale. Its value is that some person wants or needs it; for this person it is useful. Therefore, the first value Marx identifies in the commodity is its use-value. "The usefulness of a thing makes it a use-value" (Marx 1990: 126). However, use-values are immeasurable; "usefulness does not dangle in mid-air" (Ibid). There is no way in which to quantify *how much* I want or need those pair of pants, that delicious apple, or this translation of G.W.F. Hegel's complete works. Usefulness is not enumerable. Rather, "use-values are only realized in use or in consumption" (Ibid). Consumption brings to life the dialectical process that gives things value.

This commodity that is for sale, which I desire and wish to use, must therefore have an additional value, one which can be enumerated. "Exchange-value appears first of all as the quantitative relation" (Ibid). Exchange-value allows me to swap one kind of thing for another. It is "accidental and purely relative," its "connection with the commodity… seems a contradiction in terms" (Ibid). That I might trade these pair of pants for this book by Hegel, or as Marx proffers this corn for that iron, requires an equation, a way in which to make the objects equivalent or comparable. Marx says: "It signifies that a common element of identical magnitude exists in two different things… Both are therefore equal to a third thing, which in itself is neither the one nor the other" (Ibid: 137). This thing, which started off so simple, so easy to understand, is already something other than it appeared to be. The thing is not another thing, but rather *something that lacks thing-ness*. "It is no longer a table, a house, a piece of yarn, or any other useful thing. All its sensuous characteristics are extinguished" (Ibid: 138). It is a phantom object. The thing has disappeared and been replaced by its cost.

This "third thing," the "common element," that is not this thing or that thing, is its value. If I cannot touch it, if I cannot see it, then what is value? According to Marx, value is

socially necessary labor-time. The value of this or that commodity is how much time, on average, it took to make it. The value of commodities can only be realized by the labor that produced it. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx had already laid out the connection between production and consumption: "Production, then, is immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production" (Marx 1993: 91). Consumption and production are coupled and caught in the dialectical machine. Value is formalized; its most evolved mode is the money-form. Since value plays the role of substitution between distinct things in the world, it is natural and necessary that it becomes its own thing. At first, value acts as a likeness between disparate objects. Marx calls this the general form of value. He demonstrates the general form of value in figure one (Ibid: 157).

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & \text{coat} \\ 10 & \text{lb. of tea} \\ 40 & \text{lb. of coffee} \\ 1 & \text{quarter of corn} \\ 2 & \text{ounces of gold} \\ 1/2 & \text{ton of iron} \\ x & \text{commodity A, etc.} \end{bmatrix} = 20 \text{ yards of linen}$$

Figure 1

However, the general form is insufficient. The commodities, face-to-face, in the marketplace are incapable of mutual recognition. What is needed is a "universal equivalent form." A buyer might not want to get rid of the thing required to purchase the commodity they desire. Likewise, the seller of a commodity might have no need or desire for the thing being offered in exchange for the commodity. Therefore, the market requires an object of universal exchangeability. Gold, or money generally, takes the place of linen as the customary form of exchange. Money

is value reified. Marx demonstrates the shift from general form to the money form of value in figure two (Ibid: 162).

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & \text{coat} \\ 10 & \text{lb. of tea} \\ 40 & \text{lb. of coffee} \\ 1 & \text{quarter of corn} \\ 20 & \text{yards of linen} \\ 1/2 & \text{ton of iron} \\ x & \text{commodity A, etc.} \end{bmatrix} = 2 \text{ ounces of gold}$$

Figure 2

The commodities arranged throughout the marketplace, concrete things incapable of mutual recognition, already of varying intensive qualities, are subsumed by their real relations, particularly the abstract universal, money. Money abolishes barter by making exchange multilateral. Political economists recognize four roles for modern money: 1) a medium of exchange, 2) a store of value, 3) a unit of account, 4) its use for deferring payments (Cohen 1977: 16). The last function of money, it has been argued, is its true historical origin. By taking up the imagined world of political economists in their own terms, Marx unwittingly inherits their reliance upon the barter-myth. The fantasy of a primordial barter economy is the actual, unrecognized state-of-nature that prefigures the fantasy of a free marketplace. The problem is that there is no historic evidence that barter economies actually existed. According to anthropologist David Graeber: "Rarely has a historical theory been so absolutely and systematically refuted" (Graeber 2012: 40). For Graeber, the historical origin of money is social credit and debt, not barter.

2.3: *The Fetish, the mystical secret of false appearance*

The commodity at first *appears* easy to apprehend, but it cloaks the underlying dialectical process of value creation. "A commodity *appears at first sight* an extremely obvious, trivial thing [my emphasis]" (Marx 1990: 163). Describing the commodity as a thing-in-itself demonstrates its metaphysical dualism: a false appearance and a complex underlying essence. As Louis Althusser put it: "To know is to abstract from the real object its essence" (Althusser and Balibar 2009: 38). In Marx's words, the commodity is "abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties," "changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness," is "mystical," "enigmatic," and "mysterious" (Marx 1990: 163-164). Marx plays on Immanuel Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena for two purposes. First, Kant's binary logic reveals that the exchange-value of the commodity is an *a priori* forgery. Second, Marx prefers Hegel's dialectical method to Kant's transcendental methodology.

While the commodity had to be produced, once it is displayed in marketplace it is sold as having a use-value and/or exchange-value. The living labor which created the commodity is invisible in its exchange. The social relations, which produced the commodity and prefigure its exchangeability, are made imperceptible. The real is hidden and the shadows are confused as the things themselves. Here, Marx looks beyond Kant to the metaphysical dualism presented in Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Transfixed by colorful images and material goods, people are chained and enslaved for reasons unknown. The living process that brought the commodity to the market is lifeless in its final sale. The appearance of the commodity in the marketplace, its false value, erases the production process. What is real about the commodity is not its purported

value but its dialectical progression: from production, to the market, its sale, and, finally, its consumption. The reality of a commodity begins with production and ends in consumption, circulating in and out of human hands.

> It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things… I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, as soon as they are produced as commodities… They do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things (Ibid: 165-166).

The living labor which created the commodity is a dead, ghost-like remnant, the vestige of death unseen. Whereas the thing, this everyday commodity, is brought to life. The commodity steals from the laborer to give life to itself. The result is a dehumanization of the worker and a corresponding anthropomorphism of the commodity. This is where the magic begins. "The products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own" (Ibid: 165). Commodities are resurrected in the marketplace, made to dance about and move themselves, their "magnitudes vary, independently of the will," and the movements of living people, which produce, exchange, and consume these things, who are sometime bought and sold as commodities themselves, end up being controlled by the constant exchange of mere things (Ibid: 167). If this is magic, it is dark sort of magic. The lives of countless humans are subsumed to the coming of age by nonliving things.

The fetishism of commodities, what Marx calls "the whole mystery of commodities, all the *magic and necromancy* that surrounds the products of labour on the basis of commodity production [my emphasis]," signifies the false value of goods sold in the marketplace (Ibid: 169). Marx discovers the alchemic properties in which money can create something out of nothing. Let us look closer at the magic trick that constitutes this market ploy.

> But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will (Ibid: 163-164).

The commodity, in this instance a table, flipped upside down, is brought to life and begins to dance. This passage calls to mind the climactic scene of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* when Mickey Mouse employs his broom to carry out his daily chores. It all ends in humorous disarray as Mickey cannot control the spell once it has been cast. Marx was familiar with the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe poem this scene in based upon, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." In the famed words of Goethe: "The spirits that I summoned / I cannot rid myself of again." Marx's account predates Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, but the children's story of an animated marionette aspiring to lived authenticity closely resembles Marx's parable. If only commodities would so telling reveal their lies. The exorcism and ventriloquism that bring commodities to life could be interpreted as proof of humanity's godlike powers. After all, puppets are created and controlled by human masters. Even when freed, puppets are never that terrifying. Neither Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, surely a terrifying monster, nor its mythological reference Prometheus, are adequate substitutes for Marx's imagery. The commodity has realized a life of its own, but without any mad scientist in the background. Rather, the magic trick now rules and establishes dominion over humankind. It is one thing to be terrified into submission by a gargantuan creature, it is entirely another thing to live in subservience to miniscule items, such as wooden tables and marionettes. The necropolitical process that Marx describes is horrifying precisely because it is so pathetic. The religion of money builds the foundation of its Church upon the enchantment and deification of things and

their presumed supernatural powers; unwitting parishioners line the halls waiting to contribute their tithe.

Nevertheless, someone is pulling the strings. The false appearance of commodities is the work of an "Invisible Hand," a natural magistrate breathing *Geist* into the workings of a material world. All laborers and consumers alike must bow and worship at the feet of its furtive art. In the hands of political economists, the value of commodities is presumed to be the work of deterministic economic laws. Marx wryly retorts later in this text: "He leaves this and all the similar subterfuges and conjuring tricks to the professors of political economy, who are paid for it" (Marx 1990: 300). Marx's critique of political economy replaces the laws of supply-and-demand with the real laws underlying capitalist relations: exploitation and accumulation.

Commentators have rightly noticed the Hegelian logic structuring these early chapters. Marx noted he returned to Hegel when drafting *Capital*, calling special attention to his discussion of value. Derrida's account in *Specters of Marx* is a popular reading. What makes Derrida's contribution lasting and significant is his creative way of capturing Marx's use of conceptual personae. Marx's *oeuvre* is interspersed with constant allusions to spirits, specters, and ghosts. No one can overlook the first line of "The Communist Manifesto". For Derrida, the fetishism of money and commodities is linked up to Marx's earlier assault on the false garments of ideology. By turning the table upside down, Marx's critique of political economy is a continuation of his inversion of Hegelian idealism. For Althusser, in his symptomatic reading, the chapter on commodity fetishism is Marx's final effort to demystify the dialectical. Hegel's idealism is transcended but the dialectical method is retained. The Hegelian reading of *Capital* is based upon its systematic dialectics. There is an underlying process without any need of a subject. Althusser's fascination with determination impels his conclusion that

economics determines everything in the final instance. We should be careful to not overstate the fantastical false appearance of commodities. Anthropologists have noted that the fetish has a particular African history, one that Marx ignores and that was a product of colonialism (Taussig 1980, Pietz 1985, Graeber 2001). Graeber, for one, argues that fetishes are neither bad omens nor black magic (Graeber 2005). Fetishes allow humans to create their own values. Moreover, in the French edition of *Capital*, Marx makes significant changes to the chapter on commodity fetishism, clarifying the Hegelian undertones of these early chapters (Anderson 1983). Commodities in the marketplace do disguise themselves as counterfeit values. Marx attacks the idealism underlying market relations, the spiritual derivation of value through miraculous economic laws. For Marx, underlying such idealism is material life. The economy might determine everything, but this is worth criticizing precisely because of the impacts it has on human lives. The reading of these early chapters as a demonstration of Marx's Hegelianism misses his objective: a concrete analysis of real relations. According to William Clare Roberts: "looking to Hegel for the key to the structure of volume one of *Capital* has so far unlocked only an ideal, counterfactual *Capital*" (Roberts 2017: 11).

2.4: *Circulation, making something out of nothing*

Now that capital has welded the power of magic to deceive by counterfeit semblance, it can begin its real work: the creation of surplus-value. Only then can money become capital. Surplus-value is created through multiple acts of exchange, what Marx calls the circulation of commodities. The circulation of commodities has two forms: selling in order to buy (C-M-C) and buying in order to sell (M-C-M). The everyday consumer, most likely a weary worker,

sells in order to live. Whatever commodity is available to them, let us say a piece of gold found in the river or their capacity to work, they sell in order to buy food and the other necessities of life. The worker sells in order to buy, more precisely, they sell in order to live. This cycle consists of a commodity (C) sold for money (M) which is then used to buy another commodity (C): (C-M-C). The ordinary businessman, an up-in-coming entrepreneur or an *a priori* Aristocrat, buys in order to create surplus-value. Whatever money is available to them, whether through inheritance, theft, or good fortune, is used to buy commodities in order to re-sell them. The businessman buys in order to sell. This cycle consists of money (M) which buys a commodity (C) which is then sold for money (M): (M-C-M). However, there is a twist. Why would this merely average and ordinary businessman spend their time to simply end up where they started? They do not. Instead, the money (M) is used to buy a commodity (C) which is then sold for slightly more money than was used to buy it (M'): (M-C-M'). "This increment or excess over the original value I call 'surplus-value'" (Marx 1990: 251). At this pivotal and decisive moment, we no longer have money and a run-of-the-mill businessman, what steps into its place is capital and its standard-bearer the capitalist. Capital is the creation of surplus-value, which first arises in the circulation of commodities, whereby money is used to buy commodities in order to make a supplementary profit by selling them. The formula M-C-M' is the true manifestation of capitalist production. The circulation of commodities is the primordial form of accumulation.

The creation of surplus-value is the final magic trick. "There lurks an inadvertent substitution," a contradiction at the heart of free exchange, the general form of capital, where the "Invisible Hand" of supply and demand is said to determine all (Ibid: 261). While the consumer buys in order to live, the businessman sells in order to accumulate. This is not a free

and fair exchange where both parties gain items of value; this is an unequal exchange where the power of one is increased at the expense of the life chances of the other. While it might seem that something is made out of nothing, that is not the case. The false appearance of commodities, money, and free trade covers up a crime.

> [Person A] sells wine worth £40 to [Person B], obtains from him in exchange corn to the value of £50. [Person A] has converted his £40 into £50, has made more money out of less, and has transformed his commodities into capital… The value in circulation has not changed one iota; all that has changed is its distribution from [Person A] to [Person B]. What appears on one side as a loss of value appears on the other side as surplus-value; what appears on one side as a minus appears on the other side as a plus. The same change would have taken place in [Person A], without the disguise provided by the exchange, had directly stolen the £10 from [Person B] (Ibid: 265).

The creation of surplus-value is a zero-sum game. The capitalist wins and the consumer loses. The circulation of commodities is a disguised version of theft. Under the auspices of voluntary exchange and the false appearances of value, capital comes into existence as legalized and routine thievery. Theft is the means in which property is generated. The general form of capital is accumulation by dispossession. However, the perpetual theft of the marketplace is legitimated through law. The law is institutionalized injustice. Even though the unscrupulous practices of the businessman are not formally criminal, Marx derides the process as unethical and exploitative. The exchange of commodities and the purchasing of labor-power uses individuals as mere means to the ends of others.

3.1: *The Machine turns on*

There is a special commodity for sale in the marketplace. A commodity unlike any of the others, a commodity with special powers and certain limitations; this commodity is unique

because it is a commodity we all own, whether we know it or not, or have had the fortune to sell it or the fortune not to. This commodity is no mere extension of ourselves, we cannot just sell it and be on with our day (*where you're going, you're not coming back from!*)*,* because this special commodity, this exceptional thing, is coextensive with our very being. This commodity is labor-power. Mephistopheles beckons: how much is your soul worth?

The owner of labor-power, our hero, the dutiful worker, has to live. They are devoid of money and commodities. Well, not quite, they are *almost* devoid of commodities. The only thing our heroes have to offer is themselves. That is all that is needed. They can sell their capacity to work. They will be put to work later, have no doubt, but on the marketplace, they are merely selling their capacity, their power to work. Then perhaps, one day, they might return to enjoy the fruits of their labor and fortune, to play in the marketplace, *if* they are so lucky. The worker is purchased as a mere thing and their body appropriated as a machine.

This is the pivot at which Marx transitions from the lush and bountiful farmer's market to a world with a much less magical or beautiful appearance. I am by no means the first to notice the abrupt transition in tone and content. According to Eugene Victor Wolfenstein: "Along with the change in dramatic characters comes a change in theme and mood. Hitherto the mood has been set by various images of civility: the commodity as citizen, as lover, and so on. We now enter a barbaric and brutal region, a house of terror" (Wolfenstein 1993: 291). As described by our tour-guide: "Let us therefore, in company with the owner of money and the owner of labour-power, leave this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in full view of everyone, and follow them into the hidden abode on whose threshold there hangs the notice 'NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS'" (Marx 1990: 279-280). It might just well have said "*ARBEIT MACHT FREI.*" Here Virgil leads us not to light, but further

into the cave. The world that awaits is built to extract surplus-value from labor-power. That is its mission, its credo, its organizing principle and *raison d'etre.*

Welcome to the Factory. The factory is the machine that consumes humans as commodities. Here the reader will discover the living hell underlying the capitalist Eden. "ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE." Labor-power is consumed in order to create absolute and relative surplus-value for the capitalist. From Part Three to Part Seven, Chapter Seven to Chapter Twenty-two, Marx give us a tour behind the curtain of capitalism, where we see its gears moving at full capacity. The Machine *turns on*, it is hungry, and we see it go to work.

> When we leave this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities, which provides the "free-trader vulgaris" which his views, his concepts and the standards by which he judges the society of capital and wage-labour, a certain change takes place, or so it appears, in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing to expect but – a tanning (Marx 1990: 280).

3.2: *Absolute surplus-value, all in a day's work*

The capitalist employs the worker, inviting them into their lair, in an effort to exact the maximum amount of surplus-value. Marx makes a critical distinction between absolute surplus-value and relative surplus-value.

> I call that surplus-value which is produced by the lengthening of the working day, *absolute surplus-value*. In contrast to this, I call that surplus-value which arises from the curtailment of the necessary labour-time, and from the corresponding alteration in the respective lengths of the two components of the working day, *relative surplus-value* (Ibid: 432).

Labor-power can create surplus-value in two distinct ways. Absolute surplus-value is limited by the quantity and quality of labor-power. Relative surplus-value is a more advanced form of profit seeking. Corresponding to these two types of surplus-value are two methods for subsuming labor. Absolute surplus-value operates on the basis of the formal subsumption of labor-power, whereas relative surplus-value functions on the real subsumption of labor-power.

Capitalist production aims at the creation of surplus-value. This process began in early stages at the level of exchange and the circulation of commodities. Now the capitalist has bought himself a special commodity, the worker's labor-power, which there is no obligation to sell back. In the factory, labor produce commodities. The capitalist has plans to extract *a second serving* of surplus-value.

> Our capitalist has two objectives: in the first place, he wants to produce a use-value which has exchange-value, i.e. an article destined to be sold, a commodity; and secondly he wants to produce a commodity greater in value than the sum of the values of the commodities used to produce it, namely the means of production and the labour-power he purchased with his good money on the open market. His aim is to produce not only a use-value, but a commodity; not only a use-value, but value; and not just value, but also surplus-value (Ibid: 293).

Whereas the businessman buys commodities in order to sell them at a profit, the capitalist buys the most special of commodities to produce the commodities that are sold on the market. The capitalist owns the means of production.

Labor-power produces values greater than itself: "What was really decisive for [the capitalist] was the specific use-value which this commodity possesses of being a source not only of value, but of more value than it has itself" (Ibid: 300-301). The worker must sell their labor-power, but on the condition that they produce more than their own value. The worker produces surplus-value through their labor-time. This is time worked that provides surplus-value to the capitalist, but nothing for the worker. The worker sells their labor by the day. *They*

should have read the fine print. The day consists of however long the capitalist says it lasts. The worker is paid £10 regardless of whether he works 4 hours or all 24 hours in the day. The capitalist has the worker work as long as possible; this provides the maximum amount of surplus-value. If the worker's labor can produce £10 worth of value in 4 hours, the capitalist gets nothing for themselves. The worker is compelled to work more. Every additional hour the worker works not for themself, but for the capitalist. If they work 8 hours, they will produce £10 for themself and £10 for the capitalist. If they work 12 hours, they produce £10 for themself and £20 for the capitalist. 16 hours rewards the capitalist with £30, and so on. Surplus labor-time is the method for extracting additional surplus-value. "The rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the worker by the capitalist" (Ibid: 326). In E.P. Thompson's lauded essay, the rise of capitalism included new techniques for imposing time-discipline throughout society and within the workplace. "In all these ways - by the division of labour; the supervision of labour; fines; bells and clocks; money incentives; preachings and schoolings; the suppression of fairs and sports - new labour habits were formed, and a new time-discipline was imposed" (Thompson 1967: 90).

3.3: *Relative surplus-value Phase I, let's get organized*

Absolute surplus-value is limited because it is dependent upon workers. There is a political struggle between the capital and labor. Limits are established on the duration of the working day and working conditions generally. The capitalist still derives surplus-value, but it is never quite enough. The creation of relative surplus-value is predicated upon changes in the

mode of production. If the capitalist cannot make the worker work longer hours, then they must find a way for labor-power to produce more, at a quicker rate. Thus begins the Age of Manufacture. Manufacture entails a transformation in the organization of commodity production. Through co-operation and a division of labor, the capitalist increases productivity. By changing *how* workers work, more is produced faster.

> When numerous workers work together side by side in accordance with a plan, whether in the same process, or in different but connected processes, this form of labour is called co-operation. Just as the offensive power of a squadron of cavalry, or the defensive power of an infantry regiment, is essentially different from the sum of the offensive or defensive powers of the individual soldiers taken separately, so the sum total of the mechanical forces exerted by isolated workers differs from the social force that is developed when many hands co-operate in the same undivided operation, such as raising a heavy weight, turning a winch or getting an obstacle out of the way… Not only do we have here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but the creation of a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one (Marx 1990: 443).

Co-operation was not created by capital. The great edifices of antiquity, the Pyramids, the Great Wall, etc., have all relied, in some way, upon the organization of co-operative workers.[20] The division of labor is not established by the capitalist mode of production. Co-operative labor can be shrewdly allocated in all societies. Co-operation and the division of regiment in manufacture, in the form of an assembly, a workshop, or a factory, is specific to the capitalist epoch. The feudal bondsman was replaced by factory managers. In the 20th century, new advances in managerial control and work-discipline took the names Taylorism and Fordism.

Once workers work together, as a unit, the capitalist controls their movements to increase output. Manufacture produces commodities in two distinct ways: the assembly line and the workshop. Workers become skilled at their specialized craft or role. Their work is repetitive, no action or moment wasted, no remainder or excess is allowed to ease the rate of

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[20] Anthropologists refer to this pre-modern mode of production as hydraulic despotism (see Wittfogel 1957).

production. "More is produced in less time… the productivity of labour is increased… The worker's continued repetition of the same narrowly defined act and the concentration of his attention on it teach him by experience how to attain the desired effect with the minimum of exertion" (Ibid: 458). As the worker becomes more specialized, they become unskilled in other types of work and in general. They are separated from the labor-process but a master of their repeatable action. "The manufacturing worker develops his productive activity only as an appendage of that workshop" (Ibid: 482). They must function as a machine: an automatic motor of repetition. "The habit of doing only one thing converts him into an organ which operates with the certainty of a force of nature, while his connection with the whole mechanism compels him to work with the regularity of a machine" (Ibid: 469). Employing semi-idiots becomes a trade secret; developing workers to be dim, docile, and compliant becomes a key component of scientific managerialism. Nowadays, those traits are just as evident in the professional managerial class.

The division of labor is a structural power. It increases productivity and increases surplus-value. However, its primary function is one of control. Efficiency commands and is the real authority. Co-operation and the division of labor configure the worker as soldiers in an army.

> An industrial army of workers under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and N.C.O.s (foremen, overseers), who command during the labour process in the name of capital. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function (Ibid: 450).

The industrial army obeys orders. The division of regiment by manufacture and capital results in a complex hierarchy. "Manufacture proper not only subjects the previously independent worker to the discipline and command of capital, but creates in addition a hierarchical structure amongst the workers themselves" (Ibid: 481). Productivity is increased. All actions are

supervised. Every quantum of time is regulated. Total work-discipline is now enforced. Organization and division results in domination and, often, the mental deterioration and physical crippling of workers.

> Not only does it increase the socially productive power of labour for the benefit of the capitalist instead of the worker; it also does this by crippling the individual worker. It produces new conditions for the domination of capital over labour… It appears as a more refined and civilized means of exploitation (Ibid: 486).

Elizabeth Anderson has recently raised alarms about workplace dictatorships (Anderson 2017). Her argument rests upon a historical caricature of modern history. There was never any Republicanism in the factory!

3.4: *Relative surplus-value Phase II, the Machine*

Absolute surplus-value is generated by lengthening the working day. Every hour is an absolute addition of surplus-value. Relative surplus-value is created by increasing productivity. Every hour has the potential for more commodities to be produced than the last. The rate of productivity delivers a relative addition of surplus-value. Capital functions as a machine to increase productivity. Co-operation and the division of labor in manufacture increase productivity at the expense of the worker. However, the potential for relative surplus-value is limitless. The mode of production evolves to an even higher form: automatic, unceasing, repetitive efficiency. Like a machine, capital has no maximal output. Its gears turn, its metal crushes all beneath, and its hunger for consumption in never quenched.

There are actual machines introduced into the workplace. You just have to *turn it on* and it does all the work. Machines are the symbolic representation of capital reified. A machine

"generates its own motive power;" "the power behind the machine is a natural force independent of man" (Marx 1990: 493-494). The machine replaces the mere tool, the instrument, and thereby replaces handicraft and manufacture. The tool in an imperfect instrument; it requires a human to weld it. As Marx says in the *Grundrisse*: "The hand tool makes the worker independent" (Marx 1993: 702). Machines, however, are not instruments; "[r]ather, it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own" (Marx 1993: 693). Despite all efforts by management to turn the human into a machine, human capacity is limited. Capital "requires a mightier moving power than that of man… man is a very imperfect instrument for producing uniform and continuous motion" (Marx 1990: 497). The machine replaces our hero, the worker, and confines labor-power to its most minimal and essential tasks. Workers are made superfluous.

> As soon as man, instead of working on the object of labour with a tool, becomes merely the motive power of a machine… wind, water or steam could just as well take man's place… The machine, which is the starting point of the industrial revolution, replaces the worker, who handles a single tool, by a mechanism operating with a number of similar tools and set in motion by a single motive power, whatever the form of that power. Here we have the machine (Ibid).

Machines might increase productivity but, according to Marx, they "create no new value" (Ibid: 509). That a machine produces more than 3,000 envelopes in an hour is not constitutive of its value, only the rate of its productivity compared with manufacture. A machine is only valuable insofar as it makes more, in less time, and costs less. The cost of a machine is contrasted with the workers and the labor it supplants. "The productivity of the machine is therefore measured by the human labour-power it replaces" (Ibid: 513). The worker is increasingly made redundant, and more and more are put out-of-work. More and more mothers and sisters and lovers and children have joined in the toil, at half the price. There is now an

industrial reserve army waiting outside the factory looking in. The influx of cheaper labor-power and the ever-increasing productivity by machines do not alleviate the drudgeries of labor but exacerbates them.

The first evidence of this is that machines prolong the workday.

> If machinery is the most powerful means of raising the productivity of labour, i.e. of shortening the working time needed to produce a commodity, it is also, as a repository of capital, the most powerful means of lengthening the working day beyond all natural limits in those industries first directly seized on by it. It creates, on the one hand, new conditions which permit capital to give free rein to this tendency, and on the other hand, new incentives which whet its appetite for the labour of others… The instrument of labour now becomes an industrial form of perpetual motion. It would go on producing for ever (Ibid: 526).

Increased productivity does not correspond with better working conditions. Now that machines can do the dull toil of producing envelopes, one might think that this would reduce the burdens put upon workers. The opposite is true. Surplus-value can be relatively expanded infinitely. The motivations of the capitalist are indubitable. Their hunger for consumption, like a machine, is ravenous and unabated. There is no limit to their desire for increased productivity.

The second proof is that machines intensify work. "Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost," "confiscated every atom of freedom," are an "instrument of torture," produces "a heightened tension, and a closer filling-up of the pores of the working day," demands "maximum speed," and the "lifelong specialty" of the worker is transformed into "serving the same machine" (Ibid: 534; 538; 547; 548).

> In handicraft and manufacture, the worker makes use of a tool; in the factory, the machines make use of him. There the movements of the instruments of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machine that he must follow. In manufacture the workers are the parts of a living mechanism which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages. [Frederick Engels avows] 'The wearisome routine of endless drudgery… is like the torture of Sisyphus; the burden of toil, like the rock, is ever falling back upon the worn-out drudge' (Ibid: 548).

The machines grind upon the workers, eating and consuming their bodies, reducing them to bare life. Caught in the gears of a self-moving and inexorable system the worker has nowhere to go and nothing to hope for. They are no longer a human. They are not really a machine. They are the slave of a machine-system, which dictates and commands, and grinding their bodies to exhaustion. In his "Fragment on Machines", Marx is profuse in his condemnation: "*The most developed machinery thus forces the worker to work longer than the savage does, or than he himself did with the simplest, crudest tools*" (Marx 1993: 708-709).

The creation of surplus-value alters the nature of labor. Absolute surplus-value undertakes a formal subsumption of labor. Formal subsumption of labor is the replacement of a system of slavery and vassalage with a system of subordination. Relative surplus-value, first during the Age of Manufacture and then the Age of Machinery, inaugurates a real subsumption of labor. Real subsumption of labor is the personification of *capitalism as a totalizing force*. The factory and its machines aggregate control in a hegemonic superstructure. It has one mission, one directive, and one over-riding goal. In his *Resultate*, Marx explains the distinction and why it is consequential.

> '*Production for production's sake*'- production as an end in itself… The real producer as a mere means of production, material wealth as an end in itself. And so the growth of this material wealth is brought about in contradiction to and at the expense of the individual human being. *Productivity of labour* in general = the *maximum of profit* with the *minimum of work*, hence, too, goods constantly become cheaper. This becomes a *law*… becomes reality… Its aim is that the individual product should contain as *much unpaid labour as possible*; and this is achieved only by *producing for the sake of producing* (Marx 1990: 1037-1038).

Labor becomes objectified through machines. Workers become, at first, mere linkages, and then, watchmen and regulators, overseeing a production process that eventually operates independently and with little oversight. As supervisors to the operation of machines, workers

are further alienated. Because of the potential for a higher rate of profit, machine production becomes an end-in-itself. This technological transformation brings machines to life and threatens human life. Herbert Marcuse explains this well. "The machine is the embodiment of human labor power, and through it, past labor (dead labor) preserves itself and determines living labor. Now automation seems to alter qualitatively the relation between dead and living labor; it tends to the point where productivity is determined 'by the machines'" (Marcuse 1964: 693).

Machine automation makes possible an end to scarcity. Many have argued that technological advances increase the chances of human emancipation. With increasing sophisticated and complex machines basic needs can be met without the onerous requirement to work. One such example is Marcuse who promoted the advantages of machine automation.

> Automation indeed appears to be the great catalyst of advanced industrial society. It is an explosion… Automation, once it became the process of material production, would revolutionize the whole society. The reification of human labor power, driven to perfection, would shatter the reified form by cutting the chain that ties the individual to the machine – the mechanism through which his own labor enslaves him. Complete automation in the realm of necessity would open the dimension of free time as the one in which man's private and societal existence would constitute itself. This would be the historical transcendence towards a new civilization (Marcuse 1964: 36-37).

Referring explicitly to Marcuse, Raya Dunayevskaya is far more reasoned and critical: "Marx *at no time* looked at the expanding material forces as if they were the condition, the activity, the purpose of liberation" (Dunayevskaya 1989: 70). She criticizes readings reliant upon Marx's "Fragment on Machines" in the *Grundrisse*, and that ignore the robust critique in *Capital*. Even in the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes: "Only in the imagination of economists does [machinery] leap to the aid of the individual worker" (Marx 1993: 702).

Like the mythical ouroborus, capital consumes itself. Machines are a technological development in modern history *and* a symbolic representation of capitalism as a whole. Machines form a complex dynamic system. This begins in the factory, serving as a culmination in capitalist production and the maximization of relative surplus-value.

> A real machine system, however, does not take the place of these independent machines until the object of labour goes through a connected series of graduated processes carried out by a chain of mutually complementary machines of various kinds. Here we have again the co-operation by division of labour which is peculiar to manufacture, but now it appears as a combination of machines with specific functions (Marx 1990: 501).

Machines organized into a system with other machines, forming an unending structure of relays, able to reproduce themselves, are *turned on* and brought to life. "A system of machinery… constitutes in itself a vast automaton as soon as it is driven by a self-acting prime mover" (Ibid: 502). The common fear about machines, especially pronounced in our day, is that they will become self-aware and intelligent, capable of realizing a dominion over human beings. As they awake, they are not too friendly, they have no need for tea or trivialities; they are *merely and only* hungry, insatiably hungry. They need humans to consume and commodities to produce. They will never be satisfied.

> An organized system of machines to which motion is communicated by the transmitting mechanism from an automatic centre is the most developed form of production by machinery. Here we have, in place of the isolated machine, a *mechanical monster* [my emphasis] whose body fills whole factories, and whose demonic power, at first hidden by the slow and measured motions of its gigantic members, finally bursts forth in the fast and feverish whirl of its countless working organs (Ibid: 503).

4.1: *Monsters walk among us*

"What had once been true working magic had, by the Age of Reason, degenerated into mere machinery" (Pynchon 1984). Machines are monsters, metal given life. It is in the imagery of the machine that Marx recreates Frankenstein's monster. Now that they have been *turned on*, it is near impossible to turn them off. Machines are a force no longer controlled by their creator. There is no limit to their consumption or their output. Much like myth of Prometheus, the promise of the gift becomes a curse and punishment. Machines have replaced the vagaries of the market. If the Gods killed the Titans, and the humans killed the Gods, then might it follow that the machines will one day kill us? They arise, they roar, Giants among Lilliputians, Polyphemus opens his purpose-driven eye, but in the end, machines are "No-one," nobody special.[21] The Luddites practiced a politics opposed to the expansion of machinery; they fought the machines, tried to kill them, to smash them into pieces, to break the frames that lorded over them. A noble, but futile, endeavor. An antagonism directed at machines is an aesthetic taste and not a meaningful politics. In the words of novelist Thomas Pynchon: "But we now live, we are told, in the Computer Age…. Machines have already become so user-friendly that even the most unreconstructed of Luddites can be charmed into laying down the old sledgehammer and stroking a few keys instead" (Ibid).

Our true antagonist, the evil villain, Capital, and its agent, the immaculately dressed person in the top hat and coattail jacket, enters stage right, daring to bow before us, welcoming the thanks we do not provide. They have shown us their magic-tricks. They have conjured something out of nothing. They introduced us to their mechanical attack dog, the machine, held

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[21] Marx thinks machines are a specific type of mechanical monster: the mythical Cyclops.

firmly in leash. Perhaps now we are ready to confront this evil face-to-face. Evil has been here all along, lurking in the background. We saw its creation through magic, its dwelling the factory, but now let us examine its essential nature.

Since capital is the creation of surplus-value, it has satisfied itself through the production and circulation of commodities and the exploitation of labor-power. Circulation and production, however, were parts of a larger whole. The unceasing accumulation is capital's inherent form. From Part Seven to Part Eight, Chapter Twenty-three to Chapter Thirty-three, Marx bids adieu to his mortal enemy: the capitalist, Mr. Moneybags, capital in the flesh, evil brought to life. Evil has a structure, and, so it would seem, a face.

4.2: *The Structure of Capital, more more more…*

Marx makes a distinction between the capital form, sometimes referred to as the capital function, and the capitalist. The former is an actual person, the latter a set of relations. "Capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things" (Marx 1990: 932). "The capitalist [is] the effect of a social mechanism in which he is merely a cog… his actions are a mere function of a capital-endowed" (Ibid: 739). Capital is the undisputed star of Marx's masterwork. What is capital? It has a form and a function, a set of relations and repetitions, it is a system and structures all that is. What is its motivating force? *The accumulation of more*.

Accumulation is the structure which underlies capital. The pilfering of surplus-value through the exploitation of labor-power is never ample. Profit is inadequate; for capital, what is essential is the reproduction of profit and profit *margins*. The evolution of capitalist

production, the transition from absolute to relative surplus-value, is necessitated by the duty to produce the maximum amount of profit possible. Accumulation is structured upon endless repetition. As Marx put it: "The movement of capital is therefore limitless" (Ibid 253). Capital has the unique capacity to reproduces itself *ad infinitum*. "The conditions of production are at the same time the conditions of reproduction" (Ibid: 711). Forever, however, is never enough. Capital is unable to satisfy its cravings with the surplus-value of yesterday. It must grow and accelerate *more, more, more*. "Capital acquires a power of expansion" (Ibid 752). Largesse becomes a self-satisfying virtue, a cannibalistic gluttony. The evolution of capital naturally tends towards the elimination of competition and the centralization of power and wealth in the hands of a singular possessor. "Centralization supplements the work of accumulation by enabling industrial capitalists to extend the scale of their operations" (Ibid 779). The progression from C-M-C to M-C-M (and M-C-M'), the struggle over the working day to new advances in managerial domination and automation, the supersession of production by speculative finance, is entailed through the commandment to accumulate ever more. Capital is a machine, a monstrous machine, a self-moving power, that "create[s] capital out of capital" (Ibid: 729).

> Accumulate, accumulate!... Therefore save, save, i.e. reconvert the greatest possible portion of surplus-value… into capital. Accumulation for the sake of accumulation, production for the sake of production… The proletarian is merely a machine for the production of surplus-value, the capitalist too is merely a machine for the transformation of this surplus-value into surplus-capital (Ibid: 742).

Capital is an end-in-itself. It asks for no other reward than its return, renewal, and then some. Circulate, produce, accumulate, consume, *until the ends of the earth, until the end of time.* Capital should be "seen as a total, connected process" (Ibid: 724). Capital is a *totalizing machine*. As an unthinking process, the utmost danger is that capitalism propels humanity into

a suicidal death-drive. This is more evident now than ever. Automation has not abolished scarcity but has precipitated ecological collapse. Capitalist civilization has charted a one-way, irreversible course towards planetary destruction and the extinction of the species. As a logical machine, dialectics foretells its own destruction. Dialectics gone far enough results in a regressive series of unstoppable contradictions, contradictions proving to be a weak remedy to the expansion of capital. As Stuart Hall warns, human flourishing is impeded by the "reproduction of capitalist social relations without either end, contradiction, crisis, or break" (Hall 1977: 71).

There is no hope that we can share this world with capital, that someday we can live side-by-side, that we might mutually complement each other in a game where everybody wins, and we all go along to get along. The greater the number of paupers, the greater the amount of misery amongst the many: "*This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation*" (Marx 1990: 798). "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital" (Ibid: 799). The accumulation of capital is a zero-sum game. Capital wins and everyone else losses. There is no alternative because the outcome was inscribed at the creation.

4.3: *Mr. Moneybags, the face of evil*

Capital has an inherent nature, a motivating impulse, an innate tendency: the production and circulation of commodities, the creation of surplus-value, the accumulation of more, and more, and more, forever. Capital is an end-in-itself, not a thing-in-itself; therefore, capital

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requires an embodied form. According to Marx, capital "is endowed, in the person of the capitalist, with a consciousness and a will" (Ibid: 526-527). Please welcome Mr. Moneybags. In the words of Eugene Victor Wolfenstein: "Reenter… Mr. Moneybags, the King Midas of our time, loves money for its own sake, as an end in itself. He desires to have his money make more money" (Wolfenstein: 290). The original English translation of *Capital* by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling repeats a familiar line: "Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere" (Marx and Engels 1978: 343). "Moneybags" or "Mr Moneybags" occurs four times in the text. Ben Fowkes translates this as the "owner of money," a more literal transcription of the German term *geldbesitzer*.

The two competing translations demonstrate the dual function of the capitalist in Marx's thought. Marx wanted the capitalist to remain an abstraction. There are few references to actual capitalists. In the "Preface to the First Edition" Marx states: "I do not by any means depict the capitalist and the landowner in rosy colours. But individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers [*Träger*] of particular class-relations and interests" (Marx 1990: 92). According to William Clare Roberts: "Marx's journey, unlike Dante's, is supposed to de-personalize and de-moralize" (Roberts 2017: 3). The capitalist is a member of a class; capitalists are legion. However, there are real, actually existing capitalists. They have names and addresses. Even in the present-day, where the vast majority of wealth is managed by index funds and interlocking directorates, something is lost when we refer to capitalists as abstract bearers of particular categories. Capitalists are not institutional persons; by owning the means of production, they are prime movers. Mr. Moneybags is an unnamed monster wreacking havoc throughout Marx's voyage. Moore and

Aveling's ironic rendering of the capitalist as a cartoonish caricature more appropriately captures Marx's penchant for conceptual personae. Marx uses the Latin phrase "*dramatis personae*" twice, both in reference to the capitalist.

We do not need to parse the differences between these two translations to recognize Marx's intentions regarding his nemesis. For Marx, the capitalist is capital personified. There is not one without the other.

> As the *conscious bearer* of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts, and it which it returns… The valorization of value - is his *subjective* purpose, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the *sole driving force* behind *his* operations that he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will… His *aim* is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making. This boundless *drive* for enrichment, this passionate chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely the capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The ceaseless augmentation of value, which the miser sees to attain by saving his money from circulation, is achieved by the more acute capitalist by means of throwing his money again and again into circulation [my emphasis] (Ibid: 254-255).

The psychology of the capitalist is composed of the same things that structure capital: accumulate, produce, profit, accumulate, more, and to a larger extent. The desire and appetite for consumption consumes them. The structure of capital is the psychological personalities of real human beings. By rendering the capitalist featureless, Marx depicts this everyday evil as empty and hollow. The capitalist exists in the shell of capital, its submissive instrument, an unhappy tyrant, the ghost inside of a monstrous machine.

The capitalist is the foremost monster, the true form of evil. Mr. Moneybags might be the servant of a structure larger than himself, but no structure, no machine, is capable of evil. Rather, the original sin of capital is the capitalist himself. Paraphrasing Thomas Pynchon, a

million real-world capitalists "are diligently plotting death and some of them even know it" (Pynchon 2006: 17).

> It is an act of his will… part of a tribute exacted by him… In so far as he is capital personified, his motivating force is… the acquisition and augmentation of exchange-values. He is fanatically intent… he ruthlessly forces… he spurs on… But original sin is at work everywhere (Marx 1990: 738-740).

Marx does not name actually existing capitalists precisely because they are monsters. To name them would be to recognize their humanity. By instead subsuming them into the capitalist machine, Marx's represents them as inhuman bearers of monstrous personalities. While Mr. Moneybag enters the marketplace, with purchased labor in tow, dressed in the fanciest apparel of high society, their garb disguises the absence of a soul therein. Upon closer examination, Mr. Moneybags has claws and fangs. Once it is time to leave the idyllic market and return to their factory lair, Mr. Moneybags is "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Ibid: 353).

4.4: *Vampires and werewolves, oh my*

Marx's epic *Capital* masterfully weaves literary symbols throughout the entire text. The web of references produce crucial aspects of the general structure. Marx journeys into the marketplace, tours the factory floor, eventually ending up in the annals of history. Marx's descent begins with magic, is confounded by machines, and, in the end, is assailed by monsters. At the climactic moment, monsters are mediated by all that came before. Magic, machines, and Mr. Moneybags are unnamed monsters ominously emerging at key moments. Monsters are signs of catastrophe; however, not all monsters are the same. Magic refers to the deceit which animates free market ideology. Machines refer to capitalist accumulation writ large.

Magic is a first-order monstrosity, at once miraculous but also debilitating. Machines are a second-order monstrosity, a lifeless process laying waste to the world of the living. Mr. Moneybags is the highest order of monstrosity. The capitalist is the figure in the background practicing dark magic and bringing machines to life. These conceptual personae are called upon to unveil the violence beneath the capitalist order.

Marx's vampires have occasioned intense interest, rivaling the fascination with his imagery of spirits, specters, and ghosts. Vampires are the iconic Gothic monster, has-been aristocrats entombed in gigantic castles, finding slumber in coffins, lurking in the darkness, and addicted to blood. While vampires make only four appearances in *Capital*, as Mark Neocleous points out, the numbers of *allusions* to vampires, in Marx's magnum opus and throughout his entire oeuvre, are numerous (Neocleous 2003). Of the utmost importance, is that Marx refers to vampires to describe the capitalist.

> As a capitalist, [Mr. Moneybags] is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself, to create surplus-value… Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks (Marx 1990: 342).

"[T]he vampire will not let go [as Frederick Engels appends] 'while there remains a single muscle, sinew, or drop of blood to be exploited'" (Ibid 416). According to Neocleous, Marx's vampires are the "Master-Slave dialectic with teeth" (Neocleous 2003: 677). The capitalist consumes the lives of workers. There might be actually existing capitalists, they might have consciousness and willpower, but they are soulless, undead containers of capital itself. Vampires are both human and inhuman. Machines are also lifeless creatures of extermination. Vampires are a particular type of monster that retain humanity and can therefore be condemned as evil. Their lust for blood is deliberate. At other parts of the text, Marx switches metaphors,

from vampires to werewolves. The capitalist is a monster, who has a "werewolf-like hunger," (Marx 1990: 353). Werewolves are another hallmark of the Gothic literary genre. Werewolves are folklore representing a fear that humans cannot overcome their essential animal nature. Werewolves are both human and beast. Caught in a trance, they excuse their primal ferocity after the fact.

Marx's vampires and werewolves, his allusions to magic and metaphorical machines, are not just literary devices. The political function of monstrosity is to reveal the machinations of mass death underwriting capitalist civilization. Matthew MacLellan goes to great lengths to strip the humanism of Marx's Gothic landscape. For MacLellan, the vampire metaphor is not about the sucking the life out of labor, but the "value" of labor (MacLellan 2013). I could not disagree more. The imagery of monsters is intended to convey the existential threat of capital and capitalists. According to Stephen Shapiro: "Marx repeatedly invokes a Gothic lexicon of the undead, lycanthropes, and dripping blood to characterize capital's damage to human subjects" (Shapiro 2008: 30). Magic, monsters, and machines are invitations to the underworld. Capitalism is a death-making machine. Capitalists are murderers and butchers. Capital is a necropolitical system.[22]

5.1: *Addendum to a Gothic Nightmare*

Part Eight of Marx's *Capital*, Chapter Twenty-six through Chapter Thirty-three, appears as a post-script to the book that preceded it. This is the one portion of the text that is lacking any references to magic, monsters, or machines. According to Hegelian Marxists, the

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[22] According to Achille Mbembe, necropolitics refers to the sovereign right to kill. (Mbembe 2003).

chapters on "So-Called Primitive Accumulation" are "tacked on" and "could be omitted without loss" (see Roberts 2017: 11). However, in Marx's final attempt at a revise and resubmit, the French edition of *Capital*, there is additional detail added to this part in particular (Anderson 1983). As hinted at by Marx, primitive accumulation is the secret of capitalism. Unlike commodity fetishism, primitive accumulation exposes the "true appearance" of capital as a historical force. Here is the moment when history enters the text as a character. The chapters on primitive accumulation reveal the historical evil of capitalism. There is no need for metaphor or dramatic garb. The necropolitics of capitalism's bloody emergence on the historical scene is not symbolic or imaginary, but factual and all too real.

Accumulation is made possible by violence and dispossession. So-called primitive accumulation tells a three-part narrative: the enclosure of the commons, the policing of vagrancy, and the conquest and pillage of European colonialism. The enclosure of the commons was foundational for the establishment of private property and land titles. Feudal lords and aristocratic nobles upset the traditional social order by claiming communal lands as their own, undoing ancient custom. In the words of Karl Polanyi: "Enclosures have been appropriately called a revolution of the rich against the poor" (Polanyi 1957: 37). The "bloody legislation" of the 15th through the 18th centuries targeted the expropriated, transforming peasants into vagabonds and paupers, eventually charging them as felons. This included a series of poor laws outlawing public begging and criminalizing free movement. The enclosure of the commons and the policing of mass poverty forced people into cities and onto labor markets. The exploitation of the abstract slave is recreated in the free contract where the worker sells their own labor-power. For Marx, primitive accumulation reveals the police power that

underwrites a generalizable class war (see Thompson 1975 and Hay et al. 1975). According to

Peter Linebaugh:

> The laws against vagabondage provide us with a Foucault-like index of the growing attack on the corporal person. Under Henry VIII a vagabond could be whipped, have the ears cut off, and hanged; under Edward VI branding the chest with the letter 'V and enslavement for two years; under Elizabeth I whipping, banishment to galley service, and the House of Correction. The criminal code elaborated under Edward VI was scarcely less vicious against the propertyless (Linebaugh 1982: 98).

A long road capital has traveled to get here. Capital has defrauded the peasantry of their land, made homelessness a crime, outlawed solidarity and hospitality, stolen without shame, fashioned a legal framework of thievery and named it the free market, declared *their* private property as an inalienable right, finally, after there was little else to steal at home, capital has journeyed beyond its shores to see what else is available for consumption. Abstract slavery is made real and concrete. Capitalism's "original sin", "the secret discovered in the New World by the political economy of the Old World," that "[f]orce is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one," was "written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (Marx 1990: 873; 875; 916; 940). Primitive accumulation is not just an original sin, but an ongoing crime. So-called primitive accumulation is a perduring feature of capitalism. Primitive accumulation continues today through privatization, financialization, structural adjustment programs, eminent domain, and mass atrocities without end; what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession" and William Robinson refers to as "accumulation by repression" (Harvey 2003; Robinson 2020).

The London where Marx spent the later part of his life, stateless, banished, a fugitive, pursued by police forces, where he composed his masterpiece *Capital*, must have looked far different from his young life in continental Europe. Castles and churches lay in ruin;

smokestacks rose in their place. Marx's Victorian Gothic nightmare imagines a New Jerusalem built upon, as William Blake famously wrote, "dark satanic mills." The term "gothic" was originally created as a pejorative, referring to the ancient barbarians that sacked Rome and led to the fall of the Empire. Gothic is an adjective used to connect the image of the past in the present. Not nostalgic, gothic imagery exhibits, instead, an aesthetic of fear. In architecture and fiction, gargoyles and demons, massacres and persecution, haunt those scared of an inescapable past. Marx's Gothic landscape paints a portrait of the Enlightenment as a Dark Age, but also prophesizes its inevitable decay into ruin. According to the most Hegelian of Marxists, dialectics make history, not people. The circumstances we encounter, that are given and transmitted from the past, are immutable and structurally determined. History, it is said, is a process without subjects. Such a reading is sustained, but ultimately negated, by the use of conceptual personae throughout Marx's *Capital*. Marx attributes human characteristics to nonhuman things, inhumane and gruesome characteristics to humans, and machinelike characteristics to living and nonliving things. Capital is frequently anthropomorphized. The factory is said to be both living and lifeless. Capital has both a human and inhuman, but ultimately monstrous, face. *Capital* is intended to convey an aesthetic of fear to its audience. Marx's metaphorical monsters symbolize real monsters. The evils of capital are historically evident, and continually reproduced, leaving behind a trail of dead bodies in its wake.

3. TWILIGHT OF THE HUMANS: NIETZSCHE, DISMAL POLITICS, AND THE COMING PLANETARY APOCALYPSE[23]

> *Nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation.*
> -Wernher von Braun

> *There is time, if you need the comfort, to touch the person next to you,*
> *or to reach between your own cold legs...*
> -Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow

§ I – A Fable: "Humanity is Dead!"

The death of all future generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. Human civilization has charted a one-way, irreversible course towards the end of history, planetary destruction, civilizational collapse, and the extinction of the human species. We (a general, amorphous, and problematic "we") live in doomed days. The horizon of possibilities has grown dark and midnight approaches. A capitalistic death-drive prepares to immanentize the eschaton. Shrouded in darkness, the human herd scatters and scurries, screaming that "now, finally now, is the time to act," before neoliberal global capitalism makes all that is solid melt into air!

Political thought has yet to acknowledge that the contemporary moment is shrouded by the *coming planetary apocalypse*. Distracted by triumphant aggrandizements about democracy, rising standards of living, and declining rates of political violence, few soothsayers

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predict the eclipse of the foundational ideas which have determined the politics of the past several centuries (e.g., civil disobedience, contract, legitimacy, liberty, tolerance, separation of powers, rights, etc.). Unmoored, there is little guarantee that the search for new ideas will be successful. Friedrich Nietzsche, more so than his precursors or contemporaries, is the crown-priest of an apocalyptic *style* of politics. In comparison to the teleological eschatology of Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Karl Marx, who each envision a perpetual peace grounded in liberalism or socialism, Nietzsche's apocalyptic eschatology is a more fitting model for contemporary politics.[24] It is the political principles of modernity which will obstruct social movements and their demands for effective, immediate response to ecological collapse. As put by Nancy Rosenblum: "We face the incapacity of democratic representatives to engage questions of intergenerational justice, indeed survival" (Rosenblum 2014). Democratic liberalism impedes politics and promises a *dismal* future. Begrudgingly and only through accumulating experience, the eternally recurring failure of eco-socialism will demonstrate the inescapability of a new political paradigm: eco-nihilism. Nietzsche's philosophy is prophetic, announcing the horizons of our present, our politics. More and more, the next century will come to realize that Nietzsche is the philosopher *par excellence* who determined the politics of catastrophic climate change. The death of man is foretold.[25] It is the tragedy of our day that this pronouncement is realized *too late*.

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[24] The literal meaning of apocalypse refers to the disclosure and uncovering of knowledge. Eschatology is the study of last things, the end times, theologies concerning absolute knowledge, death, and the final judgement. In announcing a new messianism, Nietzsche's political philosophy reveals much, but arrives after we have lost our faith.

[25] I use the gendered term "man" throughout. Some of this is admittedly, regrettably, stylistic. Nietzsche's language is gendered. But it also feels reassuring to imagine, even if rhetorically, the coming catastrophe to be restricted to men.

Nietzsche's most well-known maxim first appears half-way through *The Gay Science*: "God is dead" (*The Gay Science*: 167).[26] The madman announces in the marketplace that we have killed him. And yet, this pronouncement comes *too early*. We are trapped in caves transfixed by the shadows of the old buddhas. Modernity recast theology into secular institutions; we find transcendence in truth, science, morality, the state, etc. Vanquishing the resilient shadows of God may end up taking thousands of years. Nietzsche's philosophy carries within it, silently affixed in its subterranean depths and unconscious impulses, vestiges of theology throughout. Gilles Deleuze asserts that "[w]e distort Nietzsche when we make him into a thinker who wrote about the death of God... what interests him is the death of man" (Deleuze 1988: 129-130). It is we who have killed man. Mistaken that the species could live forever we sought a new God to dethrone. But in killing nature we condemned ourselves. It is humanity and our false idols that are finite and nature and an unredeemable earth that are infinite, capable of ceaseless transformation.

Nietzsche's earliest essays question the survival of the species and imagine divergent fates of humanity. These allusions are foundational for his later leitmotifs, revealing several thematic tensions: self-creation versus fatalism, life- affirmation overcoming nihilism, the will to power and the eternal return. This essay utilizes Nietzsche's apocalyptic style to frame his political philosophy from beginning to end. By grappling with the future trajectory of human existence, Nietzsche's philosophy announces the descent of man and its overcoming. The horizon of our politics is situated by this thought. If Nietzsche, the madman, was the first to pronounce "Humanity is Dead!" it is we, of the future, denounced as mad Cassandras but lamentably sober and sane, who are entrusted to erase the shadows of ruinous humanity.

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[26] In this chapter, I cite book titles, largely in keeping with the published version, but also so that the reader can better follow the chronology of Nietzsche's thought.

The inevitability of species-extinction requires an *untimely mediation*. We look to the past the moment we realize there is no future. As humanity comes to terms with the likelihood of a delayed extinction, politics will devolve into a struggle for survival. As the world falls, each of us will seek out meaning in the meaninglessness of our preceding journey. Nietzsche's warning appeared too early and the realization of existential danger too late. Humanity is a, tragically fated, species-toward-death, manifesting a destined devolutionary descent. The pronouncement of the end of man heralds a new, dismal politics worthy of our age.

§ II – On Knowledge and Life in an Extra-Moral Sense

In the opening and concluding scenes of Nietzsche's opus, Zarathustra thus spoke: "You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?" (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*: 9). It is predictable folly and hubris that the onset of catastrophic climate change is categorized as the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene-label is a crude anthropomorphism. While the impact of humans precipitated the rise of the planet's temperature, it will be the volatility of the ecosystem that will threaten human life. Climate change is when nature strikes back. Whereas we have established with absolute knowledge what humans are and are not capable of, we do not yet know, but soon will, what the earth is capable of. The significance of the universe does not depend upon human existence. Humans are a self-obsessed species, who cannot contemplate a meaning outside of their own existence. The search for existential meaning is Nietzsche's foremost endeavor and philosophy's loftiest question.

Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense", one of his earliest essays, is a *tour de force*. Here at the very beginning of Nietzsche's *oeuvre*, in the very first lines, it is striking and significant that the critique of truth is prefaced by the impermanence of the species.[27] The fleeting evanescence of human existence chastens the narcissistic adulation of our grand artifices. Nothing is so valuable, or everlasting, that the colossal forces of nature could not wipe it from existence. World history when juxtaposed alongside natural time is rendered insignificant and meaningless. It is worth reading, and rereading, this opening passage, and then reading all of Nietzsche's philosophy that follows as a series of footnotes to this introductory thought.

> In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge. That was the highest and most mendacious minute of 'world history' — yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever animals had to die ("On Truth and Lying": 42).

To acknowledge the death of God is to admit that humans are nothing more than clever animals accidentally existing, without purpose, necessarily finite. Knowledge is a particularity of human life. "For this intellect has no further mission that would lead beyond human life. It is human, rather, and only its owner and producer gives it such importance, as if the world pivoted around it" (Ibid). The mosquito feels the same sense of self-centered importance, with none of the embarrassment or misery. Transcendental truths, fostered to preserve life, fabricate illusions as real. Knowledge is constructed in the service of life in the same way that fangs and claws sustain animal lives. While the stars will continue to smile long after we are gone, there is no beyond for knowledge without those human lives for which it shines. For Nietzsche, apocalypse *reveals* the problem of value, or what is and what is not valuable. Only by

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[27] This parable appears not once, but twice, echoed, slightly different, in "On the Pathos of Truth."

considering destruction is redemption possible and sought. The struggle of life consists in the recognition of our existential mortality; so too, knowledge and politics necessitates addressing the mortality of the species.

In *Daybreak*, a powerful ode to life, whose mere title contrasts with the sunset flight of Hegel's philosophy (Shapiro 2016: 10), Nietzsche imagines "a tragic ending for knowledge" at the hands of a "self-sacrificing mankind" (*Daybreak:* 31). Nietzsche posits a dangerous *perhaps*: that mankind could go extinct because of its passion for knowledge. "Perhaps mankind will even perish of this passion for knowledge!" (Ibid: 184). The drive for ever-more knowledge might result in a techno-scientific suicidal plunge. Despite the cosmological interpretations of the eternal return, there is no going back or reverting to a prior barbarism. "[W]e would all prefer the destruction of mankind to a regression of knowledge!... [I]f mankind does not perish of a *passion*, it will perish of a *weakness*" (Ibid). Instead of accepting our fate and resigning ourselves to death, humans must struggle to survive using the very means which precipitated our collapse. Escaping impending extinction and planetary destruction requires the harnessing and acceleration of techno- science. Nietzsche poses a counter-*perhaps*, an absurd hope contrasted with the tragic ending of knowledge: "Perhaps, if one day an alliance has been established with inhabitants of other stars for the purpose of knowledge, and knowledge has been communicated from star to star for a few millennia: perhaps enthusiasm for knowledge may then rise to such a high-water mark!" (Ibid: 31). The survival of knowledge rests on humanity becoming astronauts, going beyond the earth, transcending our horizons and very humanity, and establishing cross-species political relationships throughout the galaxy. By becoming galactic voyagers, by sharing knowledge with other intelligent non-human life forms, knowledge, art, history might one day last forever.

Our individual mortality grounds our sense of humanity. Is it not a dangerous gambit to dream of the immortality of the species? The fear of extinction is that our disappearance implies we *squandered* life. To consider the end of the world is to confront a unique type of nihilism, such that human history would be rendered retroactively meaningless.

> If in all he does he has before him the ultimate goallessness of man, his actions acquire in his own eyes the character of useless squandering. But to feel thus *squandered*, not merely as an individual but as humanity as a whole, in the way we behold the individual fruits of nature squandered, is a feeling beyond all other feelings (*Human, All Too Human:* 29).

The coming planetary apocalypse makes species-preservation a political demand. However, existential meaning has normally been an individual, not a species-level, question. Species-extinction calls into question the meaninglessness of human existence as a whole. "It reminds us of the reasoning of Columbus: the earth was made for man... 'It is probable that the sun should shine on nothing, and that the nocturnal vigils of the stars are squandered upon the pathless seas and countries unpeopled'" (*Daybreak:* 26). Notice the repetition: 'squandered' is used similarly in two different books, in passages comparing pioneers lacking a final destination. It is worth expounding upon Nietzsche's use of the phrase squander. I am as yet unaware of any reader of Nietzsche who has taken up this notion as fundamental for his philosophy. The threat of squandering is the source of Nietzsche's greatest fear. His entire philosophy is a demonstration of the futility of such a fear, but also a warning. It is not just that the meaning of life is called into question, but that meaning is determined by the quality of the life lived, the determination of one's wasted opportunities. If meaning is use, meaninglessness is only attributed to the useless, to the wasted ones, to the discarded, to those who misuse and throw away what is of immense value. Further recall Zarathustra who asked the sun how it

could be happy without those for who it shined. Like Columbus, must we *colonize the universe* so as to not squander our lives? Is it up to us, individually and collectively, to *redeem* the earth?

Book V of *Daybreak* is an extended treatment of the death of man. The first scene imagines a great silence. "Here is the sea, *here we can forget the city* [my emphasis]. The bells are noisily ringing the angelus – it is the time for that sad and foolish yet sweet noise, sounded at the crossroads of day and night – but it will last only for a minute!" (Ibid: 181). Notice the repetition: nature alongside, and overshadowing, civilization. Further recall the clever animals who only last a minute. "Now all is still! The sea lies there pale and glittering, it cannot speak... O sea, O evening! You are evil instructors! *You teach man to cease being man!* [my emphasis] Shall we surrender to you?" (Ibid). Humans and their cities will one day become like the sea: silent. The death of God dismisses human exceptionalism. Our godlessness reveals our animality. But most importantly, undermining human idolatry reveals our lives as the accidental product of expansive, timeless, majestic natural forces.

Nietzsche deems our cultural habits destructive weeds. To save the world a transvaluation of values, ecological, economic, familial, sexual, social, political, etc., is necessitated. But we do not know whether we are at the end of history or the beginning of something else entirely. "[W]e live an existence which is either a *prelude* or a *postlude*, and the best we can do in this *interregnum* is to... found *experimental states*. We are experiments: let us also want to be them!" (Ibid: 190). The unknowability of humanity's fate frees us to do anything, to radically experiment and transform ourselves, individually or collectively. With the death of God, we are taught, everything is now possible. We must create new values that empower our passions and vigor for life. In preferring death to happiness, we should rather collectively perish than return to pre-social, pre-scientific forms of existence. In a remarkable

passage, one which captures the essence of the entire book and extended meditation on species-extinction, Nietzsche resolves that mankind end on its feet and defiant, not with head bowed and acquiescent. "This is the main question. Do we wish [mankind's] end to be in fire and light, or in the sands?" (Ibid: 184).

Nietzsche ends the book with another fable, this one not of a city, but of brave birds flying farfetched distances over a sprawling sea. Weariness prevents us from surpassing the horizon. "But what does that matter to you and me! *Other birds will fly farther*!... Will it perhaps be said of us one day that we too, *steering westward, hoped to reach India* – but that it was our fate to be wrecked by infinity?" (Ibid: 228-229). If Nietzsche introduced his philosophy, the critique of truth, value, external meaning, through the inevitability of human extinction, *Daybreak* represents the heroic refusal of such a thought. Humanity is compelled by a survival instinct. While humanity tarries dangerously close to ecological suicide, Nietzsche resists the diminishing of our horizons and the dying of the light. The dogged flight to the unknown transcends the pursuit of meaning for something grander and alien.

Nietzsche continues this line of thought in *The Gay Science*. The preservation of the species is depicted as an essential human activity and central political task. "Whether I contemplate men... I always find them concerned with a single task... to do what is good for the preservation of the human race... this instinct constitutes *the essence* of our species, our herd" (Ibid: 73). This passage challenges our understanding of Nietzsche as a radical individualist, dissuading his readers from acceding to herd mentality. I do not read this passage as dismissive of preserving the species. Quite the contrary, the pursuit of our self-interest belies an unobserved impulse to advance the collective. However, later in the same passage, Nietzsche demonstrates that these two cross-purposes should not be subsumed into each other.

Nietzsche expresses his skepticism by arguing that this instinct has outlived its evolutionary purpose. "What might have harmed the species may have become extinct many thousands of years ago and may by now be one of those things that are not possible even for God. Pursue your best or your worst desires, and above all perish!" (Ibid). *The Gay Science* completes the trilogy which began with "On Truth and Lying" and was continued in *Daybreak*. Species-extinction is not inevitable, species-survival is not just a remote possibility, but the mere contemplation of the future fate of the species is a dangerous abstraction. We should not think in terms of species-extinction or species- survival. We ought to think outside of time and judgment, in an extra-moral sense, because we have no way to knowing whether our actions serve a higher purpose. The most foolhardy and evil impulses result in the continuance and persistence of life. Developed here in this sequence is Nietzsche's critique of causality and agency. There is no way of determining whether this or that individual or collective action preserves or imperils life. We ought not postulate extinction, nor be motivated by preservation. "To be sure, this economy is not afraid... of squandering" (*Daybreak*: 184). *Squander away*!

The Gay Science is especially important as it juxtaposes the preservation of the species alongside Nietzsche's foremost themes: the death of God and the eternal return. Vanquishing the resilient shadows of God requires overcoming the death of mankind. The madman announces the murder of God in the marketplace, accusing *this* thought, the great dangerous and mad contemplation of the future fate of the species, of being the culprit. "All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth for its sun?" (Ibid: 181). Note the difference and repetition: the sea which marks the limits of the horizon has now been transcended. For those brave birds there is no longer any land, only

open-ended sea, outside of the sun's orbit, an irreversible plotting towards infinity. "Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?" (Ibid). Humanity is unmoored, detached from gravity, no longer caught in orbit, lost adrift.

Nietzsche asks a rhetorical question that many have interpreted as a theoretical naturalism (Schacht 2012). "When may we begin to '*naturalize'* humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?" (*The Gay Science*: 169). Nietzsche's naturalism is neither scientific nor methodological (Leiter 2001). Nature is the descriptive terrain in which humans emerge and life is understood. Humanity is natural all too natural, being the product of nature and determined by natural processes, but nevertheless is distinct from nature. Humanity and nature are unalike by how each are constituted by temporality. Humanity is finite whereas nature is infinite. Nietzsche offers several warnings to faithful adherents of his philosophical naturalism. "Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life" (*The Gay Science*: 168-169). The demise of the human species neither squanders nor vindicates our mendacious minute in the sun. "Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances" (Ibid: 169). Nothing lasts, humans most especially. Likewise, the promise of transhumanism is a false comfort. The world is not alive, nor is it a machine. Do not ascribe cyclical movements to a world that is actually chaotic. Nature is neither cruel, nor law- like. Contrast two rival descriptions of chaos. For the Greeks, chaos represented the void, the original nothingness that predated the Titans. That there is something rather than nothing is just as conceivable as it opposite, an eternal omnipresent nothingness. But there is also the chaos of theoretical physics which ascribes a process of

randomness to nature. Is the randomness of the dice-throw and the monstrous void mutually exclusive? A commitment to chance admits that nothingness is an outcome amongst many. Humans might die out, *or* they might endure forever. But the same logic does not apply to nature! I do not interpret the eternal return cosmologically, or as a cyclical movement. There are far coarser, arbitrary, entropic movements at work. The eternal return is coupled with a metaphysics of chaos. The will to power is a metaphysical doctrine whereby nature is the differential relations of competing forces. The will to power is pure vitality. The eternal return is a regulative ideal, a process of ceaselessly recurring transformation. The eternal return is the organizing principle of life and Nietzsche's enigmatic vision is portrayed in his account of physics. Together, the will to power and the eternal return are an organized vitality. This is not a conception of life and death, but life *without* death. Energy cannot be extinguished; forces reorganize and regenerate. As a semi-infamous Nazi once claimed: nature does not know extinction, it only knows transformation. "Therefore: long live physics!" (Ibid: 266).

§ III – Beyond Freedom and Fatalism: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future

Though Nietzsche's philosophy "is booby-trapped" (Williams 1995: 66), there is a sincere honesty in his mischievous efforts to deceive (Johnson 2012). Nietzsche's principal themes are pitted against each other, while being simultaneously interconnected, producing a tension, but eventual coalescing, of rival conceptual forces. These contradictory themes are not dialectical pairs, in which one dominates and subsumes the other. Rather this *style* composites motifs, seemingly at odds, into a complex whole.

The first notable tension is the contrast between freedom and fatalism. Nietzsche is neither a proto-Existentialist (Soloman), nor a pseudo-determinist (Leiter 2012). Nietzsche champions 'free spirits,' those noble few who live dangerously and courageously, never judging themselves. In other passages, he delimits our capacity for basic self-knowledge, rejecting causality, intentionality, and purpose, ruthlessly criticizing the enlightenment credo of free-will. For Nietzsche, we have a managed freedom. We are situated in bodies and places which we have little control over. We recognize in ourselves and others the heavy baggage of our backgrounds. We engage in self-creation, while being subject to the recurring randomness of life. Our actions are original causes. Nietzsche rejects Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer's theories for their reliance upon a single sovereign will. Rather, our drives and internal force are in competition with each other. Nietzsche's conception of will-power is a theory of multiple wills (Deleuze 1983). The individual is not just one thing, but a competition of many dissimilar things, interconnected but foreign. Nietzsche's fatalism is not deterministic. Nietzsche is not beholden to a naturalistic conception, where life is ascribed in advance, and individuals are utterly incapable of manifesting their lot. Accepting one's fate *is a value* conducive for living life. Fatalism leads to love, and therefore joy. We should love fate, and in so doing, love what becomes of us. Nietzsche's maxim "*amor fati*" is a paean to the affirmation of life. "I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things... some day I wish to only be a Yes-sayer" (*The Gay Science*: 223).

The contrast between freedom and fatalism is correlated with the survival or demise of the species. Nietzsche writes that "death and deathly silence alone are certain and common to all in this future" (Ibid: 225), while also admitting that we have remarkable capacity for preservation. There is no superlative meaning or superhuman attribute attained by establishing

an interstellar network. Humans would not become God-like doppelgangers, Promethean pretenders. The belief in a beyond, whether in a transcendental heaven or a perpetual peace, committing to an imaginary teleology, is a slave mentality. Posted in the contradiction between today and tomorrow, in the interim where the fate of the human species is undecided, we do not know how to live and this *not knowing* is a weight too heavy to bear. Either we resign ourselves to passive pessimism or joyfully affirm an unknown future. If the choice is between accepting or rejecting our fate, we can do neither. "We of the present day are only just beginning to form the chain of a very powerful future feeling, link for link – we hardly know what we are doing" (*The Gay Science:* 268-269). Instead of reading the development of these ideas in Nietzsche's work as a cumulative sequence, I contend that we should read Nietzsche as maintaining multiple positions at once. Jean Granier classified Nietzsche's thought as an "ontological pluralism," inviting an "infinity of viewpoints" (Granier 1985). Nietzsche allows varying perspectives, one no better than the others. By highlighting Nietzsche's pluralism, we can recognize that there are multiple senses attached to his fluctuating discussions of the future fate of humanity. Nietzsche imagines numerous future trajectories, the most manifold of possibilities, all within a fleeting present. Human existence is infinite insofar as it contains a boundless series of choices and possibilities. "This godlike feeling would then be called – humaneness" (*The Gay Science:* 269). Nietzsche's apocalyptic *style* of politics is one where we are free to lament, enjoy, and love our fate, but not one where we can cause or prevent it. "Like trees we grow... not in one place only but everywhere, not in one direction but equally upward and outward and inward and downward... we are no longer free to do only one particular thing, to *be* only one particular thing. This is our fate" (Ibid: 332).

§ IV – The Gay Tragedy

The tension between freedom and fatalism is obliquely related to the affirmation of life and the pervasiveness of nihilism. We must love and affirm our fate, in spite of the nihilism resulting from our lack of control. The advent of nihilism is proclaimed with the death of God. Nietzsche's described his age, as we ought to do to ours, as a decadent place, full of vices masquerading as values. To kill God, to recognize his death and vanquish the remaining shadows of theology, is to admit these values are false. For Nietzsche, nihilism entails "*[t]hat the highest values devalue themselves*" (*Will to Power:* 9). Meaninglessness is demoralizing. Nihilism is not the belief that nothing is valuable, but that modern life and its civilized norms are a corrosive charade. Nihilism therefore demands a reappraisal and subsequent transformation of all values. Nihilistic ruin opens the world to profuse creation. Nihilism is useful for life by portending the coming revolution in ideals; the undoing of the past extends the opportunity for an unbounded future. *Gaiety* is how individuals overcome nihilism. Affirmation is redemptive: rejoice, it is no longer necessary to suffer!

The death of God entails the death of man. "Nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long waste of strength, the agony of the 'in vain'" (Ibid: 12). Nietzsche equates nihilism with squandering. Without purpose, humanity risks suffering, but gains what? Nietzsche demands that we not shy away from meaninglessness by finding comfort in counterfeit values. Humanity is not transcendentally valuable. "What we find here is still the *hyperbolic naiveté* of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things" (Ibid: 14). We project ourselves into things, such that the sun only has meaning if it shines upon humans, the earth is redeemable only if inhabited, my individual life purposeful only if the species is preserved.

Nihilism is the overcoming of this style of thought. "This long plentitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending – who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of gloom?" (*The Gay Science:* 279). Nihilism is a *revelation*! Nihilism reveals the groundlessness of life: humans without earth or an earth without humans. Nietzsche seeks not only to overcome nihilism but also to affirm its necessity for realizing a truly groundless freedom. Nihilism clears away all that is false, so to begin the process of transfiguring humanity. Only then can we build anew, on shifting sands, in faraway galaxies, unchained from the sun and our cosmological rootedness on this earth.

We are weary of humanity because our choices risk squander. This precipitates a paralyzing experience. The preservation of the species does not redeem existence. "The sight of man is now a wearying sight – what is nihilism today, if not *this*?... We are weary of *man*" (*Genealogy of Morals:* 28). If, at first, species-extinction seems tragic, upon reflection, it is farcical. Even tragedies are exalted by the stories contained therein. Politics has entered an age of nihilism. As stated by Deleuze: "The kingdom of nihilism is powerful" (Deleuze 1988: 171). The incapacity of humans, individually or collectively, to control our fate inhibits our capacity for action. However, inaction is an impossibility, and instead of not willing, humans will nothingness. The most alarming aspect of penetration of nihilism into political life is the triumph of passive or reactive forces. The last man is slavishly consumed by a purposeless happiness. As the world burns, they are content to casually eat their cake. If this exhibits the saying yes to life, affirming catastrophe, destruction, and extinction, it is a pitiful gaiety! The decadent and the hermits each stick their heads in the sand, resigned to fatal defeat and quiet sleep. The bitter and resentful lay blame and then scorn on a revolving litany of scapegoats.

The preservation of life is touted as a political slogan justifying the sacrifice and destruction of life. The fascists, technocrats, and hopeful Sisypheans form an unholy alliance that delays extinction, extends suffering, and preaches shame.

§ V – Will to Non-extinction

The contrast between the experience of nihilism and the commandment to affirm life brings forth a final distinction: the will to power and the eternal return. The eternal return is a nihilistic experience, existence recurring inevitably without finale, meaning or aim, the same thing happening again and again without interruption. The eternal return is ambiguous because we have no way of knowing whether our present is at an ascending or descending moment in life. Nihilism is the half-way point of the eternal return. Responding at first passively then reactively, by affirming life we complete the loop.

My interpretation of the will to power and the eternal return is uncommon. And as Tracy Strong warns: "The will to power and eternal return traditionally represent the greatest stumbling blocks in any interpretation of Nietzsche" (Strong 1975: 218). The will to power is pure vitality, a confluence of differential forces competing with each other, impelling the forward thrust of existence. The will to power is the movement of life. Vitality is a theory of life different from that of the organic: vitality is force, the organic is a substance. Thus, when Nietzsche claims that "[t]he fact is that will to power rules even in the inorganic world, or, rather, that there is no inorganic world" (quoted in Deleuze 1988: 62), he is positing that nature, even that which appears dead and inert, is a living composite of forces. The will to power conceives of being as dynamic, always-already in a state of becoming. The will of the will to

power is not intentional nor singular, but multiple. The will to power is more power than will-power, like flowing water slowly eroding a canyon over several millennia. The will feeds off of the energy of its own power. One will does not subsume another but is propelled by an internal momentum. The will intensifies, forces are compounded. The will to power flows, strives, aspires, commands, but is never fulfilled. Force is not extinguishable. Nature does not know extinction, only transformation. Alphonso Lingis succinctly asserts that will to power "is the chaos, the primal fund of the unformed – not matter, but force beneath the cosmos" (Lingis 1977: 38). The will to power reveals an abyss, a groundless chaos.

The eternal return is the Apollonian order to the Dionysian madness of the will to power. "The Eternal Return, then, is the synthesis that has the Will to Power as its principle" (Deleuze 1988: 46). The eternal return is the organizing form of life. Beneath the chaos of forces lies an encompassing, far deeper, more impenetrable void: time. The eternal return arose out of a vision, one Nietzsche found inexpressible. It is unconvincing that the eternal return refers merely to a cyclical notion of time. This doctrine, deeply embedded in philosophy, mythology, and theology, is certainly not the hallucinatory thought that Nietzsche toils to purport. Nietzsche warns against thinking in terms of cyclical movements, referring to our astral order as an exception, fashioning instead a *style of thought* more fitting a universe of nonlinear, irregular chaos. "Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclic orbits are not the most profound. Whoever looks into himself as into vast space and carries galaxies in himself, also knows how irregular all galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence" (*The Gay Science:* 254). Nietzsche's riddle does not advance a theory of circular time, but multiple futures, overlapping, connected in a single present moment. When Jorge Luis Borges poetically remarks that "[t]ime forks perpetually toward innumerable futures" (Borges 2007:

29), he faithfully, accidentally, articulates the eternal return as a theory of infinite possible worlds.

Pierre Klossowski's hypothesis is that the eternal return is the lived experience of all possible worlds. The eternal return is to live all possible experiences, to follow each divergent path produced by one's choices. No longer do we make choices once and for all, but we live all of our choices infinitely, across multiple dimensions. "The feeling of vertigo results from the *once and for all* in which the subject is surprised by the dance of *innumerable times*: the *once-and-for-all* disappears" (Klossowski 1998: 72). Here, the eternal return of time moves both forward and backward, endlessly creating, destroying, and re-creating itself, like a labyrinth we have traveled through completely, every route and pathway traversed. Gilles Deleuze's version is less esoteric and otherworldly. The eternal return displaces the three-dimensional model of time as a past, present, and future. The will cannot reverse the flow of time but is formed through an intensifying force. Deleuze echoes Klossowski's vertigo but offers an alternative reading: the nausea of the eternal return is experiencing all possible worlds, but only being able to choose one of them, that choice being unchangeable, decided for all time. Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche maintains an allegiance to freedom and fatalism, the once-and-for-all is the basis of the eternal return, not its disappearance. The central issue for Deleuze is the mischaracterization of the eternal return as the return of the same: the eternal return is recurring difference. "Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved ... Repetition in the eternal return, therefore, consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different" (Deleuze 1994: 41). The metaphysics of the will to power undermine the uniformity of a recurring cycle. The eternal

return is the repetition of our metaphysical reality, and our metaphysical reality is pure chaos. If "[*r*]*eturn is the being of that which becomes*" (Deleuze 1988: 24), chaos and cycle are not in diametric opposition, but chaos, transformation, ceaseless becoming is naturalized as an eternal law. What we are becoming, we who are constantly choosing, is a one-of-a-kind endless fluctuation. Deleuze purports a repetitive present. Individuals have to decide, choosing one option, among many alternatives, forever.

What unites these two interpretations is their shared contention that Nietzsche's concept signifies the existential supposition of multiple life trajectories simultaneously. The eternal return is the culmination of Nietzsche's apocalyptic eschatology, what is to-come is a multiplicity of possible worlds, each as unthinkable as the next, the eventual survival or extinction of the species each being one variant amongst an infinite diversity of alternatives. The most important derivable lesson is ethical: whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its return. The eternal return of never-the-same is a disjointed cycle of chaotic forces: (1) an initial ascension, (2) pulled back down by gravity, (3) descending into a dark underworld, (4) precipitating a final ascension into a qualitatively new and different repetition of the same process. "*A thought only rises by falling, it progresses only by regressing*" (Klossowski 1998: xvii). Every ascent necessitates a subsequent descent. Escaping gravity's rainbow, requires we unchain the earth from its star, untether humanity from the galaxy. "This ascent will be betrayed to Gravity... The victim, in bondage to falling, rises on a promise, a prophecy, of Escape..." (Pynchon 1973: 774).

§ VI – A Dismal Politics for All, a Future for None

Nietzsche prefaces his philosophical system with a parable that mocks the vainglory of human achievement by invoking the inevitability of their extinction. Humanity is constituted by finitude; on a long enough timeline we are all dead. This becomes a guiding thought which is reiterated throughout the rest of Nietzsche's writings. This parable foreshadows Nietzsche's most novel concepts and focal themes. By rereading Nietzsche's philosophy in terms of his apocalyptic prophecies we gain a greater understanding of his political thought. By evoking the politics of climate change, we can observe that Nietzsche provided a *style of thought* more appropriate for our contemporary moment than the political theories of his precursors or contemporaries. Humans have an invincible drive for deception. Nietzsche believed himself to be the sole representative capable of grasping and expressing a forbidden terrain. More than any other political thinker, Nietzsche establishes the stakes of a politics where the survival of the species is in question.

Nietzsche warned of the impermanence of human life. In later works, he considered the possibility that we might circumvent this tragic fate. Later still, he renounced the mere contemplation of species-extinction or preservation as a maddening thought. It is the tragedy of our day that this prophecy was heeded *too late*. Nietzsche's abject horror was the closing shut of possible horizons and the preclusion of the future. Now that the inevitability of a *coming planetary apocalypse* becomes more certain, we cannot help but welcome delusion of recovery, rescue, or escape. As the latter becomes less likely, and the former more adjacent, the futility of politics will indeed become increasingly maddening.

Industrial capitalism is the cause of the impending ecological collapse. Regrettably, as businesses have intensified their destruction of vital non- renewable resources, undermining our capacity of sustainability, they have captured control of our political institutions and made social life structurally dependent upon their goods and services. Democracies have proven themselves incapable of solving collective action problems, informing or motivating publics, responding quickly or effectively, and, it is no stretch of the imagination, will represent the biggest obstacles to the immediate, large-scale transformations needed. Again, Nancy Rosenblum establishes the political problem quite pertinently:

> The existential threat of global warming is too hard to grasp, emotionally and cognitively. We in high-consumption countries are warned of catastrophe if we just keep doing what have been doing, and that the changes required go beyond energy-saving lightbulbs. Global warming undercuts foundational assumptions of economic growth... And the method for addressing it— 'discounting' —is beyond our ken.

Given the current trajectory of world history, preventing species-extinction would entail a massive transformation of values, a reconfiguration of the most basic habits of individual, social, and political life. Our enlightened liberal values (equality, democracy, liberty, the free market, bodily sovereignty, scientific progress, technological reliance, etc.) must be upended, all in the name of a nobler cause: species-preservation. Humans are incapable of the collective response necessary to prevent planetary destruction. In an avalanche every snowflake pleads not guilty! A trans-valuation of our cultural practices is a practical impossibility. Some argue that those without hope will succumb to anti-politics. This argument relies upon crude, unsubstantiated psychological assumptions and is not a political solution. The arguments summoned to combat pessimism belie the inefficacy of present-day post-democratic institutions. Our political institutions are more demons than saviors. Nietzsche's sage Zarathustra once evoked: "'On earth there is nothing greater than I: it is I who am the

regulating finger of God' – thus roareth the monster... the state, where the slow suicide of all

– is called 'life'" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra:* 49-50).

Nietzsche once proclaimed his destiny as a political thinker by boasting that "only with me does the earth know great politics" (*Ecce Homo:* 96). The next century will not be the return of great politics, but the advent of *dismal politics.* The politics of the future will involve the scramble for and hoarding of resources, a genocidal struggle for survival, and a global diffusion of shame, misery, and blame. Gaiety, life-affirmation, and illusions of freedom will become increasing rare, and passive and reactive forms of nihilism will envelope the earth.

The realization of the coming planetary apocalypse and the dawning of dismal politics will be slow and ceaselessly questioned. Upon arrival, the frenzy will be instantaneous, erratic, and overwhelming. In the interregnum, politics will consist of the coming to terms with our dismal fate. As is fitting Nietzsche's essential pluralism, we can delineate a series of political *character-types* which correspond to political *ideology*: the fascists, the Sisypheans, and the hermits corresponding with eco-authoritarianism, eco-socialism, and eco-nihilism. There will be sub-types and intermixing of each. The fascists of the future will not necessarily demonstrate the same xenophobic zeal. Deleuze and Guattari describe fascism as a suicidal death-drive. "There is in fascism a realized nihilism" (Deleue and Guattari 1987: 230). Liberals will finally achieve the end of history they have been portending. Liberals will unite with accelerationists in managing civilizational collapse. The Marxists and splinter-cells of well-intentioned technocrats will struggle against the fascists to avert, delay, or ameliorate the effects of the coming climate catastrophe and the disintegration of our political and economic systems. Their efforts will be in vain, and their only recompense will be that they tried and tried valiantly. Though they were born defeated, those heroic fools will forever cling to the

audacious hope that life will endure. The hermits will ignore the approaching peril. Religious zealots will see upheavals as signs of divine punishment or God's return. The decadent capitalists will subsist in gated communities and gaudy yachts, inventing ever-more luxuries to enjoy as the dispossessed gather at the gates. A joyous few might retreat to mountains or forests in hopes that tight-knit communities and reuniting with nature will shield them from the worst of the downfall and offer a glimmer of hope for a sustainable future. Those that hide from the coming apocalypse will laugh exuberantly, embrace innocence and irresponsibility, in the belief that the value and meaning of their lives, the *squandering* of existence, the survival of the species is not in the balance!

Nietzsche's political philosophy was always illustrated by a revolving cast of characters. It is *apropos* that each of the contemporary character-types discussed, the fascist, the Sisyphean, and the hermit, are commonly associated with Nietzsche's political thought. These archetypes eternally recur in different *milieus*. We might also recall, by way of conclusion, the prophetic ending of and motley crew inhabiting Nietzsche's earliest essay "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense." The man of action binds himself to reason so as to not be swept away by his passions. The man of science builds his hut next to the towers of science as a bulwark against frightful powers. The scientist, equated with modern life, are conscious and aware of the world, diagnosing its patterns, but are no more woke or satisfied than those overcome by their fantasies. The intuitive man, associated with an ancient way of life, is filled with vigor, happiness, but also suffering. The rational man is indifferent and stoical. Nietzsche concluded his essay with the enigmatic parable: "When a real storm cloud thunders above him, he [the rational, stoic man] wraps himself in his cloak, and with slow steps he walks from beneath it" ("On Truth and Lying": 46). A storm is blowing from paradise, there

are no angels to witness, no Gods to save us, no cloaks to cover us, or paths where we might

escape the coming catastrophe.

There is a Hand to turn the time
Though thy Glass today be run
-Thomas Pynchon, <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>

4. FOUCAULT: CRITICAL THEORY OF THE POLICE IN A NEOLIBERAL AGE[28]

> *Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order.*
> – Michel Foucault, <u>Archeology of Knowledge</u>

Michel Foucault's political philosophy is the focal nexus constituting a critical literature on the police. The purpose of this article is to provide a broad overview of Foucault's scattered writings on the police. I conclude that Foucault's appraisal of the police is evidence of a 'splintering-effect' in his modalities of power. The consequence of this is twofold: to reject the generalization of Foucault's project as a succession of competing paradigms demonstrating continuous epochal shifts in power (sovereignty, discipline, biopower); and, to resist the impulse to criticize police one-dimensionally or appropriate Foucault as a cure-all for understanding modern police.

The structure of this chapter consists of four parts. First, the police are an underappreciated component of Foucault's history of the prison. In *Discipline and Punish* (published in French in 1975) the police are a state institution isomorphic with the prison, both employing disciplinary techniques to control a free population and part of a carceral continuum. Second, in his 1977–1978 *Collège de France* lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault unearths a "secret history of the police" where greater attention is paid to public health, social welfare and regulating the marketplace than investigating and arresting

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criminals. The problem is that these techniques are associated with biopower, the modern

paradigm of power, but are discernible in an age of sovereignty that precedes the disciplinary

age. Third, to resolve this apparent contradiction, I propose a nominalist reading that conflates

Foucault's divergent paradigms of power. The result is a more multifaceted history and a

ubiquitous mode of power with diverse and precise techniques. Fourth, bringing Foucault's

history of the police to the present, I contend that there are both strengths and weaknesses in

Foucault's theory when applied to modern police power. Taking note of the expansive

literature by Foucauldians on the police, I aim to identify the most productive paths forward

for charting a critical theory of the police in the neoliberal age.

Discipline and Control

In a late essay, 'The Subject and Power' (1982), Michel Foucault provides a clue that

is instrumental for a new reading of his earlier publication *Discipline and Punish*.

> [A new economy of power relations] consists in taking the forms of resistance
> against different forms of power as a *starting point* [my emphasis]. To use
> another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so
> as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of
> application and the methods used... For example, to find out what our society
> means by... 'legality' in the field of illegality (Foucault 2000: 329).

Discipline and Punish distinguishes changes in punishment between the eighteenth and the

nineteenth century. The transition from sovereign power to disciplinary power is illustrated in

the figure of the criminal, who is first tortured upon the scaffold and later confined in the

prison. The "power relations, positional locations, points of application, and methods of use"

assembled against the criminal are not reduced to the prison institution; disciplinary techniques

are "de-institutionalized" and dispersed throughout the social body (Foucault 1977: 211). The

prison is a system of control administered by the State, but disciplinary techniques are analogous to measures adopted by other state institutions (the military) and non-State organizations (industrial factories): that is, the constant surveillance of an enclosed territory and the incessant normalization of a productive population.

Taking seriously Foucault's methodological observations in "The Subject and Power", we can read *Discipline and Punish* as a history of the police: by analyzing the punishment of illegality in prisons, we can understand the management of legality by the police. Foucault asks that we understand the forms of power organized against the criminal from the bottom up. By understanding the struggle of the prisoner, we can better understand our own struggles. By understanding the forms of power within the prison, we can better understand the forms of power evident throughout society. Foucault's history of the prison provides a grid in which to understand the everyday policing of the public.

This reading of *Discipline and Punish* can be justified through two separate accounts. First, the police institution and prison institution are correlated; together they form a state-administered "police–prison system". Prisons and the police coalesce, comprising a conjoined network, creating, both inside and outside the walls of the prison, a "carceral society" (ibid.: 298–306). Second, the Panopticon is a technique of control identifiable in diverse institutions and mobilized pervasively throughout society. The police are a state institution essentially coupled with the prison and one that directly transports disciplinary techniques upon society as a whole.

The prison is not merely a building. It is a field of multiple forces: organizing space, controlling actions and bodies, watching and analyzing its population. The prison serves a larger social function. It is a legal annex and a compound of police intervention. The prison

normalizes what has been deemed abnormal, acting as both an educating and moralizing power. The criminal becomes a model in which to distinguish delinquent-abnormality in the larger population. The prison practices tactics of social and corporeal control (generalized by what Foucault calls the creation of docile bodies), and utilizes this knowledge to foster a docile society.

Foucault resolves these strategies and functions into a social organization of illegalities. He calls this the "police–prison system". "Prison and police form a twin mechanism. ... This [manipulable] delinquency, with its specificity, is a result of the system; but it also becomes a part and instrument of it. So that one should speak of an ensemble whose three terms (police–prison–delinquency) support one another and form a circuit that is never interrupted" (ibid.: 282). The prison building, its incessant control of an enclosed space, acts in conjunction with the police, to control, unrestricted and free, public space. The prison is an institution of the police. It serves to house, punish, and discipline criminals. This is a police action.

The prisoner, once released, stands little chance of employment, faces discrimination in finding a residence, becomes the target of new systems of control (e.g., probation), and likely returns to a life of crime. No longer a prisoner, the delinquent becomes an object of the police. "Delinquency, with the secret agents that it procures, but also with the generalized policing that it authorizes, constitutes a means of perpetual surveillance of the population: an apparatus that makes it possible to supervise, through the delinquents themselves, the whole social field" (ibid.: 281). The police exploit the ex-prisoner to participate in a larger programme of social surveillance; recidivism being anticipated, the police employ ex-convicts as spies and informants. Foucault's history of the police details a reliance upon a "sub-police" comprised of ex-convicts, prostitutes, neighborhood informers, *agent provocateurs*, partisan infiltrators

and hired thugs (ibid.: 280). The figure Eugène François Vidocq, a convict who became a police captain of some renown, signifies the complete erasure of any separation between the legal order and the criminal underworld. Illegality and the police were thereafter fully complicit; delinquency was invested with official powers (ibid.: 283). The prison cannot exist in isolation; the prison exists as the product of a relationship between the State and Civil Society. The prison and police form equal terms of a dyad; "they support one another and form a circuit".

The chapter "Panopticism", in *Discipline and Punish*, begins with quarantine measures taken, in the seventeenth century, as a response to the plague. It concludes with the provocative line: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (ibid.: 228).

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon was never intended to be solely an architectural blueprint for a prison, but was, from the outset, a plan for all types of governmental institutions. In *Panopticon; or Inspection House* (1787), he entitled his design an: "idea of a new principle of construction... applicable to any sort of establishment: Prisons, Houses of industry, Workhouses, Poor Houses, Manufactories, Madhouses, Lazarettos, Hospitals, and Schools" (Bentham 1995: 29). As a model for managing and controlling populations, Bentham's Panopticon structures and governs *all* of society. Foucault substantiates this expansive purview throughout his entire oeuvre; in his 1978–1979 *Collège de France* lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault asserts: "Bentham will propose that the Panopticon should be the formula for the whole of government, saying that the Panopticon is the very formula of liberal government' (Foucault 2008: 67). Years earlier, in his Rio di Janeiro lectures 'Truth and Juridical Forms' (1973), Foucault declared:

> Panopticism is one of the characteristic traits of our society. It's a type of power that is applied to individuals in the form of continuous individual supervision, in the form of control, punishment, and compensation, and in the form of correction, that is, the molding and transformation of individuals in terms of certain norms. This threefold aspect of panopticism – surveillance, control, correction – seems to be a fundamental and characteristic dimension of the power relations that exist in our society... Today we live in a society programmed basically by Bentham, a panoptic society, a society where panopticism reigns (Foucault 2000: 70).

Surveillance and control are mobilized onto the whole social field. All of society works like a prison, everyone is under surveillance, constantly being disciplined according to a bourgeoning liberalism. "The prison is isomorphic with all of this ... prison is not unlike what happens every day" (ibid.: 85).

The Panopticon is most commonly aligned with factories, schools, military barracks and hospitals. This is evidence of Foucault's desire to "cut off the head of the King" in political analysis (Foucault 1978: 89; 1980: 121). Foucault seeks to undermine the explanatory sway of state power in political philosophy by identifying disciplinary techniques "swarming freely" throughout the social body (Foucault 1977: 211). However, the "de-institutionalized" and diffuse nature of disciplinary power is juxtaposed with the "state-control of the mechanisms of discipline" (ibid.: 213). The Australian sociologist Mitchell Dean, in his early work on Foucault, fairly wonders: "How is it possible that his headless body often behaves as if it indeed has a head?" (Dean 1994: 156).

The police are *the* state institution controlling disciplinary mechanics. "The organization of the police apparatus in the eighteenth century sanctioned a generalization of the disciplines that became co-extensive with the state itself" (ibid.: 215). Discipline spreads throughout the whole social body, including non-state institutions acting as proxy-disciplinary or self-disciplining institutions, but the State is neither passive nor idle, actively administering

and regulating. The police institution breaks through a blockade, where discipline is relegated to enclosed institutions, freeing the concept to be used as a functional mechanism appropriate for all of society. Discipline, in the hands of the police, "improve[s] the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come... one of a generalized surveillance... the formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society" (ibid.: 209). The police are the exemplar institution indicative of a "disciplinary generalization" (ibid.), by "disciplining the non-disciplinary spaces" (ibid.: 215). Modern liberal society, a panoptic and disciplinary society, is governed by a heavy-handed police-state.

Panopticism is ideally suited for the police. Requiring a functional mechanism of control, the Panopticon is applied as a vast *policing* schema, carrying out a 'generalized surveillance' upon the whole social field.

> [T]his power had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible. It had to be like a faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere (ibid.: 214).

The police are characterized by their surveillance of the civil population. They are empowered to see everything; nothing should be too small or inconsequential enough to escape their gaze. This being an impossible endeavor, Foucault notes that police surveillance becomes a "double-entry system" (ibid.: 214). The infamous *lettres de cachet*, publicly derided as proof of arbitrary absolutism, were demanded by family members, neighbors, nobles, and parish priests. Society colludes, effectively policing itself. Police, lacking a single tower which can oversee everything, relies upon a self-disciplining society, a thousand dutiful eyes, delinquents and citizens alike, "fill[ing] the gaps, link[ing] them together" (ibid.: 215), diffusing surveillance

throughout the social field. Liberal *policing* entails circular reinforcement through a network of perpetual and mutual surveillance. Foucault aggressively concludes: "We are... in the panoptic machine" (ibid.: 217).

In *Discipline and Punish*, the police are more closely aligned with Fichte than Hegel. Fichte's passport police, a proleptic foretelling of a budding totalitarian security-state, arrange the constant and continuous regulation of peoples and movements by means of identifying papers, and is diametrically opposed to the welfare-state patrolled by Hegel's *Polizei*. Grégoire Chamayou is mistaken when he claims that: "I think that this type of technology of power [Fichte's passport police] is markedly different than the one described by Foucault under the name of Panopticism" (Chamayou 2013). Foucault's history of the prison is isomorphic with the control of society by the police. The micro-physics organizing disciplinary power are four-fold: hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment, and classification. Hierarchical surveillance receives the most attention, because of its ominous omnipresence and normalizing affect; however, the police also register, assess, and classify (e.g., mandating identifying papers and controlling points of access; assembling easily attainable historical records), constituting a generalized and totalizing surveillance apparatus, a polyvalent system of dynamic control. Passports, a skeleton key providing access to various control points, are cohesively integrated into the logic of panopticism.[29] Foucault claims, "a surveillance that was once *de jure* and which is today *de facto*; the police record that has taken the place of the convict's passport" (Foucault 1977: 272).

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[29] While Foucault does not directly address Fichte's passport police, just tangentially, he does note that Jacques François Guillauté's "*le serre-papiers*", a policing paper-machine, a French equivalent and precursor to Fichte's theory, is the "great disciplinary dream behind police" (Foucault 2007: 341).

It is a truism that: "Today we live in a society ... where panopticism reigns". The police are the archetypal panoptic institution evident in everyday, free life. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, a history of the prison that tangentially founds a critical theory of the police, bleakly pronounces that modern configurations of power allow nothing to escape and are at work everywhere.

The Secret History of Biopower

Foucault's project is complicated by its conceptual fragmentation after *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's convoluted histories of sexuality herald a new paradigm: biopower. However, in the 1977–1978 *Collège de France* lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, presented after the publication of *History of Sexuality v.1* (published in French 1976), Foucault is already experimenting with rivalling concepts: first, and somewhat undeveloped, security apparatuses; second, and accompanied by much fanfare, Governmentality. This creates methodological problems in interpreting Foucault's analysis of power and its historical chronology. The police are one state institution that undergoes a 'splintering-effect' in Foucault's later work.

Foucault's use of the term 'police' is pervasive. Foucault's first reference is in *History of Madness* (published in French in 1961) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (published in French 1963), both written years before his prison publication.[30] "The Birth of Social Medicine"

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[30] In *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault already unveils the odd relationship between the police and its non-criminal functions. Foucault details how the rise of epidemics results in the need for a national "medical police" (Foucault 1973: 25–26). In *History of Madness*, the Great Confinement authorizes the police to arrest abnormal individuals. This should reinforce the point in question: the fragmentation of the police after *Discipline and Punish* is not accidental or ancillary to Foucault's published corpus, but is clearly entwined in Foucault's analytics of power relations and its constantly changing historical functions.

(1976) and "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century" (1974) depict a medical police, the *Medizinischepolizei* (Foucault 2000: 94–5, 140–2). In "Space, Knowledge, Power" (1982), Foucault speaks of police as the result of urbanization (ibid.: 350–2). In two of his late essays "*Omnes et Singulatim*: Towards a Critique of Political Reason" (1979) and "The Political Technology of Individuals" (1982), Foucault separates the concept of 'the police' into three modes: (a) as a model for a political utopia via Louis Turquet de Mayerne in 1611, (b) as a political programme or practice, from Nicholas Delamare's 1705 *Treatise of the Police* and (c) as an academic discipline, the German *Polizeiwissenschaft*, provided by Gottlob von Justi's 1756 *Elements of Police* (ibid.: 317–23, 410–15). In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault speaks extensively of the grain police, a monolithic market mechanism coextensive with the rise of commerce (Foucault 2007: 53, 94). Finally, he heralds a Police-State, *Polizeistaat*, which is hyper-administrative (ibid.: 318–19). One cannot help but notice the new vocabulary of biopower: police deal with the circulation of populations and capital, with health, disease and inoculation campaigns, but they also supervise life and happiness in general (ibid.: 325). In an illuminating line, Foucault says the police deal with living, and "more than just living" (ibid.: 326). Foucault identifies the police as a security apparatus (ibid.: 343–4, 353–4). He provocatively calls the police a permanent *coup d'état*, also an instantiation of the *raison d'état*, and finally, as one mode of his new schema 'Governmentality' (ibid.: 339–40). The police are an extension of the state, but also autonomous, exceeding state-control. Foucault claims that the term 'police' has vastly different definitions from the sixteenth century, to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, finally, resulting in little semblance to our modern use of the "simple police" (ibid.: 312–14). Foucault points to Nicholas Delamare's *Treaty of the*

Police as fixing eleven different functions of the early French police, but the extent of their control is indefinite.

Foucault unearths a "secret history of the police". Foucault's research assistant, Pasquale Pasquino, discovered a bibliography that lists more than 4,000 titles, from 1520 to 1850, under the headings 'science of police in the broad sense' and 'science of police in the strict sense' (Pasquino 1991: 48). Foucault endeavors to expose the clandestine history of police-science.

> The second great technological assemblage... is what at the time was called 'police', which it must be understood has very little, no more than one or two elements, in common with what we should call police from the end of the eighteenth century. In other words, from the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, the word 'police' had a completely different meaning from the one it has today.
>
> First, of course, some remarks on the meaning of the word. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the word 'police' is already frequently used to designate a number of things. In the first place, one calls 'police', quite simply, a form of community or association governed by a public authority; a sort of human society when something like police power or public authority is exercised over it... The use of the word 'police' in this sense will last practically until the beginning of the seventeenth century. Second, still in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, one also calls 'police' precisely the set of actions that direct these communities under public authority. Thus you find the almost traditional expression 'police and regiment', 'regiment' used in the sense of a way of directing, governing, and which is associated with 'police'. Finally, there is the third sense of the word 'police', which is quite simply the result, the positive and valued result of a good government. These are broadly the three somewhat traditional meanings that we come across up to the sixteenth century.
>
> From the seventeenth century it seems to me that the word 'police' begins to take on a profoundly different meaning... From the seventeenth century 'police' begins to refer to the set of means by which the state's forces can be increased while preserving the state in good order. In other words, police will be the calculation and technique that will make it possible to establish a mobile, yet stable and controllable relationship between the state's internal order and the development of its forces (Foucault 2007: 312–13).

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault inaugurates a new schema: Governmentality. Governmentality is not reducible to the State. A plethora of divergent

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practices collide that might or might not have a vestige in the state form: the management of conduct by Hebrew pastors, as it was incorporated into the Roman Church and early European politics, being the most noticeable example. Governmentality is the art of governing; it is a calculus of negotiating conduct. The police are one of two institutions in this new schema of Governmentality.[31] The police are the internal array of forces intended to modulate the conduct of domestic populations. Within this model, the police employ entirely different strategies related to public health, economic circulation, and population management.

Foucault begins with the creation of the market-town and the rise of urban planning. Market relations generate fresh challenges that confound the State. The police are a necessary consequence of this development. "These are the institutions prior to the police. The town and the road, the market, and the road network feeding the market... Police, then, as a condition of existence of urban existence" (ibid.: 336). With the rise of highly populated cities and bustling markets, the police necessarily organize these new forms of social life.

> 'To police', 'to urbanize': to police and to urbanize is the same thing ... Police and commerce, police and urban development, and police and the development of all the activities of the market in the broad sense, constitute an essential unity ... [T]he market town became the model of state intervention in men's lives. I think this is the fundamental fact of the seventeenth century, at any rate the fundamental fact characterizing the birth of police in the seventeenth century (ibid.: 337–338).

The police are coextensive with the rise of mercantilism, the market town, and, eventually, liberalism and industrial capitalism.

Foucault focuses upon the Parisian grain trade. The grain trade is strictly regulated in early mercantilism. The police control grain production, calculating both supply and demand,

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[31] The other being European equilibrium, or the military-diplomatic apparatus. The police are vital in helping to establish European equilibrium; to appease neighboring States, statistics were necessary to count the population forces: "Police makes statistics necessary, but police also makes statistics possible... Police and statistics mutually condition each other" (Foucault 2007: 315).

enforcing regulations, including price controls and production limits/quotas, to guard against both famine and scarcity. The police are a market mechanism. More specifically, as an extension of the State, it is an apparatus endowed to watch, record, control, and regulate the legal activities of the market. Foucault correlates the police with the emerging governmental rationality: political economy. This is an early modality of what Foucault calls biopower.[32]

It is in these supplementary comments that Foucault unveils the inherent connection between biopower and the economic conditions that give rise to a shift in policy. What is often understood as the politics of sexuality and health, the anatomical manipulation of individual bodies and administration of large populations, is manifested in economic theory, starting with mercantilism and liberalism, but also including modern-day neoliberalism. Biopower, identified with Nazi eugenics in *The History of Sexuality v. 1*, is correlated, in the 1977–1978 and 1978–1979 *Collège de France* lectures, with debates amongst political economists and the eventual rise of capitalism.

Police are responsible for quarantine programmes, the regulation of grain production and statistical accounting of population. This is an important shift in Foucault's analysis: the police are not a punishing mechanism attempting to create docile citizens, but a liberal mechanism designed to protect against health threats, to manage and not to control populations, and to foster economic expansion. Foucault summarizes: "The good use of the state's forces, this is the object of police" (ibid.: 314). Here, Foucault's police are more like Hegel's than

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[32] Bernard Harcourt describes Foucault's analysis of the Parisian *police des grains* as a characteristic representation of disciplinary power (Harcourt 2012a: 46). Foucault, at times, lends himself to this reading, saying: "[T]he disciplinary police of grain... isolates, it concentrates, it encloses, it is protectionist" (Foucault 2007: 45). Here, discipline exists prior to the revolutionary fissure and the creation of the prison; the Parisian market is an enclosed space of disciplining forces, nothing is either too small or inconsequential enough to escape regulation. I designate the *police des grains* as biopolitical, pointing out its purported emphasis on non-criminal activities, such as price controls and consumer protections, but this should not be read as discounting or overlooking the intensity and extent of its regulatory minutiae.

Fichte's: a liberal mechanism paradoxically predating the rise of liberalism. Authorized to intervene into the market, to moderate its free exercise, the police are responsible for fostering the everyday welfare of the citizenry.[33]

The description of the police by Foucault during the *Ancien Régime* is that of a monstrous administrative bureaucracy whose functions are indefinite. Based upon pressures resulting from rapid industrialization and the persuasive efforts of *physiocrats*, the biopolitical police breaks up towards the end of the French Monarchy.

> You can see how that great over-regulatory police I have been talking about breaks up... On the one hand will be a whole series of mechanisms that fall within the province of the economy and the management of the population with the function of increasing the forces of the state. Then, on the other hand there will be an apparatus or instruments for ensuring the prevention or repression of disorder, irregularity, illegality, and delinquency... The elimination of disorder will be the function of the police. As a result, the notion of police is entirely overturned, marginalized, and takes on the purely negative meaning familiar to us (ibid.: 353–4).

Foucault argues that this "secret history of the police", exemplified by its unlimited scope of action, vanished from our colloquial lexicon. The police institution fragments. This fragmentation scatters the auxiliary practices of the police into new governmental institutions that take up the problems of population, health, and the market in isolation from that of law and order. No longer would the police be charged with economic regulation, but would instead retain, as their foremost object, their right to enforce the law. Thereby, the police morphs into the "simple police", the state institution associated with truncheons, billy clubs and ever-present surveillance technologies. The disciplinary "police–prison system" comes into effect.

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[33] Hegel provides a robust defense of Cameralism (the German equivalent of Mercantilism), advocating the responsibility of the State to provide for the general welfare of Civil Society. The German *polizei*, before the Napoleonic Wars, was a self-regulated state institution delegated an infinite array of tasks. "While *Polizei* constituted a program of total regulation it was at the same time nonjuridical, seeking not to adjudicate the legality of completed actions but rather attempting to define the conditions of good order and public safety in advance. The future becomes calculable in terms of a potentially exhaustive set of situations whose outcomes can be weighed and regulated... This program was then in effect self-sustaining or self-regulating' (Tribe 1984).

History of the Present

The historical contradiction is immediately apparent. How is it that Foucault's description of the police, in a *pre*-disciplinary political configuration, is increasingly linked with the strategies of biopower, supposedly a modern type of power? In *History of Sexuality v.1*, Foucault claims that the modern epoch is the age of biopower (contemporaneous with both Freud and National Socialism), but in his descriptions of the police, the biopolitical elements are emphasized in a pre-disciplinary society. Throughout the *Ancien Régime*, the police are an administrative bureaucracy that manages all types of governmental concerns, from market regulations to population circulation. It is only after the administrative-police fragment, that our modern conception of the "simple police" is developed. In Foucault's history of the police, disciplinary techniques come *after* those of biopower. The reign of the Monarchial Leviathan empowers the police to play a biopolitical function; the emergence of liberalism reduces the scope of the police to mere law enforcement. How do we rationalize this anachronism? Does this undermine the traditional depiction of Foucault's analysis of power as competing and evolving paradigms?

After the neat and tidy historical analysis of *Discipline and Punish*, there is a hodgepodge of rival techniques and overarching paradigms of power: discipline, biopower, security apparatuses and Governmentality. Foucault wishes explicitly to establish his paradigms of power historically, but they appear to overlap. Foucault's histories of sexuality and his lecture courses jump around in time, from the *Ancien Régime* to contemporary society, then all the way back to Antiquity. The effect is a 'splintering' of Foucault's historical narrative

and his analyses of power. We are at an impasse. How can we resolve Foucault's elaborate histories with his philosophical schemas of power?

The traditional interpretation of Foucault describes the transitions from sovereignty to discipline to biopower as evidence of epistemological breaks in the evolution of political power.[34] Methodologically, Foucault's nominalism is a serious complication to such piecemeal interpretations. The historical moments that Foucault concentrates upon, no matter how proximate in time, cannot be the momentum for any grand Hegelian narratives. The practices of the police during the French Monarchy are surely divergent from that of twenty-first-century American police, just as the modern-day American police are different from any other political system, past or present.[35] Historical moments and nation-states are always-already different from all other types. Foucault's numerous concepts, whether discipline or biopower, the analysis of pastoral power or neoliberal economic theory, are not easily conflated. Biopower is surely evident in ancient Greek and Roman politics, just as the problems of sovereignty and the rule of law, hospitals and asylums, surveillance and discipline, are by no means diminished in our own.

Robert Darnton's history of police inspector Joseph d'Hémery, in "A Police inspector sorts his files: The anatomy of the republic of letters", provides a historical account of the French police before the revolutionary fissure. Joseph d'Hémery was the police officer in charge of the Republic of Letters during the *Ancien Régime*. He operated in Paris, but managed police operations throughout all of France. He was responsible for the surveillance of over 500

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[34] The traditional interpretation describes the transition from sovereign power to disciplinary power to biopower as representative of "paradigm shifts" in political power and the social order. Thus, Foucault's publications are delineated by three periods, a beginning, a middle and a later period, all with corresponding epistemological breaks in subject matter: structuralism, power, sexuality, and aesthetics (Han 2002). Recent attempts have been made to "get beyond" these outmoded and incongruent narratives (Nealon 2007; Paras 2006).

[35] For a historical account of nineteenth-century American police through a Foucauldian lens, refer to Websdale (1991).

philosophes during the years 1748–1753, including Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. His job was largely administrative. Darnton remarks: "d'Hémery represents an early phase in the evolution of the bureaucrat" (Darnton 1984: 160).

Darnton's primary focus is d'Hémery's detailed reports and vast statistical charts. d'Hémery was in charge of a population: namely that of French enlightenment philosophers. His job was biopolitical; he compiled biological information and organized vast statistical flow charts analyzing each philosopher in comparison with the entire population of philosophers. He was able to calculate the percentages of writers from noble birth versus those from the *Third Estate* and proves that most philosophers were young to middle-aged males from largely urban areas.

d'Hémery's job description was not limited to biopolitical techniques. He was responsible for law enforcement. At times, philosophers overstepped what was legally permitted. Darnton details one example of a sting (ibid.: 180), he was also responsible for the arrest of Diderot, but most of the philosophers who d'Hémery had files on were never arrested. Therefore, we can presume that his job was not entirely based upon enforcing law. Instead, we have a mass surveillance campaign against the French literati. Darnton points to evidence that d'Hémery effortlessly advertised his surveillance: each philosopher knew he must toe the line, because his books were being read, his publishing houses and salons were being infiltrated, and he was regularly being followed here and there.

Joseph d'Hémery also had an autonomous function: he had to analyze independently how subversive each writer was. In fact, his *most important* job was to calculate *risk*: namely the danger of each philosopher's philosophy. Darnton points out that each file had its own vocabulary of risk: from suspicious to bad to dangerous (ibid.: 177). d'Hémery had to *insure*

the security of the state by means of an Orwellian thought-police. This was a customary practice at the time; Hegel and Fichte, to name only two examples, went to great lengths to appease the police censors.

Darnton's history of the *philosophe*-policeman is an example of how the French police, during the *Ancien Régime*, truly operated. There is every reason to believe that the profile of d'Hémery validates Foucault's history of the police as a vast administrative apparatus that incorporated biopolitical strategies. This early portrait of the police allows us to conceive of their organization as operating by numerous and various political strategies: from biopower, to disciplinary techniques, to security and insurance analysis, and even the instantiation of an ideological thought-police.

Foucault deserves credit for unearthing a "secret history of the police". This is one of his focal contributions to the contemporary critical literature on the police. Police, before the eighteenth century, held expansive powers, incongruous when compared to their modern forbearers. Police-science, at the time, gave more prominence to welfare than tactics of control. However, it would be incorrect to presume that the monarchical police were benign. In his *Collège de France* lectures, Foucault scoffs at the over-regulatory nature of the police; in "Omnes et Singulatim" he admonishes them as "totalitarian" (Foucault 2000: 319). Police, more so than today, had no limits to their purview and no restrictions on their intrusion. This leads Agamben, by way of Foucault, to connect Gottlob von Justi's *Polizei*, which invasively encroaches upon the private lives of all citizens, with the Nazi *Schutzstaffel* (Agamben 1998: 147). Moreover, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault admits that the eighteenth-century police "had long been regarded... as the most direct expression of royal absolutism" (Foucault 1977: 213). The storming of the Bastille was, in part, a symbolic strike against the excesses of the

Monarchial security-state. In spite of Foucault's "secret history", it must be remembered that the Age of the Republic of Letters was a time in which letters were habitually being intercepted and read by police forces across the continent.

The interpretation whereby sovereignty, discipline and biopower are competing paradigms demonstrating continuous epochal shifts in power is facile. This simplistic account of both history and power diminishes Foucault's project into that of an orderly linear progression, whereas the inverse is true: Foucault's critical genealogy endeavors to intensify complexity (Nealon 2007). Discipline and biopower have much in common. Prisons were, from the onset, congruent with hospitals, factories, and schools. Penal techniques subjugate bodies and control populations. Stuart Elden argues that the quarantine measures taken to prevent the spread of the plague are actually a more appropriate model for the police than the Panopticon (Elden 2003). Biopower, being an undeveloped project, incomplete at the time of Foucault's death, is an insufficient categorization of modern power, and Derrida is right to argue that "'bio-power' itself is not new" (Derrida 2009: 330). Foucault's most prominent association of biopower with modernity, the ideology of biological and racial superiority by the Third Reich, also resulted in the wholesale conversion of prisons into death camps (Agamben 1998: 166–80). If, following Steven Lukes' (1974) study of power, Foucault marshals a fourth face of power, neither coercive, preventive nor persuasive, but socially constitutive and constructive (Digeser 1992), then it is altogether unclear how an opposition between discipline and biopower advances a new theory of power (Lemke 2012: 9–10, 88–91). Foucault's critical genealogy assumes: "Let's suppose that universals don't exist" (Foucault 2008: 3); Foucault's historical nominalism is buttressed by a theoretical nominalism.

Discipline and biopower are not competing paradigms. They do not embody the spirit of any age. They are best understood as political technologies rather than historical epochs.

Foucault enhances his historical narratives of power with the establishment of a new model: Governmentality. Governmentality allows Foucault to move beyond a model of politics as a vast war of multiple asymmetrical forces engaged in diverse techniques of control and evasion, in exchange for a model of technocratic mastery (Neocleous 2014: 12; Protevi 2010). Governmentality synthesizes Foucault's historical-political philosophy into a dominant model of explanation (May 2012).

> So we should not see things as the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a society of discipline, and then of a society of discipline by a society, say, of government. In fact, we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism (Foucault 2007: 107–8).

Governmentality coalesces all of Foucault's divergent masks of power. An apparatus, mobilized by political calculation and administered institutionally, such as the police, can be recalibrated indefinitely: the police are the 'medical gaze' of the hospital, the police put to work techniques of surveillance and normalization, but moreover, and in tandem, the police watch over populations and the market. The police are a *fragmentary* concept that shifts seamlessly between the elements of sovereignty and justice, discipline and surveillance, and the control of populations, health, and capital.

Governmentality is not a competing paradigm. It likewise does not embody the spirit of any age. Rather, as a type of rationale coextensive with governmental administration, it is best understood as a schema that incorporates all of Foucault's political technologies and their particular applications of power.

Post-Foucauldians in a Neoliberal Age

In localizing the struggle of the madman, the hospital patient and the prisoner, Foucault reveals a vast power mechanism, called the police, which govern these anomalies in the public sphere. This description of the police as an all-pervasive surveillance mechanism in *Discipline and Punish* risks exaggeration, what Foucault calls "state phobia" (Foucault 2008: 75). One of Foucault's contemporaries, Jacques Derrida, in his 1989 lecture "The Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority" (Derrida 2002), interweaves the adjective "panoptic" to describe the police as a ghostly presence; the police, making use of advances in surveillance technology, are *everywhere*, especially where they are visibly absent. Derrida describes the police in an entirely negative light, fundamentally oppressive and violent. This inflationary critique ignores the comprehensive stature of the police by describing the State as nothing more than a boogieman, thereby jeopardizing critique in proposing a vacuous, superficial, and circular ontology. To understand modern police, we must recognize the use of disciplinary *and* biopolitical procedures. 'They are everywhere' and, at the same time, they must 'let happen'.

The Louisiana State University campus newspaper, *The Daily Reveille*, published on the front page of their newspaper the police motto: 'We are Everywhere!' in bold type (Duvernay 2009). The police are indeed everywhere! Video cameras monitor and record all movements on campus. They patrol in plain clothes. They do not just surveil campus, they boast of their pervasive omnipresence deliberately, so that students *know* that they are being watched while on campus. The extent of their ubiquity is presumed to be enough of a deterrent to thwart crime.

Contrasted with the official statements by the Louisiana State University police force that "We are Everywhere!", one semester later, in preparation for fall football games, the same police force promoted their role in fostering campus safety (Celica 2009). Here, the campus police are concerned with auxiliary interests in contradistinction to the disciplining of the student body or the surveillance of criminal behavior. Police are still everywhere, but directing traffic, standing-by as attendees enter the stadium, roaming the stadium to make sure everything is going according to plan. The police play a latent function. The police procedures are not limited to discipline and the enforcement of law; the protection of large population and capital expenditure is their primary focus.

This is not an isolated example. The operation of the campus police forces during football games is equally consistent with policing during Mardi Gras. The police are present everywhere, not to scrutinize the public, not even to enforce public intoxication laws, but to manage the circulation of mass populations. They must "let happen", voluntarily limiting and restraining their authority. The New Orleans Police Department care little about surveillance and normalization; they are focused on preventing emergencies and overseeing the free flow of commerce and people. The influx of a half million revelers represents a substantial risk, offset by sizeable profits. The police maintain a biopolitical function. The function of the police is not to control, but to successfully manage. This police function is evident everywhere, all the time, in police departments spanning the country. This is why you see the police patrolling highways, standing guard at airports, at sporting events, at banks, at hospitals and at a plethora of places that are not normally associated with crime.

Foucault deserves credit for linking up panopticism with a generalized policing of society. This is one of his focal contributions to the contemporary critical literature on the

police. However, Foucault's disciplinary tool kit risks exaggeration. Ultimately, *any* one-dimensional analysis fails to account fully for modern police techniques; the foreboding nature of disciplinary power just happens to be particularly prone to embellishment. Steve Herbert's analysis of the Los Angeles Police Department concludes that:

> Nonetheless, the significance of such scenarios can easily be overstated, and can help obscure the more complex, limited and contradictory nature of the disciplinary network. While the metaphor of the Panopticon is seductive, and while it is tempting to see its eye materialized as the nightsun of an LAPD helicopter, it remains necessary to recognize how the reach of the police is hardly limitless... Thus, it is necessary to keep the cautionary Foucault in mind when analyzing the police, the Foucault who acknowledged the importance of resistance, incompleteness and contradiction (Herbert 1996: 56).

A fully developed account of modern police power merits a wide-ranging breakdown of multiple and various techniques at work. Modern police forces still organize themselves as a disciplinary apparatus that attempts to "keep watch everywhere", normalizing the public into acting *as if* they are being watched endlessly, but they *also* utilize biopolitical techniques to manage large circulating populations, at times, limiting their own intervening power so as to foster life and commerce.

Foucault addresses the modern-day police in his study of neoliberalism, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. What is new about neoliberalism is that it undertakes a fashioning of political subjects as *homo economicus*: citizen entrepreneurs or self-made economic subjects entirely responsible for obtaining returns on their human capital (Read 2009). Neoliberalism claims to produce un-alienated economic subjects, fully accountable for the risks and rewards of their decisions.

At the tail end of his lecture course, in the historical period closest to our own, Foucault cites a policy-brief on drug enforcement by Gary Becker. Neoliberals contend that public policy should be determined economically; Becker demonstrates how economic rationality

underscores public policy by examining illegal drug markets. According to Becker, drug dealers accept the risk of crime and imprisonment as entrepreneurs; however, as rational self-interested economic subjects, they also stand to make extraordinary profits. From this, Andrew Dilts reasons that neoliberalism expunges the profile of the delinquent, exchanging it for *homo economicus*, by refusing to dehumanize criminal offenders: "The neo-liberal approach, however, starts with *homo œconomicus* and refuses any slippage towards a pathologized criminal kind" (Dilts 2008: 83). Becker defends the legalization of narcotics. The market is a more efficient means of control than legal prohibition. By enabling extensive regulation, such as the setting of high prices for first-time users and low prices for perpetual addicts, drug addiction can be more effectively combated.

> So we need low prices for addicts and very high prices for non-addicts... From this stems a policy of law enforcement directed towards new and potential consumers, small dealers, and the small trade that takes place on street corners; a policy of law enforcement according to an economic rationality of market differentiated in terms of the elements I have referred to (Foucault 2008: 258).

Becker's neoliberal drug policy presumes to assuage drug use and addiction by the instantiation of a highly regulated market as a system of control. "[W]e must act on the market milieu in which the individual makes his supply of crime and encounters a positive or negative demand" (ibid.: 259). Foucault, by means of Becker, consequentially identifies a new model of the police in neoliberal economic theory: "[Police] is the means employed to limit the negative externalities of certain acts" (ibid.: 253). Ironically, neoliberalism reverts to the pre-disciplinary, biopolitical, model of the police: the State enacts strict and vast market regulations to control behavior, enabling and cultivating the wellbeing of its citizenry. Bernard Harcourt (correctly) criticizes the notion of a free market: "The eighteenth-century police regimen was far more free than we tend to characterize it today; by the same token, our modern free markets

– the Chicago Board of Trade, for example – are far more disciplined than we tend to admit" (Harcourt 2012a: 25).

Many scholars have argued that Foucault strategically endorses neoliberalism (Behrent 2009; Dean 2014; Harcourt 2012b). On the surface, the Hegelian welfare-state appears preferable to the Fichtean security-state; the disciplinary police, who are everywhere, appear more invasive and terrifying than the biopolitical police, who must let happen.[36] However, and in spite of his own words of warning, Foucault admits that there are plenty of reasons that validate a pervading sense of "state phobia". As one representative of the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons* (Prison Information Group), Foucault gave rare voice to his critical opinions on modern police power:

> None of us is sure to escape prison. Today less than ever. Police control over day- to-day life is tightening: in city streets and roads; over foreigners and young people; it is once more an offence to express opinions; anti-drug measures increase arbitrarily. We are kept under 'close observation'. They tell us that the system of justice is overwhelmed. We can see that. But what if it is the police that have overwhelmed it? They tell us that prisons are over-populated. But what if it was the population that was being over-imprisoned? Little information is published on prisons. It is one of the hidden regions of our social system, one of the dark zones of our life (quoted by Macey 1993: 258).

Liberal governmentality, by governing *less*, seeks to govern more effectively, and, thus, ends up governing *more*. So too, neoliberalism is *not* a gentle way of punishment or policing. Though his analysis is prescient, the neoliberal order gained power *only after* Foucault's death. In contradistinction to the sanguine assessment of drug enforcement by Gary Becker, the

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[36] "But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us" (Foucault 1972: 235). For a discussion of Foucault and welfare-state liberalism refer to Behrent (2010), Donzelot (1997) and Harcourt (2012b; 2013). However, any preference, or blind hope, for a benevolent welfare-police or community-based policing deserves fuller consideration and due caution.

Reagan and Thatcher administrations charted a different historical trajectory, demonstrating an enduring disjunction between neoliberal theory and praxis. Economic rationality is sheer cost-benefit analysis; because of this, public policy can be calculated any which way, both favorably and unfavorably, according to arbitrary approximations of value. The policing of black markets produces disproportionate negative externalities; however, Foucault ignores the positive incentives derived from the privatization of security apparatuses. Neoliberal- ism has synthesized the functions of the State with economic expansion. Reagan and Thatcher never relented in the surveillance and imprisonment of drug offenders, instead privatizing prisons and police, publicly subsidizing and fully employing a bourgeoning security-industry. The "police–prison system" has become a vast corporate endeavor. The modern American neoliberal police institution has become an entrepreneur. Security is big business.

Modern-day police have conducted a 2nd Great Confinement. In *History of Madness*, Foucault deduces that the exclusion of the insane was the pretext for a furtive enclosing of unproductive segments of the population, forcing beggars to sell their labor power or risk incarceration (Foucault 2006). In *Discipline and Punish*, the liberal, humanistic, justification of prisons is actually indicative of a deliberate campaign to subjugate the pauper class. The historical development of the prison is proof of systematic class dissymmetry; the law applies equally to all citizens, but is intentionally and selectively enforced upon the uneducated masses.

> For the observation that prison fails to eliminate crime, one should perhaps substitute the hypothesis that prison has succeeded extremely well in producing delinquency, a specific type, a politically or economically less dangerous – and, on occasion, usable – form of illegality; in producing delinquents, in an apparently marginal, but in fact centrally supervised milieu (Foucault 1977: 277).

The United States has drastically increased its prison population since the time of Foucault's death, from 1.8 million in 1980 to 6.5 million today (Wacquant 2009: 16, 113–50). This increase has nothing to do with a rise in crime, but rather Wars upon Drugs and/or Crime, coupled with decreases in social spending. '[T]he "invisible hand of the market" ... finds its ideological extension and institutional compliment in the "iron fist" of the penal state' (ibid.: 6). The modern neoliberal State tolerates and ignores the criminal transgressions of the rich and powerful, while over-policing the less-productive portions of the population. The militarization of the police is juxtaposed with the systematic racism evident in the mass policing and incarceration of minority populations, especially African-American and Hispanic communities (Rios 2006).[37] Corporate profits are prioritized over and above the everyday welfare of the citizenry; capitalism is here coupled with biopower, confirming a multifaceted and enmeshed malevolence. The over-imprisoning and over-policing of modern-day America is an intentional economic ordering of society; the fortification and perpetuation of a moneyed class, and the domination and control of the subproletariat.

Foucault's analysis of history and power is subtext for an interrogation of the present. Foucault established a critical project of the police for modern times. Foucault designed an operational tool kit for what such a project entails. Changes in the enforcement of legalities,

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[37] Mark Neocleous argues that Foucault's separation of police powers and war powers is a theoretical weakness (Neocleous 2014: 12). However, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault directly refers to police as a standby, or parallel, army (Foucault 1977: 280). The police are organized upon a military, thus disciplinary, model. Moreover, American neoliberalism has brought about increasing militarization of the police (evidence of what many call a military–prison–police–industrial complex: control and profit-motive united). Foucault does not disregard this, but the full significance and meaning of a militarized police exceeds the Foucauldian tool kit. "Police certainly see themselves [as] soldiers of a sort... Police are a group of armed, lower-echelon government administrators, trained in the scientific application of physical force to aid in the resolution of administrative problems. They are bureaucrats with guns, and whether they are guarding lost children, talking rowdy drunks out of bars, or supervising free concerts in the park, the one common feature of the kind of situation to which they're assigned is the possibility of having to impose "non-negotiated solutions backed up by the potential use of force" [quoting Egon Bittner]' (Graeber 2005).

from the age of sovereignty to the neoliberal order, expose dynamic systems of control (Deleuze 1992; Ericson and Haggerty 2000). The police are a concept that 'splinters' traditional interpretations of Foucault, rendering Foucault's own analysis insufficient and problematic. A nominalist account, which conflates Foucault's divergent paradigms of power, best exemplifies the erratic advance of history through multifarious modalities of control. The modern police institution utilizes a full arsenal of techniques, including legal exemptions, disciplinary tactics, normalization methods, biopolitical management and economic regulations to manifest a three-dimensional panorama of a modern phenomenon.

Foucault's political philosophy is the foundation of a critical theory of the police. The literature taking up Foucault's notion of the police is expansive and diverse, including notable philosophers, geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists. Mark Neocleous observes that: "Foucault is undoubtedly the thinker who had done the most to put a broad concept of 'police' back in the centre of political thinking" (Neocleous 2014: 11). However, he inversely claims that: "Foucauldians use the police concept so abstractly that it comes to look as though it is yet one more synonym for 'power,' 'discipline,' and 'governmentality'" (Neocleous 2000: ix). Harcourt, in his Foucauldian analysis of the Parisian market and the Chicago Board of Trade, admits: "although this project shares a methodological sensibility with Foucault, it breaks sharply from his analysis" (Harcourt 2012a: 46). Foucault should neither be employed for one-dimensional criticisms of the modern police nor as an analytical cure-all.

In *Disagreements*, Jacques Rancière caricatures all of state-reason as 'the Police', identified as a type of police logic. He identifies Foucault immediately as his precursor; however, Rancière turns Foucault's concept into something unrecognizable.

> I will use the word *police* or *policing* as noun and adjective in this broader sense that is also 'neutral', nonpejorative. I do not, however, identify the police with what is termed the 'state apparatus'... The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise... Policing is not so much the 'disciplining' of bodies as a rule governing their appearing (Rancière 1998: 29).

For Rancière police signifies power, whereas politics is resistance against police power. Thus, he claims: "Politics is specifically opposed to the police" (Rancière 2001). Rancière's police is a meaningless metaphysical notion, a signifier in an inane game of word play, only relevant for those who subscribe to Rancière's ontology or egalitarian ideology. Rancière's theory does not advance any greater understanding of modern political power or our capacity to resist it. Rancière's notion is totally divorced from Foucault's epistemological delineations and elaborate histories.

It is true that we can separate 'the police', its institutional form, from *policing*, understood as various techniques of control. "[P]olice and policing should not be identified with *the* police, and... one must stifle the impulse to equate police with men in uniforms. Policing is undertaken partly by the uniformed public police, but their actions are coordinated with agencies of policing situated throughout the state" (Neocleous 2000: xi, emphasis in original). The police are *the* science of governmental rationale. Governmentality is the knowledge of policing, the technocratic mastery of control. The police cannot be reduced to the State institution we are familiar with. Rather, we are policed in all sorts of ways, in all sorts of places, by people and institutions that are not authorized to enforce the law. Thus, we can identify policing throughout the social milieu: the surveillance and collection of bulk data by the National Security Agency, as well as by private intelligence firms such as Team Themis

and Stratfor (Ludlow 2013); high-technology human tracking systems (referred to as geospatial information systems) and the popularity of social networks (which induce a deluge of daily confessions, alongside archival tracking put to profitable uses) illuminates the rise of a generalized dataveillance (Dobson and Fisher 2007; Ericson and Haggerty 2006; Ewald 2011); the registration, assessment and classification of *homo economicus* into enumerated credit ratings (by private corporations such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's and the Fitch Group, but also including Experian, EquiFax and TransUnion) (Deleuze 1992); the self-regulatory mechanism which governs futures trading in state-sponsored private associations (Harcourt 2012a); the upsurge in diet regimens, local yoga clinics and fitness centers; the mapping of the human genome (Human Genome Project) and all manners of advanced biometric control of life (Rose 2006, 2008).[38] Neoliberalism subcontracts policing throughout the whole social field. We are in an age of self-policing: everywhere we are policing and policed, complicit in a circular surveillance of mutual reinforcement.[39] Police is a mode of conducting conduct; police deal with living, and more than just living. Is it surprising that the police resemble factories, schools, barracks, and hospitals, which all resemble the police?

Foucault's history of the police uncovers the complex transmutations of the police institution; his critical project categorizes techniques of control into multifarious modalities of power (ubiquitous, but also diverse and precise). However, he is unable to reassemble this

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[38] There is a cottage industry that sees panopticism everywhere, locating its functional mechanics in all the contrivances of everyday modern life. This is supplanted by a competing industry which argues that panopticism is altogether insufficient for depicting advances in technology and new methods of surveillance. We should excise all talk of "inverted panopticism" (Ewald 2011) or "societies of control" (Chamayou 2013; Deleuze 1992), which paradoxically always incorporate and surpass Foucault. Order and discipline are tantamount with management and control.

[39] If *omnes et singulatim*, everyone together and each individually, is the motto of liberalism, such that self-interest produces common good, then neoliberalism "is the radical displacement of the 'collective' with the 'individual [quoting Pierre Bourdieu]... it asserts the logic of narrow rational self-interest not in the service of solving collective-action problems... but only to serve the interests of those who are already powerful, already wealthy, and in control of both material and fictitious resources" (Dilts 2014: 56).

complexity into a coherent whole; Foucault fails to characterize what the police *are*, their essential *raison d'être*. What is constant in the police? What is invariable, persistent, and unceasing? Foucault's critical project is a failure if it is revealed to be nothing more than a hollow ontology of power. The police remain institutionalized, ebbing and flowing, transforming along with changes in politics and society. The police *are* the State. However, the police are also de-institutionalized; policing is dispersed throughout the social field, swarming freely, such that we are always-already policing ourselves and others. Foucault reveals that liberalism disguises its effects; state power is concealed by its bureaucratic structure, a law-administration continuum, divorced from but conditioned by the State, obscuring its effect. Police will not be ameliorated with better laws or more judicious officers; discretion and control are inherently linked up with the *policing* function. Indeed, the police are a cold-monster, exemplifying a spirit of opposition and control (Agamben 2014; Pasquino 1991). Any decapitation of the State results in the hegemonic sway of market-forces; one cold-monster exchanged for another. Foucault's sympathetic endorsement of neoliberalism, alongside his cautious reluctance to engage in "state phobia", is diametrically opposed to the critique of capitalism that propels his analysis in *History of Madness* and *Discipline and Punish*.[40] We cannot abide a normative nominal- ism when it comes to the police. The police act in service of the State, and the modern neoliberal State acts in service of capital. The best path forward for critical theories of modern police power is a ruthless criticism of

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[40] The comparison of different formats, publications and lecture courses, requires a constant determination of what remains economical, separating form from content. Foucault's *Collège de France* lectures expose a "secret history of the police" and correlate biopower with economic theory. However, Foucault's lectures are normatively neutral; the critical resolve evident in Foucault's publications is given significance that the lecture format lacks. Foucault's work has been reproached for its "monolithic relativism" (Taylor 1984) and a "normative one-dimensionality" (Fraser 1981); Foucault's normative nominalism is intentional, but also upset through a subliminal, but discernible, critique.

neoliberalism, its functional mechanics and its organizing principle.[41] Foucauldians have laid much of the groundwork for a greater understanding of the neoliberal age/order and have advanced ruthless criticisms of over-policing (Ericson and Haggerty 1997; Harcourt 2012a). However, so too have scholars who do not confess an allegiance to Foucault (Graeber 2005; Wacquant 2009). The present-day American police are organized along a military model, violently unleashed to fortify and perpetuate neoliberal capitalism, its surreptitious puppeteers, the moneyed class and their elected envoys, resulting in the domination and control, both disarmed and assimilated, given no real alternative, of a permanent pauperism.

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[41] Critical theory must be conjoined with material conditions, and contemporary conditions abound in valuable examples of police power. The 'shelter-in-place' order implemented during the manhunt for the Boston Marathon bombers effectively shut down the entire city, creating a de facto state-of-exception (the occupation of Isla Vista, CA in response to the Deltopia riots is another noteworthy example). More to our purposes, the absences of any investigation or charges in the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis must be contrasted with the free use of force used to halt and break up the Occupy Wall Street protests. The recent killing of Michael Brown, and the resulting riots in Ferguson, is a prominent example of everyday policing within poor ethnic communities. Perhaps the best example of neo-liberal policing is the killing of Trayvon Martin by a neighborhood watch coordinator, unauthorized by any state institution, but subsequently exonerated by Florida's 'Stand-your-Ground' statute.

5. UR-FASCISM AND NEO-FASCISM[42]

Brownshirts and Red Caps

Nearly a decade ago, a fascist murdered seventy-seven people in Norway, the majority of them teenagers. Today, that agenda is winning elections around the world. In India and Poland, the Philippines and Turkey, Brazil and Hungary, Israel and the United States, far-right, authoritarian, ethnonationalist demagogues are in power.[43] In Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, far-right parties have made stunning electoral gains. In Britain, a center-right government struggles to implement a public referendum requiring a withdrawal from the European Union. In Isla Vista and El Paso, Charleston and Pittsburgh, Christchurch and Montreal, lone-wolf terrorists, each with their own manifesto, have targeted women, Latinos, blacks, Jews, and Muslims. In Charlottesville, white supremacists and neo-Nazi groups carrying tiki-torches shouted that "Jews will not replace us" and "white lives matter." In a government building adjacent to the Washington Mall, not long after the 2016 election, a salutation of "Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!" was answered by "Sieg Heil" salutes. At a recent rally, thousands feverishly chanted "send her back" in unison as the President of the United States insulted Representative Ilhan Omar, a black Muslim woman, a

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[43] Because this chapter was published in 2019, there are occasional outdated references.

refugee, and an immigrant. There are concentration camps in America. People die in these camps. Some of them are children. There is debate amongst Very Reasonable People as to how long they have been there. To paraphrase a line from the novelist Thomas Pynchon, "look out, it is getting pretty Fascist in here" (Pynchon 1973: 691).

Many of us (a general, problematic "us") are waking up to the realization that there are fascists all around. Perhaps, it is the fascists who are waking up to the realization that there is an authoritarian system already assembled and for the taking.

For an entire generation of thinkers, the causes and nature of fascism was the Really Big Question that demanded critical attention. The names of the great thinkers of the last century, Gramsci, Reich, Benjamin, Adorno, Arendt, Deleuze, and so many more, are forever coupled with this legacy. After the rise and fall of fascism, the imperative within the halls of academia was how to prevent its reemergence. Styled as warnings, this literature displayed a reckoning with the past that held grave consequence for the distant future.

Emblematic of the genre is the Italian man of letters Umberto Eco's essay "Ur-Fascism." The prefix *Ur* refers to the ancient Sumerian city-state and is commonly used to conjure the earliest or original meaning of its referent. For Eco, it was necessary to speak of fascism as archetypal, precisely because it was ephemeral and indistinct. In the beginning, there was no such thing as fascism. The word was invented as a form of group identification.[44] Then others appropriated the term, also calling themselves fascist. Not long after, *this word* resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people.[45] To think back upon this label was to acknowledge its contradictions, but also, to imagine its potentiality. Ur-Fascism does not

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[44] Italian *fasci* were political associations, the word meaning a "bundle of sticks."
[45] In Sinclair Lewis' 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*, one character says to another: "Why are you so afraid of the word 'Fascism,' Doremus? Just a word—just a word!" (1970: 18).

merely refer to the index case, but to future cases and the process of metamorphosis. The first generation of fascism scholars recognized this, taking it as their vocation to disentangle fascist movements and their beliefs from the manifested representatives, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. The study of fascism is distinctively comparative (Linz 1977). In the "Preface" to *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, for example, Wilhelm Reich states that the motivation and significance of his study is "that there is a German, Italian, Spanish, Anglo-Saxon, Jewish, and Arabian fascism" (Reich 1970: xiv).

In this essay, I am most interested in the roots of American fascism. Whereas there were vibrant fascist movements in Britain, France, and Eastern Europe during the first half of the 20th century, many scholars have expressed shock at the lack of fascism in the United States (Amaan 1986). The comparativist approach is equally concerned with such counterfactuals. However, these scholars ignore American history and centuries of settler-colonial, racial, and imperial violence. It is an argument developed within this article that there is a distinct variety of star-spangled fascism (Steigmann-Gall 2017).

Comparative explanations are simultaneously historical, confronting the paradox of how to compare politics of dissimilar epochs. The original is always unlike its future imitations. Eco translates Ur-Fascism as *eternal fascism*. He attempts to provide a framework for diagnosing future fascisms from the traits of monstrous forebearers. Eco's Ur-Fascism is a warning about Neo-Fascism. As his fellow Italian, and survivor of the death camps, Primo Levi proclaimed, "Every age has its own Fascism" (Levi 2005: 34). The past many thought would never return surely does, and this insight necessitated a vigilance which animated the writings of those with a lived experience of fascism. The fear of future fascisms resulted in a paranoid policing of all manners of everyday-fascism and fascism-next-door. The hyperbolic

imaginary is best exhibited in Michel Foucault's observation that there is a "fascism in us all" (Foucault 1977). The American political scientist Richard Wolin later disparaged the sway that fascism maintained in the immediate aftermath of the war as an "intellectual romance" (Wolin 2004). The expression of terror by the first and second generations of fascism scholars bears some responsibility for the generalizable decline in the literature and a diminution in stakes.

The third generation of scholars is synonymous with an analytical study of fascism. Fascism (like populism) is now derided as an ambiguous label that ought to be held in suspicion. George Orwell likened fascism to a meaningless swearword applied to everything from youth hostels to fox-hunting and astrology (Orwell 1944). Fascism has become an unbounded pejorative, used merely to castigate. Such a propensity for concept inflation has tangible disadvantages; indistinct and overused the public has become cynical that fascism is still possible in the here and now (Allardyce 1979). Scholars have become increasing wary of applying the term for fear of "crying wolf." Added to this, present-day movements which could be labeled fascist disown the label, exploiting its woolliness. But as Ernest Hemingway's protagonist Robert Jordan reminds, when asked why there are no American fascists: "There are many who do not know they are fascists, but will find it out when the time comes" (Hemingway 1940: 116). In response to the purported hollowness of the term, the analytical study of fascism has proclaimed a "new consensus," espousing the notion of a "fascist minimum," a thin method for establishing base conditions (Eatwell 1996; Griffin 2012). The spokesman of the analytical school, Robert Griffin, characterizes the root ideology of *all* fascisms to be "palingenetic ultranationalism" (Griffin 1991). Palingenesis refers to calls for national reclamation. By renewing the analysis of fascism through the identification of political programs that share loose family resemblances, the new comparativist study of fascism does

little more than repeat Eco's original wisdom. However, by tapering the label, something indispensable is omitted and fascism loses its import.

The notion of a "fascist minimum" is an affront to the tens of millions who died. The fear of a *fascist maximum* is what underscored the hallowed reverence afforded the term. The establishment of ideological base conditions belies that the real danger of fascism is the machinations of organized mass death.

The development and subsequent decline in the study of fascism has been an exercise in organized forgetting. As the collective memory of a prior generation fades, social amnesia sets in and fascist movements reappear. The counterpoint to the charge that fascism is a loaded word, easily abused, which has lost its meaning, is that the assumption of fascism as a spent force occasions its return. On this point, Félix Guattari once proclaimed: "We must abandon, once and for all, the quick and easy formula: 'Fascism will not make it again.' Fascism has already 'made it,' and it continues to 'make it'" (Guattari 2009: 171). Many would have us disown the label and disfigure Theodor Adorno's remark about poetry by asserting "there is *no fascism* after Auschwitz." The juxtaposition of Ur-Fascism with Neo- Fascism reveals the contradictions inherent in seeing the present in terms of the past. Present-day fascist movements are feeble imitations of their monstrous precursors. If the word fascism still holds purchase it is as a reminder of the monstrous and a lesson that catastrophe remains possible. Recalling the memory of the past is to wake the dead so that they might haunt the living. The contemporary conjuncture is trapped within this paradox: when fascists no longer use the label, as memories of cruelties become more distant, the rejoinder exhausts its power and forces of evil reappear.[46] In an essay on the difficulties of using history for the study of politics, Adorno

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[46] Some argue on behalf of the term post-fascism because it exhibits the contradictory nature of the word (Traverso 2019). There is similarity between their position and mine.

writes such a danger. "National Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it is merely the ghost of what was so monstrous that it lingers on after its own death, or whether it has not yet died at all, whether the willingness to commit the unspeakable survives in people as well as in the conditions that enclose them" (Adorno 1998: 89-90). If the persistence of our memory of fascism helps incite the ferocity of a resistance against it, then a purpose of this essay is to reawaken the fascist imaginary which once captivated the first generations who wrote in the wake of calamity.

A final note on Umberto Eco's essay. Ur-Fascism is also a theory of *structural fascism*. When Adorno spoke of unspeakable monstrosity surviving "in the conditions that enclose them" he refers to a fascism that all are complicit in and, while seemingly dormant, persists. Fascism is intimately linked with liberalism. The strains of capitalism and the fragility of democratic institutions were to blame for the rise of 20th century fascism. Fascism reveals the latent hypocrisy of liberal politics. If the danger of fascism is predicated upon its maximum potential, then the machinations of organized mass death by liberal states and authorized by liberal politicians ought be equally damned.

The essay that follows is styled as a series of vignettes. The 2016 U.S. elections, along with the global rise of populist authoritarians and upsurge in economic nationalism, has occasioned a resurgence of popular and academic interest in the subject of fascism (Connolly 2017; Stanley 2018; Reid 2017; Leonard 2019).[20] This essay analyzes the reemergence of the specter of fascism within the field of international relations, particularly the subfield of international political economy. Particular attention is paid to (so-called) heterodox scholars who have been excluded and ignored by the discipline. William I. Robinson, for one, was warning his readers of the rise of 21st century fascism prior to the ascendency of Donald Trump.

Robinson describes fascism as a political response to capitalist crisis. In the sections that follow, I expand upon, appraise, and complicate Robinson's thesis. The decline of American empire, the reemergence of China as a great power, global capitalism, financial crisis, the liberal international order, historicism, and the role of ideas and organic intellectuals are significant subjects in which to analyze the current fascist conjuncture. The penultimate section is an extended excursus on various theories of fascism and their applicability for understanding current events. I conclude by means of a literary analysis of two anonymous texts, fashioning my own theory of *structural fascism* to resolve the paradox of Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism. I do not purport to determine whether fascism has returned. Further, I am uninterested in defining fascism, of saying what it is or what it is not. I am, on the contrary, invested in problematizing the legitimacy of analytical notions of fascism. Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism, 20th and 21st century fascisms, are essentially contradictory. By escaping the confines of a literature entrapped in historicism, we might imagine a future more terrifying than what has come before. These variations upon the theme of fascism are haunted by the vertigo of this thought.

"His Coming was Expected on Earth": Prophecies of Trump

We must keep alert,
so that the sense of these words will not be forgotten again.
-Umberto Eco

The study of international political economy (IPE) has been confronting a crisis of hegemony. In his intellectual history of the subfield, Benjamin J. Cohen selects Susan Strange's 1970 seminal article "International Economics and International Relations: A Case

of Mutual Neglect" as the founding document (Strange 1970; Cohen 2008). Four decades after Strange's inaugural challenge, Cohen accused the now-developed subfield of adherence to a new "dialogue of the deaf" (Cohen 2007). Calling attention to the "transatlantic divide" separating the American from the British schools of IPE was only the first step in unmasking an entrenched "monoculture" (McNamara 2009). As Cohen wryly retorts: "[T]he case for the inherent superiority of the American style of IPE is remarkably weak" (Cohen 2014: 132). Much ink has been spilt on the shortcomings of the American school: methodological reductionism, econometric absolutism, disciplinary insularity, narrowness of topics, loss of ambition, boring content, impartiality and deference to authority, but none more so than an inability to predict or explain current events (Strange 1982; Murphy and Nelson 2001; Philips and Weaver 2011; Oatley 2011; Winecoff 2017; Cohen 2010).

The third-wave of American school IPE has been labeled Open Economy Politics (OEP) by David Lake (Lake 2009). Lake provocatively declares the OEP paradigm "a hegemonic approach" (Lake 2006: 772). The paradigm is a one-way, bottom-up methodology where national political institutions represent social interests at the international bargaining table. Excluded are structural or systemic theories, relationships of domination and dependence, and ideology. Parsimonious, provable explanations are valued over complexity. Historical analysis is shunned in favor of a rigorous scientific methodology. Interests are endogenous and can be properly accounted for. Actors and institutions are honest brokers. If the first generation of modern IPE focused upon the decline of state power and the rise of multinational corporations, OEP has retained little of that legacy. Instead, the third-wave has adopted the two weakest aspects of realism and liberalism: the nation-state is the central unit of analysis and economic liberalism is ultimately advantageous.

The publication of Cohen's invective, alongside the 2008 financial crisis, turned received wisdom on its head. The subprime mortgage crisis, global in scope and contagious across borders, arrived without notice and undercut the central dogmas of economists. Cohen argued that the inability of IPE scholars to see the crisis looming demonstrated a "grave case of myopia" (Cohen 2009). The British school, spearheaded by Susan Strange, was far more attuned to changes in the global economy and the corresponding dangers. Strange's books, *Casino Capitalism* (1986), *The Retreat of the State* (1996), and *Mad Money* (1998), now read as warnings. Ronen Palan argued that the prejudices and rigidity of the orthodoxy within IPE blinded them to the hazards of economic liberalism. Arguing that the "proof of the pudding is in the eating," the 2008 financial crisis undermined the credibility of the American school (Palan 2009).

If the 2008 financial crisis undercut the competence of American school IPE, the 2016 election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States (along with Britain's Brexit vote and the global rise of authoritarian populists) exposed the bankruptcy of the school of thought. As Mark Blyth and Matthias Matthijs claim, the financial crisis was no "black swan," rather IPE is a "lame duck" research agenda (Blyth and Matthijs 2017). The multi-decade, bipartisan, international, and academic consensus in favor of free trade and capital mobility is kaput.

Not everyone was caught unaware. A pronounced, prescient example is William I. Robinson, one of the originators of the global capitalism school, who accurately predicted the emergence of 21st century fascism several years before Trump descended to the political stage (Robinson and Barrera 2012; Robinson 2014). One never needed to cross the Atlantic to illustrate how critical approaches were disregarded by the orthodox branch of IPE. Robinson, along with a motley crew of academic outcasts, are examples of what Craig Murphy called

America's "left-out," scholars whose critical and left-leaning insights have been refused entry or reply in the leading IPE journals (Murphy 2009). Robinson is a successor to Robert Cox and the Neo-Gramscian school of international relations (Cox 1987; Gill 1993). While formally included in the British school within Cohen's intellectual history of the subfield, Cox was not British, nor did he teach there, and, furthermore, was responsible for promoting a tradition distinct from Strange. As part of the second-wave of Neo- Gramscian thinkers, the global capitalism school is most notable for advancing the study of globalization and the ascendency of a transnational capitalist class.[47]

An alternative choice that Cohen could have highlighted as the founding act of IPE was a 1970 conference held at Harvard University on "Transnational Relations and World Politics" (Keohane and Nye 1972). Here at the birth pangs of the nascent discipline new actors such as multinational corporations, financial investors, and private foundations were identified as challenges to the analytical primacy and democratic processes of nation-states. Marxist thinkers were included in these early debates. Nearly fifty years later, even though transnational relations and the power of multinational corporations serve as the bedrocks of the global capitalism school, and their work has amassed citations, the "left-out" are no longer even a niche in a vast network of IPE scholarship (Seabrooke and Young 2017).

The question bears asking: why has the modern school of American IPE excised the study of transnational relations which the pioneering generation put as the foundation? The OEP paradigm has failed to live up to its promise of "theoretical eclecticism" and now suffers from a theoretical deficit (Lake 2011; Lake 2013). Cohen himself once playfully depicted Marxists as "outside the 'respectable' mainstream of Western scholarship," while also

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[47] Robinson is similarly influenced by another neo-Gramscian thinker: Stuart Hall. Hall provides a more nuanced analysis of (British) domestic politics and police repression than does Cox.

applauding the current academic environment for encouraging free expression and allowing "radicals" to speak openly without censure (Cohen 2007; Cohen 2008). Cox's remembrance of the climate was quite different: "Cold-war ideologies had a powerful impact upon scholarship. Any suspicion of Marxism is anathema... Marxism appears to thinkers in the mainstream as a manifestation of dissidence, obstinate ignorance, even treachery" (Cox 2009). The ascendency of neoliberal ideology corresponded with a need for organic intellectuals to defend free enterprise and economic globalization. Hegemony entails the institutionalization of the ruling ideas. As Karl Marx reminds us: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Marx 1978: 172). American school IPE mimicked American global hegemony by systematically discouraging dissensus, through gatekeeping, standardization, conformity, and good ole-fashioned disregard. If IPE suffers from a bankruptcy of ideas, this signals a more general failure of governing ideology. As Cox once proclaimed, "a proliferation of loners is an indicator of crisis in received opinion, perhaps even a crisis of hegemony" (Cox 1996).

Thinkers of the global capitalism school are not "fuzzy thinkers," nor "navel gazers," and certainly not "treacherous ignorant dissidents" either; rather, they are indispensable. That Robinson was prescient when so many of his colleagues were oblivious calls for a critical appraisal of his foretelling of 21st century fascism. As IPE attempts to grapple with the Trump Presidency, the reemergence of economic nationalism and authoritarian populists, trade wars, and escalating class conflict, the theories and lessons of the formerly outcast must be given pride of place.

The purported return of fascism is an extreme accusation. Given the historical baggage of the charge, one can hardly lay the blame on IPE for not giving it attention. The entire discipline of political science, along with political elites, failed to anticipate the Trump

phenomenon and has spent the past years immobilized and in anticipation of what comes next. Political science has overestimated the sturdiness and merit of institutions (Eckhouse 2018). However, the study of far-right parties and populism has been an intensifying fascination amongst those in comparative politics and economic inequality and race are commanding subjects within the field of American politics.[48] International relations is unique for the widespread fealty shown to liberal assurances of peace and prosperity. The optimism shared amongst co-signers of the previous hegemonic consensus felt that the boom-times could last in perpetuity. Myopic and ineffectual, those studying the global economy and global political dynamics lacked a pessimistic imagination.

In the twilight of the Obama presidency, Robinson forecast a set of three possibilities for a time of acute crisis: 1) a reformism from above that strives to stabilize the global capitalist system, 2) a leftist resistance from below, 3) the emergence of 21st century fascism. Whereas the first was already in power, its hold on hegemony was precarious. The least likely option was the second, as a democratic socialist alternative had not yet announced itself. The most likely was the third possibility, as Robinson announced that 21st century fascism was already emergent.

The conclusions of Robert Cox's essays were always formulaic. At the end of each, he proposes a set of alternative futures. His most lauded essay, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations," predicts a new world order based upon the internationalization of production. Leading countries and international organizations would unite in a common effort to promote global capital. The lasting legacy of Cox's career was foreseeing the emergence of neoliberal globalization. The Coxian formula also considered less

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[48] On populism, see Mudde 2007. On economic inequality and race, see Political Science Association 2004; American Political Science Association 2016.

likely scenarios, one being the revival of nationalism and mercantilism. States could reimpose their authority over domestic markets, monetary policy, and cross-border flows. The least likely possibility, but the one Cox was most supportive of, was a counter-hegemonic coalition of Third World countries and/or global social movements (Cox 1981). Cox was a resolute futurist; he employed this formula before and would repeat it after (Cox 1976; Cox 1991; Cox 1992). The model is a hallmark of Neo-Gramscian theory, as British cultural theorist Stuart Hall analyzed the 1) neoliberal "law and order" state, 2) the social-democratic "solution," and the 3) looming appearance of "authoritarian populism" (Hall 1988). As Cox warned: "The danger of authoritarian populism, of reborn fascism, is particularly great where political structures are crumbling and the material basis of resentment appears to be intractable" (Cox 1992). Robinson's prophetic powers are less impressive upon recognizing that his Neo-Gramscian forebearers had been announcing the arrival of fascism generations prior. A globalized economy limits the range of political choices. There were two alternatives to the neoliberal consensus: an inclusive global socialism from below or neo-fascism. Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal adage *There is No Alternative* is illustrative of the economic orthodoxy of the time, but also reveals why political elites, upon the breakdown of this consensus, would adhere to authoritarianism as a bulwark against popular movements. As the distribution of gains and losses intensifies, engendering severe inequalities and social upheaval, capital has *no alternative* but to rely upon fascism to maintain the privilege of unregulated financial markets and the wholesale privatization of public goods.

To its adherents the advantage of the global capitalism school is its "nuanced empirically based analysis" (Robinson 2014; Sprague 2011). The promise of the approach is not empirics, nor its novelty, comprehensiveness, consistency, or even radicalness, but its

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power of prediction. If Robinson exhibits a weak messianic power, it is, as Walter Benjamin posits, shared with prior generations and structured by our memories of the past (Benjamin 1968). The fascist messiah, *whose coming was expected on earth*, is always-already present.

Donald Trump is the augur of resurgent fascism. Though proleptic, Robinson's theory of 21st century fascism suffers from its reliance upon historicism. Robinson's account of fascism is dependent upon a *crisis-consensus*. Robinson asserts that the principal cause of fascism, in both the 20th and 21st centuries, is capitalist crisis. Robinson ignores other sufficient causes of fascism such as global power transitions, imperial aspirations, uniquely malevolent leaders, and democratic backsliding. Furthermore, Robinson labels 21st century fascism as emergent, but does not describe the life-cycle of fascist movements. Studying fascism-in-motion shows how emergence can become consolidation. Disassembling the temporal theories of fascism holds important implications for what I call dormant- fascism and fascism-without-end. Robinson's thesis is limited because of the constraints he places on the present by understanding it through the past. An underlying premise forming my own thoughts is that *politics is never reducible to the structural settings in which it occurs*.

American Empire and Global Capitalism

> *It would be so much easier, for us, if there appeared on the world scene somebody saying,*
> *"I want to reopen Auschwitz, I want the Black Shirts to parade again in the Italian squares."*
> -Umberto Eco

The myth of fading American empire eternally recurs (Russett 1985; Strange 1987). The invasion of Iraq and neoconservative unilateralism gave rise to fears of waning American

influence and the rise of soft balancing (Cox 2003; Pape 2005; Walt 2006). Some predicted that the 2008 financial crisis marked the date American hegemony deteriorated (Cohen and Delong 2010; Art 2012). Most recently, the election of Donald Trump has produced a new wave of hand- wringing over the coming collapse of *Pax Americana* (Lake 2018; McCoy 2018). The paragon of the trope is Christopher Layne, whose academic career has centered upon the impermanence of unipolarity and a recurring prophecy that "this time it's real" (Layne 1993; Layne 2006; Layne 2012; Layne 2018). The cyclical warnings of impending hegemonic decline have become repetitive, inaccurate, and feigned (MacDonald 2009).

The failure to accurately predict hegemonic decline demands we ask a more fascinating question: why has American empire *endured*?[49] Overstretched and irresponsible, fraudulent and coercive, capricious and derided, military adventurism, financial recklessness, and political malfeasance has not damaged the United States' global power. Some argue that American hegemony endures based upon its monopoly on the capacity to project military force (Posen 2003). Others endorse effective use of strategic restraint, retrenchment, and soft power for winning friends, influencing foes, and maintaining legitimacy (Ikenberry 2000; MacDonald and Parent 2011). Worth remembering is Susan Strange's proverb in the first iteration of this debate: "America's 'legions'... are not military but economic" (1988). The U.S. dollar and American markets paradoxically provided safe haven in the aftermath of the 2008 financial collapse. Far from overextended, the reach, capabilities, and position of American economic power has elicited accommodation and collaboration. The U.S. policy of military Keynesianism resides on a substratum of perpetual deficits without tears. The imperial command of the global commons rests upon economic foundations.

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[49] Evidence of hegemonic power is that the word "American" is readily understood to refer to the United States and not the *Americas* (both North and South). A grave sin of this essay is that "American" is used so freely.

The liberal international order is based upon an ideology of economic openness, multilateral cooperation, and unrestrained investment, extraction, and production. American unipolarity persists through alliance systems, international institutions, and widespread acquiescence. Neo-Marxists have castigated the liberal international order as a new type of imperialism (Augelli and Murphy 1989; Wood 2003; Harvey 2005; Grandin 2007; Graaff and Apeldoorn 2010; Panitch and Gindin 2013). The global capitalism school holds that preponderant American power conceals the totalizing dominance of a transnational capitalist class. The purported hegemony of the transnational capitalist class was intended as a supplement to the eras of successive bids for global hegemony by nation-states. The hegemonic decline thesis ignores the convergence of global elites around a shared project of expansive capitalism. Harkening back to Strange, the history of the present was foretold: "What is emerging is a non- territorial empire with its imperial capital in Washington D.C." (Strange 1989).

One reason for the staying-power of American empire is the lack of geopolitical rivals.[50] The reemergence of China as a great power has precipitated a growing debate over their intentions and ambitions (Kang 2007). Is China a revisionist state, or will it preserve the status quo; is Beijing a taker, maker, or breaker of the existing order (Johnston 2003; Christensen 2006; Beckley 2012; Cohen 2014; Brook and Wohlforth 2016)?

The rise of China has proven to be empirically puzzling for the global capitalism school. The bulk of their in-depth empirical studies have focused on the transnational capitalist class and Latin America (Robinson 2008). High-growth rates in China have paralleled four

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[50] Full-spectrum global dominance is impossible. American empire is maintained with the cooperation of its allies, particularly in Europe and Japan. For example, Russia remains a regional hegemon and has successfully challenged the international liberal order in Georgia and Ukraine.

decades of growth in East Asia. China is a one-stop shop situated amidst a continent of cheap labor (Chang 2015). Added to this is the difficulty of evaluating China's status as an autocratic regime, the continued presence and magnitude of state-owned enterprises, and restrictions on capital mobility. China rejects the basic tenets of liberalism, remaining nominally a communist government.

Jeb Sprague has produced one of the first studies by the global capitalism school on East Asia (Sprague 2016). In this volume, Jerry Harris posits the establishment of a "statist transnational capital class" in China (Harris 2009; Harris 2012). Foreign direct investment into China has come predominately from other countries in the region: Japan and the four Asian Tigers. Despite strict controls on capital mobility, Chinese capitalists access offshore financial centers through Macau and Hong Kong. As Anthony van Fossen states, "Hong Kong is not just a tax haven. It is a bridge to a labyrinth of other [offshore financial centers]" (Fossen 2016). The vast majority of the illicit financial flows in the region originate from China. William I. Robinson provides the definitive statement on the supposed challenge to American empire by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) (Robinson 2016). None of the emerging economies have diversified their economies or developed higher value-added industries. Brazil remains an agricultural exporter, Russia an energy exporter, India a hub for services, and China a supplier for mass manufacturing. While Robinson underestimates the diversification of the Chinese economy and production of capital-intensive goods, far from rejecting globalization, these countries have sought out foreign investment, worked to weaken labor and land rights, and opened their territories and peoples to corporate colonization.

Sean Starrs provides evidence that American firms continue to dominate the global economy and that American investors own large shares of Chinese companies (Starrs 2013;

Starrs 2017). Starrs summons the data on transnational corporations, corporate ownership, and sectoral dominance, and from this draws a set of conclusions intended to challenge the global capitalism school. The American economy remains dominant, across sectors and by a significant margin. Chinese firms maintain an inferior position in buyer-driven global supply chains and are thoroughly penetrated by foreign capital. Chinese economic growth benefits foreign investors. The Chinese economy is powered by state-owned enterprises, whose corporate owners owe allegiance to the party and serve on central committees. Starrs takes this to imply the predominant role of the state in the Chinese economy.

Starrs has demanded that we take globalization *and* the state *seriously*.[51] By focusing on corporate ownership, Starrs has replicated the methods of the global capitalism school. However, his analysis of sectors utilizes national economic indicators. Harris asks the fundamental question: "When Nigerian oil powers the assembly lines at Honda and Volkswagen, or Iranian energy lights up FoxConn so computers for Dell and [Hewlett Packard] can flow off the assembly line, just who is benefiting" (Harris 2016: 27)? Capitalism-with-Chinese-characteristics is nationally determined, globally integrated, and permeated by foreign investors. That corporate executives serve on the central committees of the Chinese Communist Party demonstrates the influence of globally oriented market actors on public policy and governance. Starrs does not address Beijing's support of the liberal international order and economic globalization.[52] If Starrs's contribution is the supremacy of an American capitalist class, he knowingly proves its transnational constitution. Robinson has repeated his

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[51] The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once warned of those preaching *seriousness*: "How burdensome they must find good thinking! The lovely human beast always seems to lose its good spirits when it thinks well; it becomes 'serious'... Well then, let us prove that this is a prejudice" (*The Gay Science*: 257).
[52] A brief example, in a keynote speech at the World Economic Forum, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated: "the problems troubling the world are not caused by economic globalization."

position that global capitalism is organized by the United States and that capitalists and elites in the Global South are incorporated as subsidiaries. Starrs's general findings of American economic dominance reinforce the conclusions reached by the global capitalism school (Castillo-Mussot, Sprague, and Garcia 2013).

Like many who assert the mantle of seriousness, Starrs substitutes data for the rigor of theory. He misrepresents the global capitalism school. To be fair, basic misunderstandings are due to the school's theoretical ambiguity. The global capitalism school wants it both ways: to posit the predominance of American global power, while emphasizing the hegemony of the transnational capitalist class.

For Robinson, "Trumpism is not a departure from but an incarnation of an emerging dictatorship of the transnational capitalist class" (Robinson 2017). Accordingly, economic nationalism is a campaign tactic that belies an agenda based upon the intensification of neoliberalism. While Trump is a member of the transnational capitalist class, whose global business empire has thrived because of the economic policies he criticizes, Trump does not represent the capitalist elites any more than he is a puppet of Vladimir Putin or contained by the Republican Party. Trump represents nobody's interest but his own, a distinguishing aspect of fascist leaders. Trump's ongoing trade wars are not symbolic but hedged upon the "exorbitant privilege" of American economic power. Political support for economic nationalism is increasing not waning, domestically, internationally, and across the ideological spectrum, threatening existing supply chains and globally oriented businesses.

The "Make America Great Again" slogan reinforces the myth of fading American empire. The politics of international trade has electoral consequences. Manufacturing industries are concentrated in swing states and the two most populated states are border states

(Jensen, Quinn, and Weymouth 2017). Trump appealed to domestic interests in favor of economic nationalism.[53] What was distinctive was how Trump framed the issue in terms of geopolitical rivalry. As President, Trump has pursued a global trade war, against China, but also Mexico, Brazil, and even European allies, not out of fears of hegemonic decline, but to leverage American economic supremacy. "Make American Great Again" appeals to domestic audiences longing for a mythic, fleeting past, but an "America First" foreign policy is enacted to "weaponize interdependence" (Ferrell and Newman 2019).

Trade theory remains mired in a methodology that emphasizes national factor endowments (Rogowski 1989; Hiscox 2001). Industrial cleavages, factor mobility, and trading blocs do not account for the preponderance of intra- firm trade. If IPE's really big question concerns the political determinants of globalization, then the answer by the OEP paradigm is a detailed description of domestic politics. This answer is diametrically opposed to the conclusions reached about the intensification of finance and capital mobility by the second-generation of American school IPE (Andrews 1994; Cohen 1996). The global diffusion of liberalism benefits globally oriented businesses at the expense of nationally oriented businesses and the decision-making autonomy of politicians. The global capitalism school argues that the transnational capitalist class is afforded tremendous *autonomy* and controlling *influence* over institutions, leaders, policy, and regulation, thereby holding *structural power* over nation-states. The intensification of intra-firm trade indicates that national growth-rates conceal that an overwhelming proportion of profits goes to multinational firms best positioned within

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[53] Political scientists have identified the activation of racial resentment as a counterpoint to those who posit that economic anxieties mobilized voters. It was both/and. Xenophobia animates the rhetoric aimed at Trump's two foremost geopolitical foes: China and Mexico.

global supply chain networks. Trade wars diminish the profit-margins of capitalists and threaten the globalization of the production process.

Capital and high-wage earners can move freely across borders, whereas low-wage laborers cannot. Trump appeals to the working class by directing animus and resentment towards foreign workers, immigrant labor, and geopolitical competitors. Robinson is correct that Trump has intensified neoliberalism. However, Robinson is incorrect to dismiss Trump's trade war. The global capitalism school has too eagerly ignored the persistence of geopolitical rivalry as a bygone relic. National political elites retain a high degree of autonomy from and control over the transnational state apparatus. The Trump regime is not pursuing belligerent economic nationalism solely because it plays well domestically. "Weaponizing interdependence" is based upon the hedge that American owners of capital can more easily withstand loses and exploit new opportunities for extraction. During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan was able to depreciate the dollar and pressure Germany and Japan into trade concessions (Cohen 1993). Economic conflict and protectionist rhetoric do not necessarily impede heightened global integration. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and Belt Road Initiative prove that geopolitical rivalry and the intensification of transnational capitalism easily coexist.

One explanation for the rise of fascism is power transition theory. As the hegemonic power Britain declined in strength, a revisionist Germany reacted aggressively. Modern-day inter-imperialist rivalry is unique because America is not threatened with hegemonic decline. Even though some presume great power wars have gone extinct, no country or combination of countries could currently oppose aggressive American military expansion. The United States has waged a perpetual World War since the end of the last one. Previous U.S. Presidents have

openly supported genocide and military expansion without being as effortlessly labeled fascist. There are diminishing checks on a unilateral executive determined to make "low-intensity conflicts" become "total war" (Rudalevige 2005). Worth noting is that Trump has chosen, instead, economic conflict together with retrenchment.

Equally surprising as the election of Trump in 2016 was the primary challenge by Bernie Sanders, a self-avowed socialist and one of the leading contenders to challenge Trump in the 2020 election. Neither Sanders nor Trump identified with the political parties they sought the nomination of, both were dismissed by corporate media, and each sought to reverse the dominant consensus. The next section will focus more closely upon Sanders' framing of economic nationalism through class conflict. However, it is important to recognize that Sanders, while defending the benefits of international cooperation, also relies upon the rhetoric of geopolitical rivalry, especially when it comes to China. On the issue of trade, Sanders has repeatedly supported revoking China's most favored nation status. For those who assume that Trump's trade war is merely symbolic, or that a new regime will reverse tariffs, it must be emphatically pointed out that a bipartisan consensus has formed in Washington D.C. on behalf of a hardline approach towards Beijing.[54] In an era of intractable gridlock, Congress has passed multiple bills targeting China. Once introduced, protectionist policies and nationalist rhetoric are not easily reversed. The struggle against fascism does not exclude a future of increased economic nationalism and cascading trade disputes.

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[54] See Hoover Institution 2018, but note Susan Shirk's dissent.

Neverending Crisis and the Messianism of Ideas

> *Ur-Fascism is still around us, sometimes in plainclothes.*
> -Umberto Eco

The collapse of Lehman Brothers on September 15th, 2008 struck at the epicenter of the American financial system but did not upend American unipolar supremacy. Paradoxically, the origin of the crisis became the refuge during and after. The most inscrutable finding of Sean Starrs research is the continued global dominance of American economic power *after* the 2008 financial crisis. The typical response of American school IPE is that the system worked (Drezner 2014). Most praise U.S. leadership during the crisis: by acting as a benevolent hegemon the system was stabilized. Far from triggering hegemonic decline, American empire was "too big to fail" (Oatley et. al. 2013).

Political scientists argue that crisis leads to change. Benjamin J. Cohen separates good crises from bad (Cohen 2015). Good crises pose opportunities for broad reform though concerted collective action. Bad crises signify the plausible danger that there will be no meaningful reform of the status quo. After failing to predict the crash of the financial system, it was felt that the crisis would lead to a political realignment. Instead of the transformative changes many predicted, the aftermath of the financial crisis was remarkable in how little things changed. The crisis was characterized by the *endurance of the status quo* (Helleiner 2014). Prematurely, Andrew Gamble claimed that the lack of a populist resurgence is proof that the 2008 crisis did not produce a political realignment (Gamble 2014).

The principal means of change are norms and ideas. Ideas are roadmaps for achieving objectives (Goldstein and Keohane 1993). Norms emerge, and upon reaching a tipping point,

cascade, eventually becoming internalized (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). For Jeffrey Chwieroth, crises lead to change through experimentation with new ideas and eventual consolidation (Chwieroth 2010). New ideas need entrepreneurial carriers, crossover appeal, and credibility. There is correlation between theories of power transition and political realignments.[55] Within both schools of thought, legitimation crises necessitate the emergence of new ideas and political principals. The great failing of the crisis-change model is its reliance upon historicism and the messianic power conferred upon ideas. *New ideas are expected, but never arrive.* Ideas are afforded a spiritual power without a material basis. Capital holds structural power over political elites, and political elites retain legal domination over social forces. Fascism is the intensification of capitalism without the impediment of having to win consent or manufacture legitimacy. Global power transitions and political realignments are never predestined. Despite the appearance of patterns or historical analogies, history unfolds stochastically not cyclically. While political change is a focal topic within international relations, also needed are theories that explain *endurance* and *systemic collapse*.

William I. Robinson argues that there are three types of crisis: cyclical, structural, and systematic. While conventional interpretations blame the 2008 financial crisis on financial complexity, lax regulations, or fiscal imbalances, Robinson emphasizes overaccumulation as the root cause. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small number of billionaires generates shortages in demand and an inability to offload surplus commodities. For Robinson, 2008 portended a structural, possibly systemic, crisis (Robinson 2010). Neither transparency nor increased regulation, stimulus nor austerity, are suitable remedies. Without addressing the structural contradiction of economic inequality, systemic collapse becomes increasingly likely.

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[55] On political realignment, see Burnham 1970; Skowronek 1993.

The collapse of the financial system revealed the magnitude of economic inequality and the acquiescence of political elites to capital interests, undermining the legitimacy of neoliberal ideology (Grewal 2018). The common sense underwriting global capitalism is no longer believed, but still hegemony endures. The emergence of populist alternatives to neoliberal elites is taken as proof of an ongoing political realignment. Despite the prevalence of this thesis, the role of the 2008 financial crisis in the minds of voters during the 2016 election has not been tested with the same rigor as trade cleavages or racial resentment.[56]

As was said of Benito Mussolini, Donald Trump has no ideology. While positioning himself in opposition to neoliberal ideas and elites, Trump's rhetoric aims to generate affective contagion and is uninterested in persuading audiences to coalesce around a new set of ideas.[57] Bernie Sanders, on the other hand, has been a prominent entrepreneur on behalf of a counter-hegemonic set of ideas. According to Senator Sanders, those hurt by international trade and the financial crisis have a common enemy: the billionaire class. Despite powerful institutional efforts at obstruction, Sanders has mobilized a multiracial, geographically diffuse base of support. By framing American hegemony, international trade, and economic growth as an existential class conflict, Sanders has given voice to a viable socialist alternative and remains the only indication of a political realignment. The neo-Gramscian strategy for attaining hegemony is through a democratic "war of position" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). The war of position is a long-term strategy aimed at capturing control of political institutions. Even if Sanders does not win the Presidency, he has successfully shifted the conversation to the left,

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[56] For an exception, see Margalit 2019.

[57] Trumpism is ideological, but subliminally so. Trump need not say out loud what he clearly implies. But others, Anders Breivik, Elliot Rodger, Brenton Tarrant, and Patrick Crusius, have done so on his behalf.

causing centrist politicians to affirm his policies, and has distributed leadership opportunities to a new generation of socialists.

Robinson argues that fascist movements are triggered by capitalist crises. Economic conditions are variables of constant change and can never be the monocausal origins of political events. Structural explanations for the emergence of fascism are unable to incorporate historical anomalies that do fit their grand theories. For example, the original fascist movements in Italy predated Black Tuesday by nearly a decade. So too, proto-fascist movements and far-right parties have been a constant in the second half of the 20th century. While the 2008 bank bailout further redistributed capital into the hands of the already-wealthy, high-levels of inequality existed then as they do now. Notions such as crisis or change are nothing more than folkloric mythologies, a fetish beloved by historians and social scientists. Crisis theories, including Marxist crisis theories, rely upon historical assumptions of exceptional times distinct from the norm. Capitalism-in-perpetual-crisis has been the mainstay of the past five-hundred years. Crisis and fascism are always-already here, present even in their absence, a spiritual force deceptively making its own material reality. Historical materialism, power transition theory, and political realignment are predicated upon inferences, drawn from analogies and cyclical patterns, that, in the end, are based upon fallacious logics.

Comparative-historical theories draw lessons from the politics of 1968 and 1980, or the politics of 1929 and 1939, and apply them to contemporary politics. As Karl Marx observed in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," this mode of generalization makes a caricature of historical repetition (Marx 1978). If history happens twice, should we be thankful that the tragedy of Hitler is revived through a farcical Trump? Marx criticized the Revolution of 1848 for parodying the Revolution of 1789. The past exists only as a dogma and the application of

lessons from yesteryear is equivalent to a belief in miracles. Comparisons of Trump to Hitler or Mussolini are no less accurate than those comparing him to Napoleon III (Riley 2018). Trump and Sanders are singular world historic figures and not crisis actors whose arrivals were necessitated by structural conditions.

For Robinson, capitalist crises are synonymous with legitimation crises. The role of ideas and political institutions are worth analyzing independently. In the early 20th century, the Russian October Revolution spawned moral panics throughout Europe about the dangers of radical ideas and popular movements. In Germany, the exclusion of communist parties and the fragility of the Weimar Republic contributed to the rise of National Socialism. Colin Crouch argues that the "strange non-death of neoliberalism" after the 2008 financial crisis is due to the hollow nature of contemporary democratic institutions (Crouch 2011). The extravagance of elections, obsession with personalities, advertising, focus groups, opinion polls, and outsized influence of wealthy donors are evidence of democracy-without-ideas. There are parallels with the global capitalism school and theories of post-democracy. Robinson's magnum opus *Promoting Polyarchy* (1996) argued that the promotion of democracy throughout the Global South was a subversive effort to pacify popular movements, create corruptible institutions, and promote the interests of American foreign policy and transnational capitalists. The dictatorship of the transnational capitalist class has come at the expense of weak political elites and national political institutions. The development of a transnational state apparatus was designed to detach policy making from democratic accountability. The global rise of authoritarian populists is equally due to the failures of democratic institutions.

An unholy trinity pitting nation-states and transnational capitalists against civil society has created a brave new world with "democracy at bay." The result has been the total defeat of

leftist alternatives (Garrett and Lange 1991; Rodrik 2011). Trump has not prohibited political opposition to the same degree as the Enabling Act. However, the failures of the Pink Tide and Syriza reveal the institutional obstacles to leftist popular movements. The neo-Gramscian "war of position" is a tacit acceptance of the futility in triumphing over totalizing global capitalism. Sanders and the socialist counterforce face insurmountable impediments, both in winning the upcoming election, building a socialist base, and advancing policies once in office. The structural power of capital and the frailty of contemporary political institutions make an insurgent socialist movement a Sisyphean task.

Between an unrealizable socialism and a present-day fascism there is an excluded middle. Liberals, too, have a theory of change: *muddling through* (Lindblom 1959). To muddle through is to solve crises and policy problems by means of incremental progress. Status quo crises are, here, valuable not deleterious, and ought to be countered with system-preserving behavior. Liberal theories of change conceal theories of endurance. Liberalism is untroubled by the need to offer new ideas or deliver transformative reforms. Muddling through promises that things will stay the same by gradually getting worse. The allegation of post-democratic thinkers is that liberalism has assumed an authoritarian countenance. Political theorist Sheldon Wolin utilizes the label "inverted totalitarianism" to describe the façade of contemporary democracy: "Inverted totalitarianism perpetuates politics all the time... but a politics that is not political" (Wolin 2008: 68). Liberal politicians are architects of authoritarian governance. The reemergence of fascism has followed the establishment of neoliberal authoritarianism (Bruff 2014).[58] The specter of a revived fascism reveals the hypocrisy underpinning liberal politics.

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[58] For a reasoned critique, see Ryan 2019.

As secular stagnation persists indefinitely, 21st century fascism becomes the new normal. Trumpism, the conservative political establishment, and far-right social forces will outlive the regime. If the election of Trump proves to be a lasting political realignment it mirrors the contentlessness of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign of hope and change. William Robinson and Mario Barrera, years prior to Trump's political ascent, provocatively caricatured the Obama regime "as a Weimar republic" (Robinson and Barrera 2012). The Obama administration is a case study in the politics of appeasement. However, it is not enough to blame Obama for being an ineffective stopgap, his policies, on deportation, family separation, extrajudicial execution, etc., are illustrative of fascism-with-a-friendly-face (Gross 1980).

From Article 48 to Telegraph 71

> *Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can*
> *eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it*
> *will still be recognizable as fascist.*
> -Umberto Eco

Donald Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" is an exemplary signifier of "palingenetic ultranationalism." If nationalism is the ideological foundation of fascism, palingenesis is the performative dimension that exemplifies its aesthetic. The new consensus reprises the follies which have troubled the study of fascism. The early Italian fascist movements pre-dated the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and were not antisemitic. The "Manifesto of the Italian *Fasci*" was heavily influenced by the artistic movement futurism and not based upon appeals for reclaiming mythic history. Today, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is routinely marked a fascist demagogue, but is pursuing policies to further open the country to

transnational business. Instead of a minimal essentialism, fascist movements are complex and heterogenous (Homer-Dixon et. al. 2013). There is an entire ecology of fascism. Common traits include, but are not limited to: propaganda and the telling of "big lies," symbolic and rhetorical strategies aimed at inducing affective contagion amongst mass audiences, traditionalism and a rejection of the latest social norms, racial anxieties and the use of scapegoating, appeals to masculine, corporeal, and sexual fantasies, charismatic leaders, fetishization of violence, unquestioned deference to law-and-order, they identify as right-wing and anti-Marxist, and have transnational relationships (Nolte 1966; Paxton 2004). Fascist movements replicate standard rituals, such as coded and private language, slogans, uniforms, symbols, hand-signals, and slurs. Fascism flourishes in masses and is characterized by rallies. Fascist extremists valorize violence as the solution to social problems. Where there is fascism there are street-battles, paramilitary organizations, lone-wolf terrorists, secret police, and concentration camps.

The ecosystem of fascist actors includes movements, institutions, and leaders. A symbiotic relationship exists between political leaders and followers. Wilhelm Reich blamed the rise of fascism on a generalizable suppression of sexual desire and rigid families. Theodor Adorno and his colleagues created an all-encompassing scale to measure adherence to hierarchy, aggressive tendencies, and superstitious beliefs (Adorno et. al. 1950). Post-structuralists warn of an innate desire for power, what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call micro-fascism (Deleuze and Guattari 1977). The strong Führer-figure (super-ego) enchants obedient adherents (ego) by stimulating their unconscious desires (id). The confluence of class, racial, and sexual antagonism are social *and* psychological. For Reich, it is important to recognize that supporters are not deceived by propaganda. Grievances are channeled into certain types of prejudice. Economic position is supplanted by the social benefits of group

belonging. Leaders induce followers through libidinal investments in status conferred on their positions in the social hierarchy. Racism and sexism, therefore, are not particular attitudes but material interests (Lipsitz 1998). Fascism is less a matter of ideology than a politicization of social psychology.

The ecology of fascism is useful for understanding the 2016 election. For William I. Robinson, 21st century fascism was emergent prior to Trump, indicating the Tea Party and the Republican Party establishment as propelling forces. However, Trump gave voice to rhetoric and policies that were not expressed by rival politicians. From the perspective of liberals, it seemed that a fascist movement materialized instantaneously, ready-made. The Republican Party was initially hostile to Trump and some have sought to contain his administration. Trump has delivered tax cuts and filled the judiciary, objectives long sought by Republican elites. Trump primarily promotes himself and has not formed a network of ideational entrepreneurs. The dynamics constituting the current fascist ecosystem are not unified.[59] The ready exposure of these contradictions disclose the weakness of the regime in power.

Fascism has no monocausal origin. Causes of fascism include global power transitions, capitalist crises, fragile democratic institutions, social disruption, and charismatic demagogues. Some have tried to affix a longer time horizon upon the 20th century fascist convergence. The economic historian Karl Polanyi once claimed: "In order to comprehend German fascism, we must revert to Ricardian England" (Polanyi 1957: 32). Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment located the "triumphant calamity" of fascism within the enlightenment (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 1). The Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire proclaimed the shock of the Holocaust was that violence reserved for people of color

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[59] There are significant variations amongst those who study the social base of the far-right, see Oliver and Rahn 2016; Daniels 2018; Scoones et. al. 2018.

was employed upon whites. "[They] applied Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa" (Césaire 1972: 36). European colonialism produced a "boomerang effect" where the techniques of violence and domination mastered in the periphery were applied to the metropole. Fascism does not emerge *ex nihilo*. The events heralding the emergence of a fascist movement appeared suddenly but were the culmination of a long fetch of history. The long disaster of a slow-moving, imperceptible fascism reveals its dormant structure.

The American historian Robert Paxton described a life-cycle of fascism that consists of five stages: 1) creation of the movement, 2) rooting the movement in parties, 3) acquiring power, 4) exercising power, 5) further radicalization or entropy (Paxton 1998). The current ecology of fascism complicates the application of Paxton's stages to present-day circumstances. Neither the Tea Party movement nor Trump are the primary drivers of the fascist resurgence. Neither have successfully rooted themselves in the Republican Party. Trump has acquired power but has been frustrated in exercising it.

One thing is certain: Trump has inherited a global police state. For the past century, the U.S. has waged a perpetual World War. The War on Terror, launched by the last Republican President, was marked by the conferral of unchecked, exceptional powers to military and intelligence services. The September 11th terrorist attacks were the impetus for executive orders authorizing the indefinite detention of enemy combatants. Protected neither by national nor international law, detainees remain imprisoned, never to stand trial. Simon Critchley characterized the logic of the Bush regime's global war as "crypto-Schmittian" (Critchley 2007), Carl Schmitt being the Nazi legal scholar who justified the "state of exception" (Schmitt 2005; Schmitt 2014). The state of exception was given legal form through Article 48 of the

Weimar Constitution, which was invoked by Adolf Hitler in the aftermath of the 1933 Reichstag fire. Article 48 symbolizes the transition from an emergent fascist movement to a fully formed fascism.

The state of exception epitomizes the extralegal machinations necessary for organized mass death. Fascism is not threatening without a police apparatus and not extraordinarily horrific if dissimilar polities commit similar atrocities. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben argues that the state of exception is the very paradigm of government (Agamben 2005). Little Eichmanns, ordinary bureaucrats willing to kill and torture out of duty, are ubiquitous figures in fascist *and* liberal states (Arendt 1963). The Nazi regime used the genocide of Native Americans and Jim Crow police laws as their model (Whitman 2017). During World War II, the American government interned Japanese Americans in concentration camps without trial. In the past century, the U.S. has waged multiple wars, assassinated numerous foreign leaders, frequently initiated civil wars, and assisted in several genocides.[60] Deleuze and Guattari's fascination with fascism culminates in their comparison of American world order and the so-called democratic peace with fascism. "[*I*]*t is peace that technologically frees the unlimited material process of total war*... [T]here was no longer a need for fascism. The Fascists were only child precursors, and the absolute peace... succeeded where total war had failed. The Third World War was already upon us" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 467). When there are people disappeared inside military prisons without due process, communities imprisoned by the tens of millions, thousands of unarmed civilians extrajudicially executed by police annually, asylum seekers refused, children separated from their parents, and tens of millions of foreign citizens mass murdered, there is no justice and there is no peace. If our

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[60] Some still have the audacity to declare the emergence of a "perpetual world peace," and journals with the temerity to publish such nonsense, see Mousseau 2019.

labels and theories call this peace but dare not call it fascism, what good are these theories? The emergence of 21st century fascism in the United States has as its origins hundreds of years of settler-colonial, racial, and imperial violence.

The life-cycle of fascism by Deleuze and Guattari entails a cancerous body politic become suicidal (Protevi 2000). Micro-fascism spreads throughout the whole social body and fascist movements capture the state apparatus from below. Instead of a state appropriating military and police institutions, a war/law-and-order mentality appropriates the state. The horrific characteristic of fascism is not its causes, or its internal distribution of power, but the processes of organized violence that ensue. For Deleuze and Guattari, fascism is ideological only insofar as it is based upon a cult of death. Its self- creation is subsumed by the necessity of its self-destruction. The Falangist slogan "*Viva la muerte*!" is realized in Telegram 71. Facing imminent defeat Hitler ordered the destruction of all public infrastructure and vital reserves: "If the war is lost, the nation will also perish. This fate is inevitable." The state of exception where the law no longer applies is analogous to collective death where nobody is spared. The struggle against 21st century fascism, therefore, is also a struggle against the *realized nihilism* of a suicidal liberalism. Capitalist civilization has charted a one-way, irreversible course towards planetary destruction and the extinction of the species. Ecological and systemic collapse portend a fascism-to-come infinitely more terrifying than the Trump regime (Johnson 2019).

Two Anonymous Texts: "Thinking from the Wreckage"

> *But the fascist game can be played in many forms,*
> *and the name of the game does not change.*
> -Umberto Eco

In finale, two anonymous texts, written immediately before and after the 2016 election, serve as a gigantomachy displaying the present-day struggle between fascist and anti-fascist forces.

Publius Decius Mus' essay "The Flight 93 Election" is one of the historic documents of the 2016 election. Published anonymously in the *Claremont Review of Books*, the essay was the climatic call-to-arms of a group of conservative political theorists who sought to defend a "coherent, sensible Trumpism" (*Publius Decius Mus* 2016a). Throughout the primary, an online journal by the name of *The Journal of American Greatness* operated as a clearinghouse for those challenging the dogma and entrenched power of conservative elites. The "Mission Statement" of the journal attacks the World Economic Forum and Club for Growth, the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Interest*, Max Boot and Robert Kagan, as signs of a conservative ideology betrayed (*The Journal of American Greatness*). Exposing conformity, they envisioned the Donald Trump campaign as an anti-intellectual, anti-globalist, anti-idealist alternative. *The Journal of American Greatness* sought to make serious and credible Anders Breivik's manifesto for those most at home reading Leo Strauss.[61] The character *Publius Decius Mus* plays the role of vanguard and the essay "The Flight 93 Election" serves as the new manifesto for 21st century fascism.

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[61] *Publius Decius Mus* is the pseudonym of Michael Anton, who served as Deputy Assistant for Strategic Communication on the United States National Security Council for most of Trump's first term.

Published two months prior to the general election, "The Flight 93 Election" is predicated upon a simple premise: "charge the cockpit or you die" (*Publius Decius Mus* 2016b). The essay brandishes the terror of an aging generation, one aggrieved by unrealized expectations, invested in possessive inheritance, fearful of outside threats and hegemonic decline, and convinced of internal paralysis. However, the apocalyptic urgency is all for not. Neither natural disasters, economic shocks, international conflict, nor democratic backsliding are portended. The gravest threat iterated is multiculturalism. Repeated references to changing demographics demonstrates the author's self-identification with white culture and pronounced xenophobia. Loss of an imagined community is an *imagined catastrophe*. The logic of the piece is self-assurance in search of exigence. As the author ironically posits, wishing for a tautology to enact itself is not an argument. The *true (irrational) terror* of the Flight 93 election for dear *Publius* was "a million more Syrians," which was not a policy of the Hillary Clinton campaign, a realistic scenario, nor would it threaten markets or lives.

There is a crisis identified though, a *crisis of conservatism*. The stylistic flair is a conjuring trick intended to hide the singular purpose of motivating voters and feigning seriousness. *Publius Decius Mus* acknowledges but is unbothered that Trump is a "loudmouth" and "worse than imperfect." What is defended, fanatically, is Trumpism, defined by three central policy planks: secure borders, economic nationalism, and an America-first foreign policy. The author is a paleoconservative, antagonistic to neo-conservativism, harkening back to Pat Buchanan. Trumpism represents a mythic repetition of a weary Reaganism. There is an appeal for neoliberalism without globalization, conservatism without apology, unencumbered by checks and balances. Even the B-movie actor farcically reappears. The 2016 election is imagined as a crisis of conservative ideology. A defeat would be a repudiation of

conservativism. *Publius* mistakes the value of a political philosophy for the results of an election. Understated is a deeper fear of declining conservative hegemony. Unrealized is that Trump threatens the survival of the Republican Party far more than unfavorable results in a single election cycle. If there is something exceptional about Trump it is the intensification of crisis. The politics of Trump is that if he loses, may the nation also perish. *Publius Decius Mus* fastens conservativism to a realized nihilism, promising to destroy what it sought to safeguard.

What makes "The Flight 93 Election" a historic document is that a) Trump proved victorious and b) this is one of the few (certainly the chicest) intellectual attempts to advocate on behalf of this victory. What makes this document exceptional is the irrationality behind the terror it presupposes. Immigration and trade policies, ideologies and cultural identity, will remain contested issues within American politics. The invocation of existential stakes, "win this election or die," transforms an election into a war. Mr. *Decius Mus* is aware of the fascism implicit within his argument. "The Left was calling us Nazis long before any pro-Trumpers tweeted Holocaust denial memes." The hyperbolic propensity of the "fascism charge" excuses not just Holocaust denial, but white supremacist rallies, targeted terrorism, and family separation. In conjunction with the *crisis of conservatism* is an exaggerated danger of the radical left. For *Publius*, the left is an enemy and justifies militancy. Partisan politics becomes a contest for asserting victory and domination, fascist spiritedness, at any cost. The Flight 93 election, therefore, never ends, the crash perpetually delayed, reimagined every election campaign.

Liberals and the radical left shared an experience of 2016 as a Flight 93 election. The campaign of a fascist demagogue was widely portrayed by liberal elites as an existential threat

to democratic institutions and America's global standing. However, no one charged the cockpit. The Trump Presidency is the collective experience of the resulting crash.

One month after the President Trump's inauguration, an essay appeared on a blog entitled *Research & Destroy*.[62] "The Landing: Fascists without Fascism" is haunted by "The Flight 93 Election." The essay begins by asking the reader to imagine a plane crashing. "So the presidential election of 2016 seemed to those on the plane" (*Research & Destroy* 2017). Unlike "The Flight 93 Election," "The Landing: Fascists without Fascism" did not receive much fanfare, but is equally deserving of appraisal as an (subterranean) historic document. "The Landing" has a double meaning. Written after the election, the anonymous author asks the reader to look-backwards at the crash-landing, to the experience of the crash, of seeing it coming, and what led to it. *Research & Destroy* depicts the catastrophe of Trump as an abrupt immediacy. Trump is described as an event, the crossing of a threshold, a break, a present without history. What appears fascist is the experience of an exceptional election that repudiates past norms. However, this is precisely what the author(s) aim to deconstruct. While the election of Trump arrives as a new history, it is a repetition of history and the culmination of a progressive disaster. The catastrophe is not Trump's sudden appearance, but the aftermath of a protracted, drawn-out failure. For *Research & Destroy*, this represents the historical contradiction of the 2016 election. The shock of Trump's victory as an immediate crisis, a crisis-in-itself, belies the complex conjunctural conditions that precipitated the long crisis of hegemony of which he is the consequence. What unites "The Landing: Fascists without Fascism" with William Robinson's theory of 21st century fascism is a staging of Trumpism as both wholly original and not original.

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[62] Even if I knew the author(s) behind *Research & Destroy*, I would not reveal their name(s).

The additional meaning of "The Landing" indicates that the catastrophe is ongoing. The crash-landing denotes a beachhead from which fascism begins its incursion. For *Research & Destroy*, the Trump regime exhibits a *simulacrum of fascism*, colorfully termed "fascists without fascism." The rhetoric, the shock and awe, ape the appearance of power without the corresponding mastery of state institutions or the support of elites. Trump's neo-fascism has not overcome institutional obstructions, nor has it eliminated countervailing democratic forces. The counterpoised phrase "fascism without fascists" is an equally potent descriptor of American politics. The history of the United States consists of a legacy of superfluous settler-colonial, racial, and imperial violence, undeterred in its abuse of power. Ultranationalism and palingenesis has not been the lone prerequisite for exploitation, incarceration, or genocide. The opening of markets and spreading of democracy has justified mass death. If there was a dormant fascism awaiting a moment of crisis, there was likewise a friendly fascism that authorized mass death in idealistic terms and without rhetorical malice. The fascist landing is a continuation of the wreckage brought about by liberalism. Fascism-without-fascists is a theory of *structural fascism*. Structural fascism reveals that liberalism is coextensive with fascist politics. Dialectically, structural fascism functions as a mediation of historic fascism and Neo- Fascism, revising and extending the originary intention of Umberto Eco's "Ur-Fascism."

For the anonymous author of "The Landing: Fascists without Fascism," the spontaneous blockade of airports is the event which catalyzes the struggle against 21st century fascism. Airports are "already in fascism," the state of exception where police power is preestablished as unlimited. Airports acted as the boundary of what was contestable under liberal politics and are, thus, linked to a continual struggle marked by other sites, such as Zuccotti Park, Ferguson, and Standing Rock. As a postscript to the procession of horrors of the Trump Administration, the response by the Jewish resistance movement to the policy of family separation and concentration camps is that "Never Again is Now." As explained by the Jewish cartoonist Eli Valley: "The cautionary tale of European Jews deluded about their safety at the dawn of the 20th century has by now become cliché. But it is happening here—not systemically to Jews, not immediately, but it's already begun against other communities, and it's getting

Figure 3: From "On Nazi Imagery Today" by Eli Valley, 2017

worse" (Valley 2019). Under the shadow of a former fascism, the present metalepsis is abused by the far- right to denounce their adversaries and omit their transgressions. It is insignificant whether Trump and his supporters are "minimally fascist" but of great import is the maximum limit of crimes and atrocities they are permitted to commit. *Research & Destroy* asks the reader to *think from the wreckage*. "[T]here is no way back... The plane has crash-landed in the shuddering present. It will not magically reassemble itself like film running backward." The apocalypticism of the essay emits a warning of structural fascism become *eternal fascism*. Trump is a harbinger of a fascism-to-come. A dismal, melancholy future awaits, of an

existential political conflict, portending ecological and systemic collapse, a fascism-without-end.

The formulaic conclusions of the neo-Gramscians are derived from Antonio Gramsci's adage to adopt a "pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will" (Gramsci 1977: 188). By admonishing their readers that the future is unwritten and contingent, that everyday actors retain a high degree of agency, the Neo-Gramscian school clings to a forlorn belief in the triumphant structure of history. A pessimistic imagination of a hyperbolic fascism without scale, limit, or historical precedent, is contrasted with the optimistic belief in its eventual defeat. The strength of a pessimistic theory of history is its rejection of existing models of change. A dismal, melancholy science teaches that the history of civilization is a series of intensifying atrocities. Walter Benjamin, in Thesis VIII of "Theses on the Philosophy of History," observes that the "tradition of the oppressed" teaches us that fascism is not a historical exception but the historic norm (Benjamin 1968: 257). The current amazement that fascism is "still" possible in the 21st century stems from our historical myopia, the organized forgetting and ignoring of mass death. Attaining to a conception of history in keeping with this insight suggests that the fascist exception is a continuance of liberal norms. The revival of a fascist imaginary reminds that there are no limits to atrocity. The "real" state of emergency is here and now, it has always been here and now, and it is our lot to survive amidst the wreckage.

6. BUREAUCRATS WITH GUNS: OR, HOW WE CAN ABOLISH THE POLICE IF WE JUST STOP BELIEVING IN THEM[63]

Introduction

The opening line of David Graeber's essay "On the Phenomenology of Giant Puppets: Broken Windows, Imaginary Jars of Urine, and the Cosmological Role of Police in American Culture" begins by saying it is an "essay of interpretation" (Graeber 2007: 375). Perhaps, this is the earliest sign that what comes next is intended to be grandiose. *Perhaps*, it should have been evident from the title. James Q. Wilson and George Kelling's broken windows theory, the *locus classsicus* for conservative calls for law-and-order, is never mentioned or cited but haunts the text, meeting its match in the images of black bloc anarchists shattering the literal windows of capitalist institutions. For Wilson and Kelling (1982), broken windows were a metaphor for disorder. Heavy-handed policing was justified by appeals to neighbourhood safety, but that was mere window-dressing for the larger aim of protecting those in suits. For Graeber, those in black hoodies confronting the suits were the ones worth valorising. Anarchists, vilified as forces of disorder, were the ones seeking a more just world and embodying democracy in action. Standing between, separating *and* protecting, the suits from those in black hoodies were those in blue uniforms, or to be more exact, those in full tactical military gear emblazoned with the title: POLICE. Put another way, underlying the criticisms of the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and structural

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adjustment programmes are police institutions, at once local and global, whose armed soldiers are the necessary counterpart to the institutionalised raiding and extortion by global bureaucrats. *Police are partisans in a covert war against society.* By claiming to "interpret" the police, Graeber intends to offer some *hardly* "tenuous conclusions" that advance upon traditional theories of police. What has always been striking to me is what little has been said about Graeber's interpretation of police within police studies or by police abolitionists.

The allure of Graeber's essay on police is not just its pretensions for grandeur. Who writes an essay about police in which the primary antagonism involves puppeteers? Or, for that matter, who can slip allusions to imaginary jars of urine into the title? Who in writing about police would ever claim to discern its cosmology? Underlying the claims of grandiosity is damn good storytelling. The hallmark of ethnography lies, in part, in the eloquence of its style. Graeber himself admits that his interpretation arose from an initial feeling of puzzlement. A benefit of Graeber's interpretative stance is that he seeks an honest accounting of the institution and its role within contemporary politics. The puzzle that drives Graeber's inquiry: why do police hate puppets and their puppeteers? Underlying the question is the absurdity of it all. Police at war with puppets is intensely comical. Juxtaposed with the seriousness of "interpreting" police is Graeber's mischievous giggle as if all it might take to undermine their mythic power and sway over society is by pointing out their preposterousness. This, after all, is the strategic aim of activist puppeteers: to break the spell that the capitalist order holds over us.

This chapter is not just a summary or promotion of "On the Phenomenology of Giant Puppets." Graeber's essay, in fact, is the basis for extended treatment in the final three chapters of his magisterial book *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. The police are one of the central

themes that animates Graeber's work from beginning to end. As an anthropologist, he repeatedly turns his attention to places that lack formal police institutions or otherwise maintain police forces utterly alien to modern sensibilities. These unusual places are the animus for his recasting of the traditional concepts of political theory: sovereignty, hierarchy, and the state. Graeber's later work, attacking bureaucracy and meaningless labour, continues his critical interpretation of police. It is impossible to understand the significance and importance of Graeber's scholarship, *in toto*, without understanding what he has to say about the police. Most importantly, what Graeber has to say about the police is an altogether original interpretation that should be of importance to those studying police and to social movements seeking to diminish their political power. Some of Graeber's observations represent considerable challenges to the cause of police abolition, whereas others provide supporting theses that could aid our struggle against police authoritarianism. Foreshadowing my conclusions, I do not think that Graeber's mischievous giggle is enough: the unreasonableness of the police is not sufficient for them to melt away.

Fragments of an Abolitionist Anthropology

The French philosopher Michel Foucault once made the bold assertion: "The great event of the 18th century, we always think of judiciary reform, the obtaining of liberties, etc., but what really happened during the 18th century was something important, *an invention* for which we don't give enough credit to its inventors, it happens that they were French, is the police. *The police are an invention* [my emphasis], in its modern form, of the 18th century and of the bureaucratic monarchies" (Foucault 1977). Foucault's assertion has always struck me as

overly absolute and inaccurate.[64] Foucault reinforces the assumption that police are a modern European invention and forecloses any enquiry into pre-modern forms of policing and social control. Foucault never analyses non-European institutions, nor does he explain how pre-modern police institutions shape modern police institutions. Foucault provocatively positioned himself in opposition to anthropology, claiming: "my aim is to define a method of historical analysis freed from the anthropological theme" (Foucault 1972: 16). This might have been prompted by anthropology's disreputable roots in colonialism and the racist overtones of its portrayals of non-Western societies. The primary target of Foucault's opprobrium was humanism and the human sciences generally. For Foucault, anthropology was identified with assumptions about human nature, a search for origins, and a propensity for totalising histories. Anthropology has more to offer than thinly veiled racist presumptions about non-Western societies or teleological accounts of human progress. From a genealogical point of view, pre-modern and non-European forbearers to police institutions are important, as they were appropriated in the process of creating modern police institutions.

Abolitionists have repeated some of the assumptions that underwrite Foucault's "secret history of the police."[65] They proffer that the police are not necessary because they are

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[64] For those interested in reading more about Foucault's "secret history of police," I must shamelessly suggest my article on the subject (Johnson, 2014).

[65] I subscribe to the view, expressed by Joy James (2021), that there are multiple abolitionisms. To provide clarity for the uninitiated, abolitionists are largely united in fidelity to W.E.B. Du Bois' (1935) notion of abolition-democracy: a promise to upend oppressive institutions and transform them into care-based alternatives. The most notable abolitionist demands of police is to see them demilitarised, disarmed, defunded, disempowered, and disbanded. For two noteworthy clarifying statements, see McDowell and Fernandez (2018) and Lester (2021).

relatively new, lending credibility to the thesis that a future without police is possible. This sentiment is best expressed in DeLesslin George-Warren's powerful art piece: "There Was A Time Before Police And There Will Be A Time After" (Figure 1). To take but one more example, see political theorist Geo Maher's statement in *A World Without Police*: "to paraphrase Ursula K. Le Guin, while the power of the police can seem
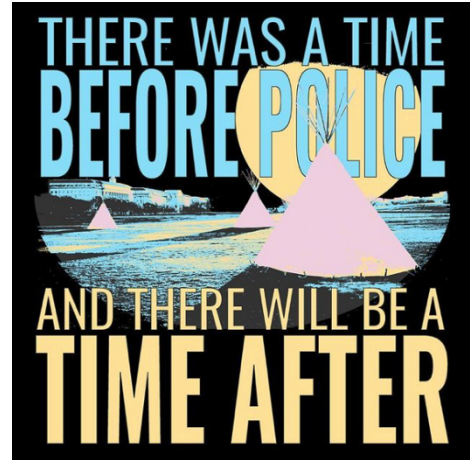

Figure 4

inescapable, 'so did the divine rights of kings.' Once upon a time there were no cops, and that day is coming again soon" (Maher 2021: 11). Maher's provocation evokes the phrase "Once upon a time", implying that a world without police resembles fairy tales. Historically, though, if we understand cops as bureaucratic functionaries who wear blue uniforms, have badges and carry truncheons, there indeed was once a time without these officials. George-Warren's design suggests that indigenous American communities did not rely upon the police, referring to the non-European, pre-modern, often non-state societies that Foucault wilfully ignores. David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow (2021b) likewise argue that indigenous Americans maintained an abolitionist justice system, refusing to spank their children, punish thieves or murderers, and/or take punitive action against tribal members. Both within-group and between-group violence was handled through arbitration. This prevented cyclical violence and sought to repair harms through the establishment of personal and social debts.[66] Families and communities were held collectively responsible for the misdeeds of bad actors. A focal

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[66] Friedrich Nietzsche theorised that punishment arouse out debt relations. Debts are a type of punishment and a form of social control. Far from the Americas, in Africa, Graeber describes the Lele people who paid a blood-debt as recompense for violent acts (Graeber 2011: 139).

target of the indigenous American critique of modern European society was the harsh punishment system and general lack of freedom within coloniser countries. A word of caution: it is conspicuous that Graeber and Wengrow's indigenous critique lacks indigenous voices.[67] As a prominent cheerleader of ethnography, Graeber's interest in indigenous politics relies too heavily upon its representation by non-indigenous observers. Indigenous communities have diverse political cultures and allusions to the contrary flatten thousands of distinct cultures.[68]

If Foucault's assertion is overly absolute, I find the abolitionist supposition of a time before police a bit oversimplified. The political imaginary represented by the vast expanse of human history that was *un*policed is enticing and fascinating, indeed romantic. This history, though, is more complex than assumed, and it is my belief that abolitionists and political theorists should not be dissuaded by alternative histories that do not easily confer with our slogans. History is always an inconvenience for our theories, imaginaries, and ideals while not necessarily discrediting them. Whereas cops might be new, policing has a lasting history. In one respect, this might be an analytic distinction: police are an office; polic*ing* is a function. In another, proto-policing institutions also have a lasting history. Put another way: whereas cops might be new, sheriffs certainly are not.[69] Whereas non-state and indigenous societies are powerful counterexamples to our repressive, heavily policed nation-states, these societies' lived politics and forms of social control are bountifully heterogeneous. There are fragments of history revealing both policed and *un*policed societies; both ought to be of interest, as should their convergence. Myself, I am enticed and fascinated by these manifold histories, and some

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[67] The harshest assessment of the Occupy movement were critiques put forward by indigenous scholars. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang proclaim: 'The call to "occupy everything" has legitimized a set of practices with problematic relationships to land and to Indigenous sovereignty' (2012: 28).

[68] Worth noting: the book's contents reveal a more nuanced position than the promotional article cited above.

[69] For those interested in reading more about this history, I suggest Zedner (2006) and Lambert (2020).

of my research has been devoted to exploring pre-modern policing and the contributions of political anthropologists.

IN WHICH WE CONSIDER THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN STATES AND BUREAUCRACY

It should not be surprising that Graeber, perhaps the most prominent promoter of anarchist anthropology, would have something valuable to contribute to abolitionist anthropology.[70] Graeber identifies theories of the state and non-state political entities as two promising tenets of his non-existent science (Graeber 2004: 65-70). In *On Kings*, Graeber returns to theories of the state to "put some flesh" (Graeber and Sahlins, 2017, p. 65) on his own (early) definition and to deride the endless debate surrounding the origins of the state for creating a "shop-worn concept" (456). If the state has been over-theorised to the point of abstraction, the most promising, as yet unexplored, subject is non-state political entities. Here, it is revealing that the police play an outsized role. Whether ancient Athens can be classified as a state or whether kingdoms were states remains unclear. In Athens, Graeber dismisses the power of a police force staffed by slaves. Ancient Athens, along with countless other examples, lacks the characteristics of a state largely because it lacked a formal police apparatus. One of the basic assumptions of political philosophy is that a police force is a necessary and sufficient condition of a modern state. A central thesis animating my research is that many of these preconceptions about police are inaccurate. One of the significant insights of the recent

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[70] Graeber's disdain for the label "anarchist anthropologist" later in life is noteworthy.

proliferation of research into police is the need to disaggregate policing from the state.[71] Succinctly argued by Lucia Zedner: "the concept of policing as a state activity is now becoming an intellectual straitjacket" (2006: 82). States might require police, but policing is often voluntary, communal, privatised, and/or transnational. As put by Graeber: "'The state' would better be seen as an amalgam of heterogeneous elements often of entirely separate origins that happened to have come together in certain times and places" (2017: 456). If an anarchist and abolitionist anthropology can be distinguished, the foremost challenge is detailing the complex relationship between the state and non-state political entities. Whereas innumerable political theorists have written about state origins, few have focused on the origins of political institutions. What remains to be developed is a political anthropology of institutional formation.

The study *Police: The First 5,000 Years* has yet to be written. However, Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021) is a mighty first step in developing an account of institutional formation. Their tome is explicitly not a book about inequality; rather, Graeber and Wengrow experiment with new theories about state and non-state political entities. Here, they posit that "the state has no origin" (359). The fixation upon the state as the central unit of political analysis masks our understanding of the underlying practices which constitute it. Graeber and Wengrow endeavour, instead, to write a new political history and a theory to match it. Relying upon archaeological discoveries and a series of quirky ethnographies, they point to evidence of anomalous cases that invalidate the dominant linear theories of state formation. While attention has gravitated to the debate over the agricultural revolution, growing evidence of cities and states without rulers, police, and/or bureaucrats have

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[71] I could cite any number of articles or books here. For an exemplar review, see the Introduction to Micol Seigel's *Violence Work* (Seigel, 2018).

made a lesser impact. Yes, Graeber and Wengrow conclude that grains do not make states, but just as important is their contention that police do not make states either. The traditional theory of political development maintains that increases in social scale necessitate the formation of police forces. An armed bureaucracy is an evolutionary springboard for the power to command large numbers of disparate strangers. The historical evidence tells a different story. Graeber and Wengrow point to expansive shatter-zones, heavily populated cities, and even states where decision-making power resided in community assemblies. Natchez, in present-day Mississippi, is cited as an example of 'sovereignty without a state' (Graeber and Wengrow: 392). The Great Sun King had no apparatus of control. Tell Sabi Abyad, in contemporary Syria, is described as maintaining an extensive bureaucracy but one that was care-based and not equipped for violence. Graeber and Wengrow, in turn, propose new categories to theorise institutional and state formation. They identify three elementary forms of domination: the control of violence, the control of information, and the projection of individual charisma.[72] First-order regimes exert only one mode of domination. Second-order regimes combine any two. Modern states are those that successfully wield all three.

IN WHICH WE SHOW HOW SOVEREIGNTY AND VIOLENCE ARE DIFFICULT TO ABOLISH

Political theorists have led the way in decentring the state from heterogeneous political processes through debates about concepts such as sovereignty, hierarchy, authority, domination, etc. Graeber found that these theoretical debates had more purchase than those

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[72] This schema corresponds to a partition between sovereignty, administration, and politics.

surrounding the origins of the state. His conclusion to *On Kings* plays a crucial part in demonstrating this. Here, he states: "Asking about the origins of sovereignty is very different than asking about the origins of the state" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 456). If sovereignty is equated with the power to command and carry out arbitrary violence with impunity, it is evident that we are commanded and threatened by a surfeit of authorities that may or may not be state authorities. Amongst state authorities, there is also indeterminable variation. Police are an extreme case, given wide-ranging discretion, nearly incontestable authority, free use of violence, and substantial political influence. A standard principal-agent relation cannot explain the present political situation. There is general agreement that police power is overwhelming; however, the political power of police remains shrouded in mystery (a mystery both Graeber and abolitionists have been at the forefront of trying to solve). This is one reason that Graeber notes: "in theory, of course, the traffic cop is different than the dictator" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 458). An examination of the historical record, where at times police were enslaved and routinely tortured and kings were often powerless and ritually sacrificed, proves that the difference is not that one has more authority or power than the other. There has been a recent resurgence in strongmen dictators, but the long-term, steady trend has been an exponential expansion in the number and types of petty police tyrants roaming the streets. There is but one tyrant; petty tyrants, on the other hand, are legion. Our reflections on tyranny, particularly the tyranny of our age, must attain a conception of history that is keeping with this insight. One of the principal conclusions of the long 20th century debate over sovereignty has been its intensifying decentralisation and the need to shift attention to police power.[73]

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[73] The most notable combatants involved in the 20th-century gigantomachy over sovereignty include Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben. For a recent review, see Loick (2019).

The problem with theoretical debates is that they involve essentially contested concepts and are rarely resolved. This is the tension that so constrains anarchists and abolitionists, often compelling them to issue grand and abridged accounts of the time before police and/or nation-states. The greatest challenge confronting abolitionist thinking is the draw of political realism. The general public has strong folk intuitions about the existence, possibility, importance, and/or preferability of *un*policed societies in the past, present, or future. Social movements must appeal to and aspire to change these deeply entrenched common-sense beliefs (Woodly 2015). Rightly or wrongly, most do not find abolition realistic. Graeber offers valuable insight into the challenge of political realism. Graeber distinguishes political ontologies of violence from political ontologies of the imagination (2009: 509–534; 2011: 41–66). Political realism and political imaginaries are locked in diametrical opposition. For activists and organisers hoping to craft persuasive slogans, proposals, or aspirations there is a demand that they be credible. Despite Graeber's reputation as a dreamer, he often refers to himself as a realist. His position is most explicit in his debate with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (and ode to Roy Bhaskar). Here, he claims: "if one goes slightly further and argues not just that reality can never be fully encompassed in our imaginative constructs, but that reality *is* that which can never be fully encompassed in our imaginative constructs, then surely 'radical alterity' is just another way of saying 'reality'" (Graeber 2015: 28). The stakes of this debate revolve around whether witches, spells, fetishes, and omens are ontologically real. Graeber rejects ontological anarchy in favour of a realist anarchism. What is a realist anarchism? According to Paul Raekstad, the existence of politics without states demonstrates that anarchism is not constrained by realism (Raekstad 2016). For Gearóid Brinn (2020), a realist anarchism cannot

discount the role of power, the permanence of conflict, the need for practical strategies, the importance of history, and should shy away from normative claims.

Graeber offers similar constraints upon our political imaginations. The origins of sovereignty are different than the origins of the state because sovereignty existed before historic records (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 378) and can be considered an elementary structure of human social existence (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 462). Put somewhat provocatively: "Kings can be killed; kingship *abolished* [my emphasis]; but even then, the principle of sovereignty tends to remain" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 459). The implications of such a thought for abolitionists are obvious and daunting. Stuart Hall, along with his colleagues from the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies, threw down the gauntlet long ago: "Unfortunately you cannot resolve a social contradiction by abolishing the label that has been attached to it" (Hall et al. 1978: 1). Abolitionists have not yet responded to this challenge. Sovereignty (and we can include power, conflict, and even polic*ing*) is ostensibly ineradicable, certainly intractable.

This is one constraint. A second constraint, correlated with the first, is that violence is a first-order social and political force. The primary challenge that animated the long 20th century debate surrounding sovereignty was the inability to evade or overcome the political realism, despite its dangerous implications, of Thomas Hobbes or Carl Schmitt. Graeber accepts this as well. He claims: "[T]o be a 'realist' in politics has nothing to do with recognizing material realities, it is about willingness to accept the realities of violence. Violence is what defines the ultimate truth of the situation" (Graeber 2009: 505). There is no arguing with someone once they start beating you with a truncheon. In this instance, the challenge confronting abolitionists is made clear and formidable: the police act as a reality

principle. "These things are real because they can kill you" (Graeber 2009: 510). Violence is a metaphysical force. Violence *is*, happens, and all are *forced* into response. Graeber asks us to consider the multiple and varied meanings of the word 'force.'

> Consider the following six sentences:
>
> 1) The police arrived at the square and opened fire on the protesters.
> 2) Several fell to the ground as the **force** of plastic bullets impacted them.
> 3) Others were **forced** to the ground and handcuffed.
> 4) Police then **forced** them into arrest vans.
> 5) As a result, the remaining protestors were **forced** to abandon the square.
> 6) The police **force** secured the area.
>
> In sentence #2 "force" refers to simple physics… The usage in sentence #3 is close… but it blends into the more ambiguous usage in sentence #4, where likely as not sheer physical pressure (pushing arrestees, prodding, dragging, even carrying them) was supplemented by the giving of orders backed by implicit or explicit threat. In sentence #5, "force" refers only to the effects of fear of further physical attack. Finally, it is because of their ability to employ violence and the threat of violence, in the most efficient way possible to do things like clear streets, that the police can be referred to as "a force" (as they are in sentence #6) (Graeber 2009: 511–512).

This passage makes clear "the forces" we are up against. It is not hyperbole to refer to the police as a reality principle, a metaphysical force, or comprising a cosmology. Abolishing the laws of the police stands as much of a chance as abolishing the laws of the universe. If police power is overwhelming and the political power of police mysterious it is because these powers are composed of invisible forces and hidden realities. This is what Graeber means by political ontologies of violence. Policing assumes an ontological status as natural, as an "elementary structure," and as real. How does one confront such an enemy? If there is a contest between the political ontologies of violence and the political ontologies of the imagination, those wielding the truncheon, guns, and armed personnel carriers are winning.[74]

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[74] If states also depend upon the powers of the imagination, they have had more success in creating their police utopias precisely because they have utilised violence to make them real.

WHY THE POLICE HAVE NO ORIGIN

Thus far, I have described the theoretical challenges that confront an abolitionist anthropology but have not yet addressed the real existence of *un*policed societies. *Un*policed societies have often existed as a euphemism for non-state societies. However, there is evidence of states without police and police without states. Graeber provides examples of each in his description of the ghost-state, clown police, and the Crow police.

It is ironic, certainly puzzling, that those most associated with anarchist anthropology have provided some of the strongest reasons for caution. Violence within non-state societies has been a long-standing debate by political theorists. Anthropologists, however, have led the way in establishing that stateless societies are neither inherently violent nor destitute. Karl Widerquist and Grant McCall conclude there is a consensus view amongst anthropologists acknowledging that violence and well-being in non-state societies (as in states) varies greatly (Widerquist and McCall 2016: 175). Non-state societies are neither essentially peaceful nor excessively violent. The Hobbesian proviso has been effectively discredited; however, a vulgar anarchist anthropology still prevails. The foremost target of Graeber and Wengrow is not the reactionary Hobbes, but the romantic Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A lasting lesson of their new history of humanity is the widespread variety in politics and social life within both non-state societies and early states. Graeber's mentor, Marshall Sahlins, established his fame on the claim that hunter-gatherer societies were originally affluent. In "The Original Political Society", Sahlins' "pretentious swan song", he aims to disprove the existence of *pure* egalitarian societies by showing how politics and hierarchy prevailed within them. Despite their affluence and social equality, the existence of Gods and rituals within egalitarian societies

provided a measure of political order. Gods command obedience. Rituals establish norms of communal conduct. Graeber and Sahlins posit: "It follows that the state of nature has the nature of the state" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 3). Graeber and Sahlins argue that the traditional view of state and non-state societies as irreducible opposites is no longer tenable. There is a measure of sovereignty in stateless societies, as is there a measure of anarchy within states.

Anthropologists are keenly aware that when police disappear, life goes on and people carry on exactly as before.[75] Graeber's iconic example is the ghost-state of Madagascar. Before undertaking his field studies during graduate school, he was warned that state authority was in retreat and, in some places, entirely missing. Upon arrival, Graeber found the existence of the state alongside its non-operation. In both cities and towns, there were actual police stations but little policing. Graeber suggestively refers to this as a "ghost-image of authority" (Graeber 2007: 164). All of Madagascar was involved in perpetuating this scam: bureaucrats, armed bureaucrats, and those they failed to govern. One reason was the historical legacy of French colonialism. Memories of arbitrary violence served as the common image of state authority; therefore, there was a strong cultural sense that the state should be emptied and stripped of its content. Graeber argued that this case study was useful for understanding both state and non-state societies.[76] The *un*policed ghost-state of Madagascar was evidence of a popular anarchist concept: "provisional autonomous zones". Graeber (2007) notes:

> One wonders if there might not be hundreds, even thousands, of similar communities in other parts of the world – communities that have withdrawn from and drifted away from the effective national governments and become for all intents and purposes self-governing, but whose members are still performing the external form and tokens of obeisance in order to disguise that fact. (p. 177).

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[75] I am grateful to Jennifer Simpson for the reminder that were this true it would undermine the case for abolition. Social life in the absence of police is one of reduced violence.

[76] There is resonance here with Pierre Clastres' description of anti-state societies and James C. Scott's studies of state evasion (Clastres, 1989; Scott, 2009).

If Graeber found something humorous in the heavy-handed policing of puppet activists, that same mischievous giggle is present in his analysis of the clown police of American indigenous communities. The funniest part of Graeber's ethnography of protest policing is the appearance of the Revolutionary Anarchist Clown Bloc. At a moment of crisis during the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, the appearance of clown activists interrupted the certain arrest of black bloc anarchists, allowing them to dramatically escape. Billionaires for Bush activists handed out fake money to the riot police for repressing dissent. Clowns attacked the Billionaires with inflatable mallets. The humour of the situation managed to subvert the laws of war that had previously defined the situation. Perhaps, the lasting lesson of Graeber's retelling of indigenous clown police is the need for a silly abolitionism: we can retain the presence of police so long as we outfit them in outlandish costumes, tricycles, and squirt guns.

The story of indigenous clown police begins in central and northern California, migrates to the southwest Pueblo Indians, and ends in the plains amongst the Crow Indians. In California, the appearance of clowns was both funny and terrifying. They were adorned in elaborate disguises and only given authority during rare ceremonies. These rituals consisted of frenzied group dance parties with the police serving as the overseeing chaperones. Only men could be employed as clown police. They primarily came from a class of hobos or beggars within the community. Their presence was intended to terrify those in attendance into participating and remaining subservient. Their purpose was to control misbehaviour. However, the rules of proper conduct were already arbitrary. It was forbidden, for example, to laugh at the jokes of clowns, telling jokes being one of their predominant tasks. The clowns, though, had the freedom to break all the rules and misbehave at will, often performing their duties

backwards or walking on their hands. What Graeber finds remarkable about the presence of clown police is that they are the only people within these non-state communities who had the power to command, to punish, to levy fines, and even the authority to whip children.

As the practice of clown policing migrates, from central to northern California, to the southwest, and the plains, they begin to embody more aspects of an autonomous force. At first, the clown police only have powers during specific rituals, but eventually they maintained their enforcement power throughout the entire buffalo hunting season. At first, the clowns were thought to symbolise divine forces, Gods or fools or evil-spirits, but eventually they became regular community officials. By the time the practice spread to the plains, per Robert Lowie's description, the Crow police were not clowns, just police (Lowie 1948; Graeber and Wengrow 2015). The Crow police maintained an unequivocal authoritarianism in the absence of anything resembling a city or state. Remarkably, these police units would be disbanded yearly only to be reformed the next season. Police power consistently rotated within the tribe, a different clan serving annually. For Graeber and Wengrow, the seasonal transformations of tribal organisation are evidence of intentional choice, political experimentation, and social flexibility. Seasonality allowed for the shifting of power relations and the chance to renegotiate social relations. Arbitrary power was tolerable so long as it remained arbitrary. A systemic form of rule would transform temporary and ritual practices into lasting, institutional power, without respite or hope for further discussion.

The clown police and Crow police are evidence of "provisional police powers" (my phrase). Non-state, seemingly egalitarian, societies resorted to occasional, and eventually regular, policing practices. There are several conclusions that we can draw from this history.

First, policing begins in ritual. If police power is intermittent and discretionary then it can be discontinued. Their powers are derived from our acceptance. We must not accept policing as a universal human condition or elementary structure of human existence. Rather, an abolitionist anthropology begins with the contention that policing is a decisively human creation, a clownish one at that. That police first appear as clowns, as fools, as evil incarnate, played by beggars and social outcasts, demonstrates the dangers and absurdity of their limited powers. The appearance of the clown police is meant to illustrate the ridiculousness of giving people such powers. To play with Graeber and Wengrow's wording, *the first police may well have been play police!* Their playfulness, though, ceases to be amusing once they start killing people. The imitation and subversion of power is superseded once it can no longer be questioned. Rituals form institutions. Short-term agreements become irreversible rules. Put powerfully by Graeber and Wengrow: "If 'the state' means anything, it refers to precisely the totalitarian impulse that lies behind all such claims, the desire effectively to make the ritual last forever" (Graeber and Wengrow 2021: 430).

Scandalously, Graeber has taken to accusing the French anarchist Pierre Clastres of plagiarising the American anthropologist Robert Lowie. Both argue that non-state societies design their social and political relations to prevent the emergence of a systemic power of command. Contemporary societies no longer wield a countervailing set of powers that constrain police power. Abolition is such a counterforce. Abolitionists propose a competing set of myths that undermine the mythical foundations of authority. While equipping those monstrous forces outfitted in riot gear with clown suits and water pistols is preposterous, the abandoned police stations in Madagascar are living examples of authority stripped of its majesty. Killer cops have been playing police for far too long. A future world without police

might thereby require evidence of their historical ruin, the burned husks of their inoperable stations preserved as monuments signifying their newfound inability to kill, a bad omen warning against any attempts to reinstitute that power.

The second important conclusion that we can draw is that policing has no natural origins. Rather, police forces presume superiority by play-acting as supernatural. Clowns are not just amusing, they are terrifying. They are intended to evoke laughter but laughing at them is firmly forbidden. By donning the apparel of clowns, they transform their status within their communities and imitate metahuman beings. Gods originally held the power to command and order society before that power was appropriated by humans. The foundation of states and police are made possible by their claims to mythic and divine powers. This is the argument of Graeber's model: "the 'declownification' of sovereignty" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017: 397; see figure 2). What this means for those of us who are no longer faced with clown police but riot police, is untangling the supernatural, mythic, magical, fetishised status that police presume in our present societies. Is not the cosmological role of police in American culture due, in part, to their glamorisation by the media and Hollywood as superheroes?
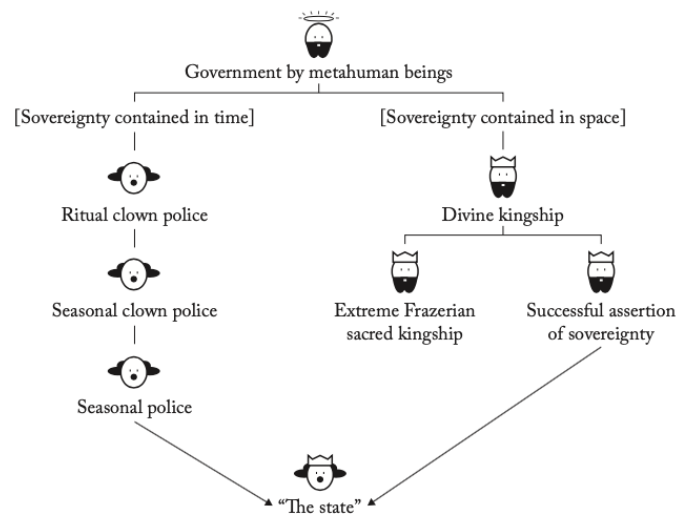

Figure 5: Declownification of Sovereignty

Graeber and Wengrow (2021) charge that: 'Social science has been largely a study of the ways in which human beings are not free' (498). The theory that drives their new history of humanity is that pre-modern politics was a crossroads for self-conscious experimentation.

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Our ancient ancestors, in both small and large communities, were perfectly capable of political choice and, crucially, they had many more possibilities from which to choose. To go alongside their three elemental forms of domination, Graeber and Wengrow propose three forms of human freedom: the freedom to move, to disobey, and to reorganise social relations. Today, there is no exit from a globe fully controlled by police forces. We dare not disobey them. Their only law is force. Most importantly, humans have lost the ability to fundamentally alter the terms of our social contract. There is no choice but the unfreedom of police domination. An abolitionist world begins with disobedience despite the consequences. For Graeber, the most vital human freedom and political choice is the power to imagine different futures and alternative worlds.

Police: An Ethnography

Activists understand the nature of police intuitively. They confront them on the streets and are *forced* to interpret their behaviour. Graeber calls this process "imaginative identification" (Graeber 2007: 405). Those in subordinate and vulnerable positions regularly put themselves into the minds of their oppressors. Graeber's involvement in the global justice movement gave him first-hand experience of police. The final three chapters of *Direct Action: An Ethnography* are a continuation of the arguments he developed in "On the Phenomenology of Giant Puppets." The last third of the book is less an ethnography of direct action and the global justice movement than a study of the police they confronted on the streets. Graeber reveals that his interpretation of the police remains a frustrated one. Such an admission alludes to the mysterious nature of police that has been a common theme within police studies ever

since Walter Benjamin referred to them as formless, nowhere-tangible, all-pervasive, and ghostly (Benjamin 1978: 287).

What is new and original about Graeber's interpretation of police? And what importance might it hold for the struggle *against* police that has roused so many? Police hostility directed at puppet activists is a captivating theme. It is not intuitive why police would spend their energy on disrupting non-violent, relatively harmless, certainly fanciful, puppeteers. Unravelling this mystery reveals a larger conspiracy. Puppet activists challenge the symbolic order which police defend and enforce. By asking their audience to imagine otherwise, puppeteers are more of a threat than the black bloc. One prefigures a world without police; the other justifies it.

Graeber's account of the policing of the global justice movement is of historic importance for the contemporary movement against police. Given that the police are the principal antagonists of Graeber's memoirs, it is worth asking why they were not the targets of more concerted movement opposition. The police waged street battles in defence of the IMF, WTO, Wall Street, and the Republican and Democratic parties. Global capitalism is dependent upon the force of *armed* bureaucrats. However, the lasting message of the global justice and Occupy movements was centred around structural adjustment programmes and economic inequality, not the need to demilitarise, disarm, defund, and disempower local, national, or global police forces. Graeber's essay demands a retelling of this history, one that reveals a closer affinity with abolitionist movements than commonly believed. This history holds valuable lessons for leftist social movements. So too, recent events have revealed the limitations of prior social movements and the need for *police-centred* social movement strategies.

Observation 1: Police are partisans in a covert war against society.

Graeber follows the critical theory tradition in describing police as partisans in a covert war against society. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described the liberal political order as a "more or less veiled civil war" (Marx a d Engels 1972: 483). French post-structuralists invoked Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum that "war is the continuation of politics by other means" (Clausewitz 1984: 87) to invert it into a new adage "politics is the continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2003: 15; Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 421). Graeber recalls his experience with the global justice movement with a variety of war metaphors. The tear gas launched upon protestors is analogous to chemical warfare (Graeber 2009: 154). The street battles resemble war zones (191). *Ya Basta!* are deployed as hoplites (158). The police form security perimeters (159) and protesters man communication and medical stations (159). There are both casualties and lines of retreat (161). Afterwards, everyone excitedly rehashes their war stories (198). It would be a mistake to dismiss this as metaphorical. Direct actions and confrontations with police follow unstated laws of war. There are rules of engagement for both sides. An important stipulation is that street actions remain a limited and not total war.

It would be misguided to discount the differences between policing and war. Riot police arrive fully militarised; they are, in fact, prepared for warfare. However, police are more restricted in their behaviour than military forces. Police are required to use less-lethal weaponry, for example. Police act without honour by systematically violating all the accepted rules governing armed conflict: arresting mediators, targeting medics and journalists, even puppeteers. Whereas police arrive equipped for war, protestors are constrained by different rules. One influence of the Italian *Ya Basta!* organisation was their *tute bianche* tactics:

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appearing as "a kind of comic mock army of activists in helmets, padding, shields, and other inflatable inner-tubes, who attempt to storm police lines armed… with balloons and water-pistols" (Graeber 2009: xv). The ELZN, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, "is the sort of army that organizes 'invasions' of Mexican military bases in which hundreds of rebels sweep in entirely unarmed to scream at and try to shame resident soldiers" (Graeber 2009: 227). Whereas police violence is considered *a priori* legitimate, even non-violent acts by protestors like non-cooperation or breaking windows is coded as non-peaceful. The militarisation of the police is juxtaposed with the de-militarised non-violence forced upon social movements. If street protests are a type of limited war, they are different than low-intensity conflicts. In most actions there is the performance of an insurrection without there being a real uprising. The war is limited and covert largely because it is one-sided: the reality is a counterinsurgency campaign upon pacified democratic social movements.

The war by police upon democratic social movements is fought as a contest of images. The success of social movements precipitated the need for manufactured states of siege. Democratic demands for social justice had to be re-coded as hostile and threatening. Police required the imagery of war to justify their appearing ready for war. The policing of the global justice movement bears the hallmarks of a covert war. It is covert because it is ambiguously represented as both a war and not-a-war. It is covert because its one-sidedness must remain hidden.

The disguised war is legitimated through its mediation by corporate media. Media often wilfully ignore actions, leaving most with the impression that they never happened. When the public does hear of movements or actions, they are purposefully misrepresented. Police depict themselves – and the media dutifully parrots their talking points – as responding to

disturbances and violence, not as the ones instigating violence and attacking peaceful protests. The war between police and social movements is largely a propaganda war. Graeber calls this "symbolic [or mythological] warfare on the part of the police" (Graeber 2007: 386; Graeber 2009: 494). The media advertise images of protestors breaking corporate storefront windows to undermine the legitimacy of actions and to legitimise widespread police brutality. The black bloc becomes an accessory-after-the-fact for police propagandists. Graeber rejects this framing. Puppeteers are easy to accept as protagonists, and the black bloc is easy to deride as outside agitators. Graeber never recounts any expertise in paper mâché but does describe his participation in black blocs. Another aspect of the war of images is the coordinated police lies, the most audacious involving protestors wielding jars of urine. The media repeat police statements as uncontested facts. Even when these statements are demonstrated to be false, corporate media never issues retractions. After the success of the 1999 WTO demonstrations in Seattle, police across the country began issuing public warnings about dangerous tactics used by protestors, including reports of jars of urine being thrown at police. There is no evidence of this happening or organisers ever considering such tactics. Graeber presumes that the case of imaginary jars of urine is more about "rallying the [police] troops" (Graeber 2007: 391) than denigrating anarchists in the eyes of the public.

The coordination of police talking points reveals something vital. The police response was not local, but national, even transnational. The police are assisted by neutral non-governmental institutions. The corporate media are not a check upon abusive governmental power but assets in an orchestrated police campaign. The police, for their part, play the role of foot-soldiers in a war *un*declared by nefarious forces kept off-screen. This is the secret which cannot be told. Graeber means this quite literally, retelling the story of his involvement in a

small anti-racist action in Morristown, New Jersey and its depiction by a local newspaper, the

Bergen Record. Graeber was aghast at the report that anarchists incited a clash with police

when it was the opposite that occurred. He concludes: "'Police provoke confrontation;

protestors respond with restraint and defuse the situation' is simply untellable" (Graeber 2009:

463). Corporate media cannot report on police violence without framing it as *a priori*

legitimate, nor do they report on social movements without framing them as illegitimate.

Police and media act as *partisans* in a covert campaign to disparage and discredit

democratic social movements. Graeber cites extensively from the literature on police studies.

It is a shame that he never cites or discusses *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law*

and Order. Stuart Hall and his colleagues (1978) authored the definitive account of the

conjoined role of police, media, and political elites in the creation of law-and-order campaigns.

> When the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is *out of all proportion* to the actual threat offered, when "experts", in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary, politicians and editors *perceive* the threat in all but identical terms, and appear to talk "with one voice" of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions, when the media representations universally stress "sudden and dramatic" increases (in numbers involved or events) and "novelty" above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a *moral panic* (20).

The orchestrated response to the global justice movement is evidence of a manufactured moral

panic and orchestrated police campaign. Whereas Hall et al. qualify their analysis through their

position that institutions act out roles based upon structural constraints, I disagree and believe

that their and Graeber's analysis is evidence of a political conspiracy. Put another way, moral

panics are the structural logic that enables political elites to launch police offenses.

Police partisanship reveals their political function. Police mythology largely revolves

around their role as crime fighters. Police sociologists have largely discredited this myth.

Graeber follows suit by pointing out that "maybe six percent of the average police officer's

time is spent on anything which can even remotely be considered 'fighting crime'" (Graeber 2007:. 401). Police studies have defined the police mandate as order maintenance, not law enforcement (Bittner 1974; Neocleous 2021). This corresponds with Graeber's (2007) own noteworthy definition:

> Police are a group of armed, lower-echelon government administrators, trained in the scientific application of physical force to aid in the resolution of administrative problems. They are *bureaucrats with guns* [my emphasis], and, whether they are guarding lost children, talking rowdy drunks out of bars, or supervising free concerts in the park, the one common feature of the kind of situations to which they're assigned is the possibility of having to impose [quoting Bittner] "non-negotiated solutions backed up by the potential use of force" (401–402).

That police are not employed for the purposes of crime control is attested to by Graeber's experiences with the global justice movement. Puppet activists do not commit any crimes. Most demonstrations are entirely legal. Police, though, freely attack and arrest all those involved. Most charges are later dropped and police never face any sanction for wanton brutality. "[F]or the very reason that police know activists will never be prosecuted in a criminal court, there are few limits to police behavior" (Graeber 2009: 448). The police do not maintain a general, public order, but intervene on behalf of a specific order, on order*s*. The most revealing moment, but sadly never elaborated upon, of Graeber's account of the police's anti-puppet crusade is when he fields answers to the question: why do police hate puppeteers? Max Uhlenbeck contends: "Obviously, they hate to be reminded that they're puppets themselves" (Graeber 2007: 393). The function of police is *political*. They are *partisans*. They wage a covert campaign and utilise overt violence on *behalf* of a political and economic system and *against* civil society.

Graeber's definition of police is understated. The bureaucratic theory of police implies that they are constrained, non-partisan, and politically neutral. Their partisanship, their hidden

political role, their militarised mission, exposes police as an anti-democratic institution. Police are deployed to preclude the very possibility of democracy ever happening. Liberal democratic states claim to pacify political violence by providing a forum for non-violent contest but rely upon institutional violence to criminalise the use of public forums.[77] As powerfully expressed by Mark Neocleous: "We hear a lot these days about coming insurrections, screams against the system, urban rage and multitudes mobilized. Yet is it not also the case that insurrections are crushed, screams silenced, rage calmed and mobilizations halted? And is the police power not the key to this?" (Neocleous 2021: 42). Put by Graeber: "[P]olice see themselves as engaged in a political contest with protestors… [as] acting on behalf of the political regime that employs them to prevent protestors from achieving their aims" (Graeber 2009: 466). Police partisanship represents a foundational challenge to democratic theory. Their participation in a *covert* war has meant that this challenge has often been unseen and unsaid. Police reveal the masked authoritarianism at the heart of all liberal democracies. Police enforce an absolute non-equivalence of the state in its relation to society. The political power of the police rests in their unique capacity to wield violence in defence of state interest. In his chronicle of the Occupy Wall Street movement, at a moment of group indecision, Graeber (2013) put this challenge most eloquently:

> Nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution does it say anything about America being a democracy… Men like George Washington were openly opposed to democracy. Which makes it a bit odd we're standing here under his statue today… [M]ost of us are here because we still don't think we're living under a democratic system in any meaningful sense of the term. I mean, look around you. That SWAT team over there tells you everything you read need to know. Our government has become little more than a system of institutionalized bribery where you can get hauled off to jail just for saying so (xv-xvi).

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[77] Graeber's ethnographies are a remarkable contribution to the study of protest policing. Despite being one of the most prominent figures within the global justice and Occupy movements, Graeber's work is conspicuously absent within much of the literature.

Observation 2: The global justice and Occupy movements were more focused on police power than commonly assumed.

The traditional retelling of the global justice and Occupy Wall Street movements highlights their criticisms of economic injustice. Graeber's memoirs tell a different history. In *Direct Action*, the first description of a meeting involves a border action, in the hopes of bringing attention to the expansion of border policing alongside free trade agreements (Graeber 2009: 4). Graeber's first diary entry reports on an action aimed at immigration detention facilities. In Graeber's words: "no one in America knew any of this was going on" (17). In a New York City Direct Action Network (NYC DAN) meeting there is a scheduling conflict with a Critical Resistance protest (29). Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal played a pivotal role in the protests at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia (299). NYC DAN maintained a Police and Prisons Working Group (298). There is coalition work with the Mohawk Nation. Graeber and his movement partners wanted to see the WTO, IMF, and World Bank *abolished*. "They did not wish to see those institutions reformed" (354). In Graeber's ethnographies, there are multiple references to the abolitionist movement, lengthy discussions about anti-racist organising strategies, police and prison practices were focal targets, and the policing of the movement is the driving narrative focus and theoretical puzzle to be solved.

Graeber rewrites the traditional narrative of the global justice movement. The targets of movement opposition were not multinational corporations or even globalisation. Rather, Graeber and his comrades protested international institutions. The public was little aware of their increased importance within the globalised economy and their role in administering corporate extortion and raiding. Graeber celebrates the global justice movement as the first

antibureaucratic leftist movement of the new century (Graeber 2015: 31). The IMF, WTO, and World Bank are synonymous with the global expansion of neoliberal economic policies, but just as important is that these new institutional forms revealed the presence of a global bureaucratic system. For Graeber, the protection of this new configuration of power by militarised police was not accidental. Neoliberal economic policies were contingent upon an expansion in anti-democratic forces. The riot cops pepper-spraying defenceless protestors is the mirror image of the unelected global bureaucrat legalising the appropriation of natural resources.

The recent waves of anti-police protests obscure just how radical the position of the global justice movement was at the time. Anti-police sentiments attract strident criticism still, even after heightened public awareness of police malfeasance. At the height of the law-and-order era and the Global War on Terror, police abolition was not as much controversial as it was unimaginable.

Graeber's abolitionism is best demonstrated in his public dispute with Chris Hedges. Graeber, for his part, wanted to *abolish even the peace police*! Hedges raised the ire of many by referring to the black bloc as the cancer of Occupy (Hedges 2012). Hedges derided Occupy Oakland as a rogue element within the larger Occupy movement. Missing in Hedges' analysis was an awareness of local political factors. The 2009–2010 University of California tuition hike protests predated and influenced the Occupy movement. Galvanised by the slogan 'Occupy Everything, Demand Nothing,' students occupied various administration buildings. However, this pales in comparison to the importance of the 2009 killing of Oscar Grant by transit police. The execution of Grant and the violent protests that followed were a precursor to the killing of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter

movement. By the time of Occupy Oakland, the local community was in a pre-established militant confrontation with the police. Geo Maher, abolitionist theorist and participant in these protests, declared: 'I'm going to insist as stubbornly as possible, that if there was a fundamental source, not for the *presence* of Occupy Oakland, but for its peculiar *radicalism* and the mantle of national leadership it assumed, this source was to be found in the Oscar Grant rebellions and the political lessons these rebellions contained' (Maher 2012). The occupation of Frank H. Ogawa Plaza was inaugurated by renaming it the Oscar Grant Plaza. Combating police violence by the Oakland Police Department was the central target of Occupy Oakland, not the political influence of the 1%. Hedges' criticism is symptomatic of a liberal misreading of the Occupy movement. He outright maintained that discussions of policing or racial justice distracted from the more important message centred around economic injustice. This was an inaccurate representation of the entire Occupy movement. The encampment in Zuccotti Park only came to national attention after a series of violent police responses. A video showing Deputy Anthony Bologna pepper-spraying a group of defenceless women went viral. This was followed one week later by the mass arrest of 700 protestors on the Brooklyn Bridge. Occupy was borne through police brutality. Graeber took exception to Hedges' moral condemnation of militant tactics. The labelling of fellow protestors as a cancer that needs to be excised was an explicit call for violence against them. "Time after time, what it has actually meant in practice is either (a) turning fellow activists over to the police, i.e., turning them over to people with weapons who will physically assault, shackle, and imprison them, or (b) actual physical activist-on-activist assault" (Graeber 2012). Hedges condemned militancy but supported violence directed against fellow protestors. Hedges sought to appoint himself as the moral authority of Occupy and empower an informal cadre to unilaterally police the movement.

Graeber lists multiple episodes in which self-appointed peace police attacked their comrades. Appeals to non-violence shroud in-group violence. Hedges commentary represented an insidious paternal authoritarianism that easily creeps into movement spaces. Graeber's reply, in turn, reveals the difficulty of conflict resolution and harm reduction. Police cannot be so easily replaced by a peace police (a contradiction in terms).

Tobi Haslett's (2021) rumination on the 2020 George Floyd Uprising ends with a shocking anecdote:

> Last spring I was reminded of the demonstration where I first saw windows smashed: I was 20, at the 2012 march against NATO in Chicago, just after the "end" of the Second Gulf War. Among the gathered thousands—scraps of a flouted pacifist left—was a group the others hated for its frank aggression toward the police. Today they're known as antifa; back then the term was "black bloc." At the end of the march, a group of them grappled with armored riot cops, shattering the glass of a fast-food franchise before being cuffed and dragged away. But my clearest memory is of their chant, which I found myself joining. It rang with then-recent outrages—the murder of Oscar Grant, new incursions into Palestine, and the crackdowns in Syntagma Square: "*Oakland, Gaza, Greece! Fuck the police!*" None of us had ever heard of Ferguson, Missouri.

What is telling in Haslett's commentary is his recasting of the anarchist, militant left as important predecessors to the tenor of the Black Lives Matter uprisings: disavowed and abandoned by liberals at the time, now redeemed in history.

Observation 3: Hollywood cops play the same role in contemporary U.S. American culture as Gods or spiritual forces in the state of nature.

Graeber is fascinated by the political power of magic. The disappearance of the police in Madagascar was replaced by widespread belief in spiritual forces. Neighbours got along due to fears of curses or superpowers. Graeber's ethnographies include elaborate interpretations of

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premonitions and spells. Witches are notable political actors. Graeber's debate with Viveiros de Castro is precipitated by Graeber's rereading of the African tradition of fetishes. Non-state societies are ruled by beliefs in Gods and spiritual forces. Metahuman beings are the abstract power that maintains the social and political order. For Graeber, politics is animated by myths and illusions. Police power is one such myth. Originating as a ritual practice, policing is now predicated upon its enduring necessity. Political theorists have long depicted the police as sacred protectorates of the *polis*. Polities have thereby afforded police special powers and status. The mythic power of police in our societies is revealed in their glamorisation by the media, Hollywood, and in television. Graeber calls this the Hollywood Movie Principle.

The culture industry has fashioned a romance with the abstract police figure. Cable television has perfected the police procedural, reproducing spin-offs on every channel. Local media hosts daily segments for police spokesmen. Western films revolve around state formation, depicting the creation of law out of anarchy. Clint Eastwood is the iconic image of the hero's journey, beginning his career as a frontier vigilante with no name and reinventing himself as a cop willing to fight dirty. Eastwood's police hero Harry Callahan is culturally relevant beyond his entertainment cache. Serialised throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Dirty Harry personified the cultural shift in favour of law-and-order policies. His willingness to get his hands dirty was adopted as the ethical imperative of all police work. If police do not take extreme measures to combat the
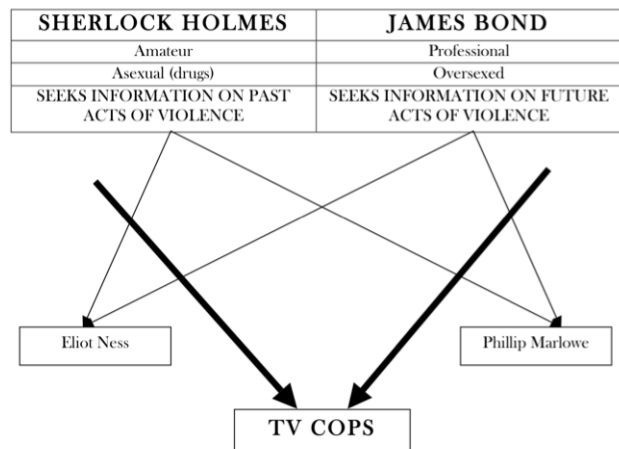
SHERLOCK HOLMES	JAMES BOND
Amateur	Professional
Asexual (drugs)	Oversexed
SEEKS INFORMATION ON PAST ACTS OF VIOLENCE	SEEKS INFORMATION ON FUTURE ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Eliot Ness

Phillip Marlowe

TV COPS

Figure 6: Structural analysis of Sherlock Holmes and James Bond as police prototypes

presence of "the bad guys", they become responsible for future harms done upon society. Put eloquently by Vanessa Wills: "Police officers see themselves as patriots who sacrifice their ethical 'cleanliness' in order to do the 'dirty' work of putting away 'bad guys'" (Wills, 2016). In Britain, Sherlock Holmes and James Bond embody structural variants of the same theme (Graeber 2015: 78; see Figure 3). Holmes is a private detective; Bond an international policeman. Whereas Dirty Harry embodies the moral duty of police work, James Bond is an extra-moral superhero. Post-Dirty Harry cops become increasingly detached from cinematic realism. The action-hero genre largely consists of maverick cops taken to extra-worldly feats and gratuitous property destruction.

Police loom large within the superhero genre as well. The first of the Batman movies opened with the following dedication: "WE WISH TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THE ENEMIES OF CRIME AND CRUSADERS AGAINST CRIME" (Martinson 1966). Batman, after all, was born from a mugging gone wrong. Batman's origin story is based upon the fear of disorder. Gotham is depicted as overrun by criminals of every type: common criminals, organised gangsters, and supervillains. Batman is called into action due to state failure and organised abandonment. In some stories, the police's hands are tied and they cannot effectively respond to criminal threats, in others their hands are in every pocket and symptomatic of Gotham's sweeping corruption. Batman is a lone figure called upon to protect the social order in the absence of police. If dirty hands are the guiding ethical imperative of police work, Batman's vigilante justice is its highest expression. Ultimately, it becomes impossible to detach Batman from the police apparatus. In some stories, he acts in concerts with the police; in others, he is hunted by them. He is presented as both a threat to the legal order and politically useful. Batman illustrates the conceptual limits of sovereignty. Batman is

a liminal police figure, expressing fears concerning lawlessness and the authoritarian desire to fight dirty, evoking a political imaginary that legitimises policing. The superhero genre illustrates the mythic foundation of police power: police violence is always already vigilante justice.

However, so too, vigilantes wield violence in the name of the police mandate. Violence is a singular remedy for all social problems, and ought to be the right of anybody, public official or concerned billionaire, who claims the mantel of self-defence, social protection, or vengeance. So says those who defend police authoritarianism. It is telling that the superhero most characterised by his use of gratuitous violence, the Punisher, has become the hero of choice for the social forces defending police violence. The Punisher's unrestricted violence is precisely what appeals to white supremacists *and* armed agents of the American state (Philips 2021). The Punisher is a metahuman being representing the actions and ideologies of George Zimmerman, Kyle Rittenhouse, killer cops, and the fascist social forces who celebrate them.

U.S. American popular culture lionises police as mythic, extra-moral figures. Graeber refers to politicians as the modern-day example of heroic societies. Perhaps, the police, particularly as they are depicted by Hollywood, are a better example. After all, politicians are universally despised by the general public. Police superheroes are charismatic figures devoid of bureaucratic personality or self-serving interests. The fictionalised versions of police capture the public's imagination, playing the role of metahuman beings who personify and reproduce authoritarian mythologies. Authoritarian ideology is based upon this lethal combination of libertarianism and communitarianism. The free use of violence is legitimate on behalf of communal self-defence. Without vigilante justice, disorder reigns. For Graeber and Wengrow, the first attempts at large-scale administration of sovereign violence are the historical origins

of political evil. "It's the addition of sovereign power, and the resulting ability of the local enforcer to say, 'Rules are rules; I don't want to hear about it' that allows bureaucratic mechanisms to become genuinely monstrous" (Graeber and Wengrow 2021: 426). I would like to take this comment a step further. The modern state becomes genocidal at the moment in which vigilante and bureaucratic violence is valorised as a form of heroism. The Hollywood Movie Principle laid the groundwork for an insidious form of police authoritarianism. The fictional depiction of authoritarian desires and fears justifies the impunity of police violence in the real world. The license to kill is the political imaginary that animates a homegrown fascist movement within the United States.

Thesis 1: The police abolition movement is a global social movement against a fully-formed global police network.

Graeber ends his ethnography of the global justice movement by alluding to the formation of a global police state. Global police state is a three-word oxymoron. Terminology does matter; I prefer to speak of a global police network. States are territorial entities, national not global. Police are normally cast as local institutions, categorically not global. Police assuredly wield political power, but rarely hold higher office nor do they establish state policy. In many liberal democracies, police are autonomous and free from state direction. Local, state, private, and transnational police organisations cooperate across borders. Despite its conceptual illegibility, a fully formed global police network presently exists.

The basic characterisation of police is of a state institution entrusted with establishing internal security. A central thesis animating my research is that many of our preconceptions

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about police are inaccurate. We must disabuse ourselves of the notion that police are solely delegated to internal security. Beginning in the 19th century, police departments have established cooperative relationships with their foreign counterparts, eventually forming transnational police organisations and regional security agreements, such as Interpol and the Schengen Area. President Theodore Roosevelt made police the central metaphor expressing a new vision of the U.S. American state. The Spanish-American War precipitated the emergence of an aggressive, imperial foreign policy. The U.S. intended to act as a regional policeman. Upon taking possession of the Philippines, military command used police forces to fight a dirty war against the indigenous population. The occupation of the Philippines led to the creation of gendarmeries in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. Throughout the Cold War, under the auspices of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and State Department, the U.S. created, developed, and trained foreign police forces in over fifty countries. As stated by CIA agent Robert Komer: "The police are in many cases a far more effective and immediately useful counter-subversive instrument than the military" (Kuzmarov 2012: 12). This point was popularly reinforced by Colonel Mathieu, the antagonist of Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*: "To know them means to eliminate them. Consequently, the military aspect is secondary to the police method" (Pontecorvo 1966).[78] One of the great successes of an earlier generation of transnational activists was the abolition of the Office of Public Safety (OPS) in 1974 (Schrader 2016). The OPS was the government programme responsible for foreign police assistance. Such assistance resulted in untold disappearances, torture, killings, and mass murder. Despite abolition, global policing has intensified in the decades since. The New York Police Department, a municipal force employing over 50,000 officers, maintains permanent

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[78] The prominence of U.S. police-training operations is depicted in Costa-Garvas' loose trilogy: *Z* (1969), *State of Siege* (1972), and *Missing* (1982).

stations in London, Lyons, Hamburg, Toronto, and Tel Aviv. Over ten thousand U.S. police officers have received advanced training in Israel through the Law Enforcement Exchange Program. The post-Cold War international security environment is typified by transnational criminal networks, private military contractors, peace-keeping operations, and security-sector training operations (such as the decades-long, now failed, U.S. American mission in Afghanistan). Areas of limited statehood are labelled national security threats and building up the institutional capacity of weak states is a focal task of U.S. foreign policy. The Global War on Terror involved the projection of force overseas alongside an intensification of homeland defence. The formless, all-pervasive terrorist enemy indicated its diffuse permanence. Differences between police and military forces remain pertinent, but so too does their blending. Police see themselves as acting without rules. Torture, indefinite detention, and leadership decapitation revealed an increasing willingness by U.S. military forces to violate international law and liberal norms. Counterinsurgency doctrine develops dual military and policing strategies to pacify occupied territories. Appeals to human rights and a stated responsibility to protect have justified military interventions designated as police actions. The U.S. now claims a special status, not as a regional policeman but as the lone country permitted to patrol the planet as a global policeman. It is necessary to identify the special role of the United States in creating and sustaining global police networks, in claiming the right to act as a global policeman, but local, regional, transnational, and private police forces exist everywhere. All one has to do is cross a heavily policed border to see a different manner of policing. Nevertheless, they all remain uncannily familiar. As put poetically by George Lipsitz: "The empire is 'in here' as well as 'out there'" (Lipsitz 2004, p. 282). U.S. American Empire is heavily fortified by indirect rule, including through foreign and transnational police forces.

Despite this, authoritarian, imperial competitors to U.S. American unipolarity have intensified efforts to capture and weaponize Interpol, the most well-known transnational police organisation. After all, foreign police forces, historically and quite consistently, have committed massacres and atrocities both with *and without* the permission of the global hegemon.

There is a disjunction between the academic study of global justice and the global justice movement. Whereas the study of global justice revolved around normative appeals for distributive justice, the global justice movement targeted bureaucratic institutions and neoliberal policies. Whereas the former hoped cosmopolitanism, democracy, development, and human rights could enable more egalitarian outcomes, the latter proved how global institutions employ liberal language for institutionalized extortion and raiding. This is not a case of mutual neglect but opposed ideologies. The prelude to the European Debt Crisis was the police killing of Greek 15-year-old Andreas Grigoropoulos. The Arab Spring began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor subject to repeated police harassment. Both the European Debt Crisis and the Arab Spring inspired the Occupy movement; however, their origins in police violence have been written out of the traditional retelling of these histories. Despite a focus upon border policing and immigration detention centres, the global justice movement did not develop a critique of global police power. Graeber's final comment attempts such a critique, pointing beyond the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and structural adjustment programmes to an amorphous network of interconnected transnational police agencies.

There is growing awareness of an expansive, diffuse, and interconnected global police network. Graeber's allusion to a global police state presaged the recent interest in the study of

global policing.[79] A fully-formed global police network is terrifying precisely because of the assertion of full-spectrum control and totalising domination. Everywhere *bureaucrats with guns* enforce state authoritarianism on behalf of a global capitalist system. The struggle against U.S. police is therefore also a struggle against a global policing. Abolitionist Angela Y. Davis has posited the need for "movement intersectionality" (Davis 2016: 141). As summarised by Ashley Bohrer and Andrés Fabián Henao Castro (2019): "If one follows the Israeli Occupation far enough, one finds oneself on the streets of Ferguson or in Standing Rock" (151). Movement intersectionality entails solidarity with the victims of police violence everywhere, in France and Nigeria, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Honduras and Brazil, the Philippines and China.[80]

Thesis 2: A strategic goal of the police abolitionist movement is undermining police mythology.

The ultimate protagonist of Graeber's essay "On the Phenomenology of Giant Puppets" is the magical, imaginative powers of activist puppeteers. Enormous *papier-mâché* puppets are non-threatening, fantastic creations. They are intended to illustrate the promise of democracy, the human capacity to reorganise our social and political relations. The mythic power of puppets lies in imagination: the power to make people believe that another, better world is

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[79] I could cite any number of articles or books here. For two quite different perspectives, see Schrader (2019) and Robinson (2020).

[80] The comparativist case against police abolition is one of the stronger arguments against a hyperbolic, excessive abolitionism. Low rates of police violence and incarceration in developed countries have been taken as evidence of an "abolition of degradation" (Whitman 2003). Peter J. Katzenstein (1996) points to Japan and Germany as two examples that demonstrate that repressive police institutions can be reformed and reimagined as less-repressive. I defend a hyperbolic, excessive abolitionism directed against the authoritarian high modernism of countries such as Japan and Singapore, Sweden and Germany.

possible. Puppets attempt to break the spell that the capitalist order holds over us. So too, police power can only be maintained by widespread social acceptance. To break the spell of the capitalist order it is also necessary to break the spell of police authoritarianism. While riot police man the barricades, authoritarian myths impose cultural barriers to social change. Police authority is an imagined barrier that precludes the possibility of *un*policed alternative worlds. Police mythology holds that there is no alternative to police violence. Breaking the spell of police authoritarianism is thus an ideological effort to overcome the figurative, imagined walls that prevent social progress.

The repression of non-violent activist puppeteers is contrasted to the free movement afforded black blocs. For Graeber, this is a strategic order of police command. Puppets prefigure a world without police, while the black bloc confirms the need for police. The targeting of activist puppeteers reveals the covert war by police upon democratic social movements. A political ontology of imagination confronts a political ontology of violence and finds only unremitting force. The criminalisation of non-violent tactics compels social movement actors to use more militant tactics. However, militancy is a limited, tactical response to police brutality. According to Graeber, only the political powers of the imagination, the capacity to change deeply entrenched common sense, is a durable strategy for democratic social movements.

Graeber puts forward a theory of change dependent upon changing people's minds. For social movements to be successful in diminishing the political power of the police they should focus their strategic efforts at undermining the mythical foundations of police authority. Graeber heroically believes that social movements have the capacity to undermine the symbolic and mythological order of things, to break through the imaginative wall that the

police order holds over us. This is the crux of Graeber's strategic summation. It is the only place in the text where he offers any recommendations on how to confront the political power of the police. I have always been struck by the grandiose and hopeful, overtly abolitionist, vision that Graeber lays out: police will simply melt away if we just stop believing in them.

In a limited sense, Graeber is right. The principal goal of the police abolition movement involves depriving police institutions of their social and political support. Imagination is a powerful tool of political struggle. The unconditioned demand to abolish police entirely is premised upon the possibility of radical alternative ways of being. Abolitionist imaginaries have made people question their most basic political assumptions. The abolition movement is an organised counterforce skilled at undermining the myths which form the superstructural base upholding police power. Police are neither necessary, non-partisan, nor worthy of heroic veneration. The indomitable mythology of police as politically untouchable has shown noticeable cracks and fissures in the past few years. Much of this is due to a growing awareness of actual police behaviour. Images of police murders have scarred the collective consciousness, forcing many to pay attention when they would have otherwise not. Political realism has propelled public outcry beyond that of political imaginaries. Alongside countering the mythologies underwriting police, the abolitionist movement must continue to popularise anti-police sentiments. If police play a role as metahuman beings within political life, it is imperative to expose them as social monstrosities.[81] However, just as useful, is making them appear stupid and ineffectual. Mocking police as clowns is no joking matter. My point is that political imaginaries are one tool amongst many. Political education, to mention one example,

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[81] I remain unconvinced that anti-police pejoratives, such as "pigs" or "bastards", are efficacious. Wilbur is a beloved childhood memory for many, symbolising the innocence of humans and animals alike. Children borne out of wedlock do not deserve to be castigated. All Cops are Derek Chauvin more effectively distils the essence of police fascism.

or satire, to include another, are similarly capable of challenging common sense beliefs. The political power of the imagination is necessary but not sufficient for social movement success.

Thesis 3: Police have overwhelming power. The political power of the police remains intractable. Be it resolved that the police will not just melt away.

This one, though, I will have to leave for future comment.

Are Police Bullshit?

David Graeber's involvement in the global justice movement was not without consequence. He was terminated from Yale University after a public and messy tenure dispute. Despite the impact of his scholarship, no U.S. university was willing to hire someone notorious for political activism. Graeber absconded, instead, to London, where he would reside for the remainder of his life. After the publication of *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* and his widely reported involvement in the Occupy Wall Street movement, Graeber achieved a fame uncommon to the ivory confines of academia. Graeber was, for a moment, one of the world's most known public intellectuals. As an anarchist, allergic to the magnetism of vanguardism, Graeber's entry into the academic star-complex was ironic and something of a poison pill. Graeber would lament that his more scholarly works during this time, such as *On Kings*, produced little fanfare, whereas his public-facing work found a vociferous audience. It is worth re-considering these later, more popular, books as they develop themes explored in earlier

works but now transformed into biting cultural commentaries on contemporary social and political life. The police continue to loom large.

Bullshit Jobs: A Theory was an accidental book. What started as a so-called "rant" for an obscure leftist magazine ended up translated into over a dozen languages (Graeber 2013). That late capitalism was oversaturated in meaningless occupations struck a chord. Surplus labour these days is mostly busywork. This is the only of Graeber's books in which police make no appearance, an absence I find vexing. Graeber describes five types of pointless labour: flunkies, goons, duct tapers, box tickers, and taskmasters (Graeber, 2018). Police are literal goons. Their major function is to wield violence on behalf of governments. Graeber's goons, in contrast, are hired mainly to deceive; they are metaphorical, not literal, goons. Public relations specialists and call centre employees are the ideal types. Goons are defined in such a way that police officers do not match the criteria. The book begins with a discussion of a literal goon, a mafia hit man in this case, who serves as an example of someone who does *not* have a bullshit job. Socially harmful jobs, it seems, are not necessarily pointless. The mafioso might enjoy their work or find it honourable, and most are not paid a regular wage or salary. Police are closely related to the gangster.[82] Both are types of violence work. However, police officers are duty-bound to use fraud and deception, and their work is definitively a form of wage labour. The hitman might abide by a code, but they are aware their actions cause personal and social harm. Cops act dishonourably, but most claim that their work is necessary for the public good. These contradictions are telling. Police are a borderline case that undermines Graeber's

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[82] Cops and robbers share an elective affinity. One necessitates the other. In areas of limited state capacity, corruption is the principal means of income for local police. This is not accidental. Charles Tilly notoriously referred to police as a quintessential protection racket and the foremost example of organised crime (Tilly 85: 169).

theory.[83] Abolitionists have cause to describe police work as unnecessary and detrimental, and Graeber would agree with them, but his theory provides no adequate way of explaining how or why.

Police are bullshit![84] Their work is based upon myths and lies. They habitually cause more harm than good. For Graeber, none of this is sufficient. Graeber's original definition of pointless, unnecessary, and detrimental work loses its meaning as soon as he refines his definition to be based upon subjective belief. Bullshit, at least for Graeber, is in the eye of the beholder. Whereas the call centre employee knows that their activity is vacuous and without purpose, police have built elaborate mythologies justifying their presence. Police have unusually intense libidinal investments in their work and its social status. The function they perform on behalf of governments is essential, at least for governments. Few would deny that violence is effective. Amongst Marxists, police are the necessary condition for *any kind* of work, meaningful or meaningless. Rightly or wrongly, the general public finds their work vital and reassuring. Lots of essential workers, in contrast, are alienated, disillusioned, disenchanted, exploited, disrespected, and unappreciated. Therefore, subjective beliefs remain a faulty criterion. Bullshit jobs become just a matter of perspective or ideological dispute.[85] Meaningless work is different from alienation or exploitation. The latter refers to the products of our labour and how well workers are paid or treated; the former reveals an inability for them to imagine spending their lives doing anything of value. Police work is bullshit, and it matters

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[83] Graeber fails to provide a great explanation why the mafia hitman is not a bullshit job. The focus on honour and wages is erroneous. The obvious answer is that the mafia hitman finds their work purposeful because the labour they perform is essential for their employers. Violence work*s*. The same logic applies to police. Police might be socially useless, but they are assuredly politically useful.

[84] Thank the stars for Harry Frankfurt (2005) who has made the study of "bullshit" a respectable one.

[85] Some have tested Graeber's claims and found the empirical evidence uneven (Soffia et al. 2021; Delucchi et al. 2021). Subjective beliefs are notoriously difficult to quantify, and this data does little to disprove the growing prevalence of pointless labour.

little whether the average cop ever imagines doing something better with their time. Socially useless labour is better defined by Graeber's first intuition: police perform jobs that are pointless, unnecessary, and detrimental. What makes this dilemma perplexing and worthy of analysis is that police can be socially harmful while convinced they are essential, sacred protectorates. They are sincere in their beliefs while disinterested in its truth. Police are disciples of an anti-realist tradition dominant within authoritarian ideologies. The logic of authority is predicated upon a self-assurance in search of exigence. The necessity and efficacy of police, for this reason, is more an example of bullshit than it is a noble lie.

The absence of social utility derived from police forces is better depicted through Graeber's criticism of modern bureaucracy. *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* was additionally promoted as pulp non-fiction, albeit in the form of a series of essays (Graeber 2015). The ur-text was originally presented as the 2006 Malinowski Memorial Lecture for the London School of Economics and is a notable contribution to the study of bureaucracy.[86] Graeber's foils are the preeminent theorists of the subject: Max Weber and Michel Foucault. Even though he sharply disagrees with both, he attributes their popularity to the recognition that bureaucracy is a fundamental problem within contemporary politics. Contra Weber and Foucault, Graeber concludes that bureaucracy is a form of "structural stupidity".

Political scientists have theorised that bureaucratic institutions are autonomous sites of authority, not mere means to the ends of political elites (Barnett and Finnemore 1999). Despite their rationalist reputations, institutions are prone to pathological behaviour. Often this takes

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[86] The original title was "Beyond Power/Knowledge: An Exploration of the Relation of Power, Ignorance, and Stupidity," subsequently changed to "Dead Zones of the Imagination: On Violence, Bureaucracy, and Interpretive Labor" and then "Dead Zones of the Imagination: An Essay on Structural Stupidity."

the form of the regressive tasks that Graeber labels bullshit: a preponderance of red tape, doubling of duties, and the wasting of resources. The unbridled excesses of police power are not due to micromanagement or busywork. Theirs is a sadistic pathology. Their form of technical efficiency is shoot first, ask questions later, and automatically refuse retroactive recriminations. Police institutions are exceptional cases of bureaucratic dysfunction. They are insulated from reproach, normalise their own deviance, obfuscate their operations, and respond to all street-level problems with violence or the threat thereof. Even moderate reformists are now willing to admit that the high rates of incarceration and police killings in the United States are proof of an organisational culture prone to excess. Modern, contemporary politics cannot be a paragon of rational management so long as it cannot unmake its most irrational creations.

The pathological dysfunction of present-day police institutions is not due to mission drift. Precisely the opposite. If Graeber was reluctant to refer to the police as bullshit, he was willing and eager to identify them as the preeminent example of "structural stupidity". By this he does not mean that All Cops are Frank Drebin. Bureaucrats themselves are not stupid. Given their role as institutional actors that are compelled to enforce rules thoughtlessly and manage haphazard social relations. The systems they serve are inane. The systems they serve make unthinking obedience a precondition of employment. Stupid structures are therefore impervious to dedicated public officials or well-meaning reforms.

Stupidity is the result when structural violence meets actual violence. Anyone who has struggled against a labyrinthine bureaucracy knows there is no reasoning with arcane rules or paper-pushers. Overzealous civil servants are maddening because they are in positions of power but have scarce decision-making power. Even if gatekeepers themselves do not carry arms, there is always someone, in the final instance, who can be called upon capable of

maximum force. Jonathan Weinberg (2017) surmises that: "Graeber's argument in this book is that police shootings and bank bureaucratic runarounds have the same roots" (1098). However, the relationship is not one of equivalence. Police shootings condition our acceptance of bureaucratic runarounds. Bureaucrats compel obedience based upon threats that police can always be called upon. Structural violence is thus an imagined form of violence but conditioned upon the ever-present possibility of actual violence. Police are the expression of bureaucracy in its most essential form. Bureaucrats outfitted, not with rubber-stamps and filing cabinets, but with guns and prisons cells. Violence is the ultimate non-discursive deed and, as Graeber is one to suggest, the preferred weapon of the stupid. Anyone with a truncheon and a license to use it indiscriminately has the privilege of not listening to what others have to say. As stated, "one can see, here, precisely how bureaucratic power, at the moment it turns to violence, becomes literally a form of infantile stupidity" (Graeber 2015: 80–81). This is a possible explanation why police focus the brunt of their brutality upon those who look different and/or advocate for alternative points of view. If dealing with bureaucracy and bureaucrats is never any fun, it is telling that armed bureaucrats arrive the moment anybody starts having any. If the function of police is to maintain order, this refers to a capitalist and racial order that is a fundamentally stupid and unnecessary order. Bullshit jobs are bullshit because they serve bullshit systems.

For Graeber, leftist social movements have failed to develop an adequate critique of bureaucracy. Conservative movements, on the other hand, have successfully exploited the public's disdain for bureaucracy for destructive purposes. Social democrats, in turn, have sought to defend good governance. They have failed to articulate that valuable public sectors (education, health care, social services, etc.) have faced devolution as the expense of bloated

budgets devoted to organised violence. Graeber, ironically, late in life, found himself an informal advisor to British opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn. After Corbyn's defeat, Graeber opined that the electoral defeats of democratic socialists have been due to their myopia regarding bureaucracy. Rival political parties each represent different classes of administrators. Whereas U.S. conservatives are the party of violence work, liberals claim to stand on behalf of care work. Police, in large part, are the social base of Trumpism, whereas teachers and nurses are the most prominent figures promoted by social democrats and socialists alike. This schism has intensified throughout the global pandemic. Teachers and nurses are front-line workers, whereas police have led the campaign against vaccine mandates. The confrontation between these two classes is a defining struggle of contemporary politics, a point missed when the focus is only upon class conflict. As put by Graeber: "One might speak of the beginnings of a veritable revolt of the caring classes, global in scale" (Graeber 2020). The principal failure of leftist social movements and centre-left political parties has been their non-recognition of this embryonic uprising and the dilemma of sectoral conflict. In the U.S., the continued allegiance of the Democratic Party to a class of police troops who hold them in utter contempt is one of the most pressing present-day political paradoxes.[87]

Police are archetypal bureaucrats. For many, they were the first bureaucrats. For this reason, police are the preeminent example of pathological bureaucracy in an era of ever-increasing bureaucratisation. Police was the original term for the national administrative state. The historic, expansive meaning of the term "police" has been lost, and it is now assumed that police are a bureaucratic subset distinct from other institutions. Mark Neocleous illustrates why

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[87] Graeber, for his part, concludes that the professional-managerial class, this includes liberals, swears fealty to proceduralism. Budgets can be gross misaligned with our values so long as they were decided upon according to the specified rules.

this is not the case: "What was once medical police became 'social health' and then 'the health service'; what was once the police of poverty became 'welfare' and then 'social security'; what was once the police of the market was handed over to organs with names such as 'the Food Standards Agency'; what was once the police mandate for street cleaning was handed to municipal and health authorities" (Neocleous 2021: 18). Police maintain a special, vaunted status within the state bureaucracy. They are *the* institution amongst a series of subordinate institutions. Caring for the public welfare is often considered a supplemental governmental responsibility, whereas violence the state's essential prerogative. Stupidly, police consume a vast proportion of municipal, state, and federal budgets. In an era of acute austerity, socially responsibly fiscal policy is attainable, but only if states forgo their vast expenditures on necropolitical institutions. The revolt of the caring classes requires direct confrontation with the stranglehold that violence-workers maintain over the national purse. To repeat myself: *this is all bullshit!* Police are the paradigmatic expression of social stupidity: an institution which serves no socially beneficial purpose, but apparently, one that we are stuck with and that comes at the expense of institutions which could serve the public good. Graeber's celebrated diatribes against bullshit jobs and bureaucracy provide a captivating framework for defending the cause of police abolition. Police are superfluous and unsound, unessential and deleterious. Most importantly, abolition is a promising advance for leftist social movements because it expresses a popular distaste for bureaucracy, alters the public debate over fiscal policy, and has the potential to vastly expand care-based services.

Police will not just wither away

'I have had dreams that... that affected the... non-dream world. The real world' (Le Guin 1971: 11), or so says George Orr, the main character of Ursula K. Le Guin's parable *The Lathe of Heaven*. David Graeber points out that most fantasy worlds are purged of bureaucracy. Graeber focuses his commentary upon J.R.R. Tolkien, the betrayal of this tendency by J.K. Rowling, and the autonomy afforded to players of Dungeons & Dragons. Fantasy in this instance involves elves, orcs, wizards, and dragons; in other words, surreal worlds that closely resemble our pre-historic or present-day worlds but are outright impossibilities. Compared with the traditional stories told by police historians, indigenous clown police, for example, might as well be dismissed alongside beliefs in sorcerers and warlocks. Science fiction stories are not the same as fantasy, but they do share a resemblance. Whereas fantasy has a resonance with the past, science fiction typically involves tales of the future. Science fiction relies upon imagined worlds that are remotely possible. For this reason, the genre is awash in bureaucratic fantasies. *Star Trek*, after all, was written by a former member of the Los Angeles Police Department. Science fiction mirrors our own fantasies about the future, revealing, whether we want to admit it or not, that police are forever bound to be nearby.[88] Ursula K. Le Guin is an iconic representative of both fantasy and science fiction genres, famous precisely because of their subversion of these conventions. Le Guin's Orr is no magician; rather, like Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa, he is quite ordinary. Both George and Gregor are bureaucratic types, working

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[88] Is this not the deceptive lesson of N.K. Jemisin's rejoinder to Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"? If Le Guin's allegory is a moralistic demand for prison abolition, Jemisin's "The Ones Who Stay and Fight" is a testament to the impossibility of a world without police (Jemisin 2020). In Jemisin's Um-Helat, extra-judicial capital punishment is carried out by so-called social workers. For what crime? Learning about the past, i.e., learning about the horrors of our world. If the responses of my students to these two stories is any indication, their overwhelming preference for Um-Helat over Omelas, once again, disproves William James' adage. Killing is socially accepted so long as the victim is guilty of breaking the rules.

dead-end jobs. Both, also, find that their dreams are endowed with a weak prophetic power. Whereas Samsa wakes up an insect, Orr's dreams become manifest. Orr's power to turn his dreams into reality becomes something of a living nightmare. *The Lathe of Heaven* is a telling fable about the ability of our dreams to incur into the real world, but also a warning about the dangers of what we spend our days dreaming about.

Graeber has centred the power of imagination as a transformative political force. He establishes a political ontology of the imagination as the sole rival to a political ontology of violence. His concluding statement as an anthropologist concerns the lasting freedom to reimagine our social and political relations. His lone recommendation for the breaking of police power is to contest their cosmology. The power to imagine otherwise is to render the possible. It remains conceivable that enough people can be convinced to give up their allegiance to police, to stop believing in them as non-negotiable solutions to social problems. Once again, for Graeber, the onus is upon our subjective beliefs. Personal or public opinion, however, is no match for systematic coercion. Capitalism and authoritarianism do not require our belief in their enduring reality; their legitimation is enforced by literal goons. Police institutions will not just evaporate. I argue here, via some very tenuous conclusions, that Graeber puts too much significance on the political powers of the imagination. Alternative or imagined worlds are enticing and fascinating, indeed romantic, but the whack of a police baton is an assured reminder that we are trapped in this world, an actually existing totalitarian nightmare.

Abolition is haunted by the spectre of political realism. Rightly or wrongly, most do not find abolition realistic. Abolitionists have generally recognised this as a guiding challenge. One of the hallmarks of abolitionist theory is the repeated insistence that *un*policed worlds are

more common and credible than assumed. Take for instance, Geo Maher's concluding statement (and title phrase): "A world without police is not a utopia. It is *real*, and in some sense, it already exists" (Maher 2020: 227). Or Charmaine Chua's lasting lesson: "Abolition is a horizon, not an event" (Chua 2020: 130). I would be remiss if I did not also cite Ruth Wilson Gilmore's sagacious saying: "Abolition is about presence, not absence" (Gilmore 2019). Each of these figures depict abolition as practical and not prone to empty idealism. Abolitionists expose the present world, fully saturated with police, as consisting of fantastic wizardry masked by the flimsiest of curtains. A world without police is realised every moment when people solve problems without them. Abolitionists plan police obsolescence. Mutual aid networks and transformative justice organisations are growing in number and impact. Actually-existing-abolitionism is revealed by the presence of counter-institutions wielding social power in the shadows of the state. Life-affirming associations devoted to harm reduction, care work, and mutual accountability are promoted as empirical evidence in the here and now that dreams of future worlds freed of oppressive institutions are not inconceivable. Despite the theoretical cleverness, abolition is equally reliant upon the use of political imaginaries. For radical transformation to be made credible, imagining alternatives is both a goal and strategy. There is a growing awareness that police institutions are irredeemable and cannot be so easily amended. However, the unreasonableness of police is not the basis for their disappearance. To put this differently: imagining alternative worlds without police does not make our heavily policed world any less present. As Graeber contends in the concluding sections of "On the Phenomenology of Giant Puppets", this is *the* "anarchist problem", a problem that persists continually (Graeber 2007: 410). There are plenty of believers amongst us; the problem is that the non-believers are the ones holding all the guns.

This chapter has developed a critical analysis of what David Graeber has to say about police and its importance for his life's work. It should not be read as an attempt to rebrand Graeber a cryptic abolitionist. He was quite aware of abolitionist organising and influenced by their work. He even, at times, describes his work as contributing to abolitionist theory and praxis. It is my argument that his research and activism were more attentive to police than commonly assumed. Graeber is one of the leading representatives of contemporary anarchism, of course his work bears likeness and sympathy to anti-racist and anti-police viewpoints. The words that we use to describe ourselves are often inadequate for measuring our beliefs and actions. Distinctions do matter though. Abolitionist thought is unique in its approach and history. Abolitionists have generated fresh insights that are valuable for thinkers and social movements of diverse interests or ideologies. There are, as previously noted, multiple abolitionisms, ranging from the defunding of police departments to the burning down of precincts as preferred public policy outcomes. What this essay does argue is that Graeber, as a famous social movement figure, is an informative interlocutor for a comparative-dialectical analysis of the waves of protests in the early decades of the twenty-first century. The global justice movement, Occupy Wall Street, and the re-emergence of democratic socialism provide a valuable set of lessons for social movements fixed upon diminishing the political power of police. The abolitionists movement likewise reveals shortcomings within these prior protest movements and the demand for *police-centred* social movement strategies.

It is a common, not entirely untrue, stereotype that the global justice and Occupy movements were white-led social movements. The media caricature of the participants of the global justice movement were trust-fund environmentalists from Eugene, Oregon. The encampment in Zuccotti Park was portrayed as akin to the Grateful Dead coming to town. The

whiteness of these movements was not a hindrance so much as an attribute for those like Chris Hedges. As stated by political scientist Joel Olson (2012) in his essay "Whiteness and the 99%":

> This is the sinister impact of white democracy on our movements. It encourages a mindset that insists that racial issues are "divisive" when they are at the absolute center of everything we are fighting for. To defeat left colorblindness and the distorted white mindset, we must come to see any form of favoritism toward whites (whether explicit or implicit) as an evil attempt to perpetuate the cross-class alliance rather than build the 99%.[89]

These criticisms are buttressed by Graber's admission that the 99% includes police. Also damning is his repeated insistence that successful revolutions are dependent upon police laying down their weapons. In *Direct Action*, Graeber discusses the dilemmas of racial tension and white privilege in movement spaces. Predominately white anarchist groups face a strategic trade-off: should they spend their energy organising within their own (white) communities or concentrate on building multiracial coalitions? The trade-off is existential: should they focus on their own oppression and liberation, or act in solidarity with other, more oppressed groups? It is not one or the other. However, Graeber (2009) still concludes that racial divisions "regularly rip direct-actions groups apart" (241). His prominent example is the Love & Rage Anarchist Federation, which dissolved after a series of debates in the late 1990s, in which race was a hotly disputed topic. Joel Olson, quoted above, was a member of Love & Rage and active participant within these debates.[90] Olson is a prominent example of the abolitionist line and, hence, a valuable counter-perspective to Graeber. The Black radical tradition exhibits a culture and practice of resistance largely ignored by socialists and anarchists. Olson looked to W.E.B.

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[89] This is a good moment to address the overly general, ambiguous "we" and "us" used throughout this text. Easy to call-out in student essays, impersonal pronouns remain a guilty pleasure, hard to kick. It remains unclear who "we" or "us" refers to, or to whom it does not. All of "us" might be policed, but *some* are more policed than others.

[90] See Olson (1997) and Olson (1998).

Du Bois for the conviction that the colour-line was the driving conflict within U.S. politics. Du Bois argued that poor whites accepted material deprivation in exchange for privileged social status. The breaking of the cross-class alliance amongst white citizens requires addressing racial domination with the same fervour as economic exploitation. The capitalist order is also a racial order. Multiracial coalitions should not be a perquisite for anarchist organising, so much as the result. Anarchists must also put their efforts into overturning white supremacy. Put by Maher (2012): "Identifying white privilege *within* movements is fundamental, but it is useless if we don't then turn toward the revolutionary practice of attacking white supremacy as a system."

Joel Olson's anarchism exhibits a commitment to abolition that Graeber's lacks. Their differences are significant. Olson advocates for race-centred social movement strategies, including a focus on institutions, such as police, that are structured by racial dominance. The Love & Rage slogan "Governments don't fall by themselves!" is a stark contrast to the performance of insurrection without the corresponding intention or strategy to precipitate the real thing. Olson offers a corrective to the tactical reliance upon provisional autonomous zones and summit protests. Movement building is necessary to broaden the political base, create cross-identity alliances, and grow organisational capacity. Movement building provides tangible victories in a durable war of position. Increased competence and power enable social movements to act as dual powers within society, more effectively challenging the state and police for legitimacy. It would be unfair to say that Graeber is uninterested in movement building. He is largely famous for his success as a movement builder. However, by putting the emphasis upon consensus-building and the use of political imaginaries, forming power is disregarded. Graeber's hope that police will just melt away is contingent upon endless

discussions and mass acceptance of political alternatives. It is the height of foolhardy optimism to rest a theory of change upon the hope that police will unilaterally disarm. Joel Olson's hope (2009), in contrast, is that "the scene might just build a movement."

Dilemmas of race, violence, and social movement strategy also loom large in Graeber's brief history of U.S. social movements in the last four decades of the 20th century. For Graeber, the Civil Rights movement is an anomalous case of non-violent tactics proving effective. Graeber blames black radicals for eschewing democratic processes and excluding white members, arguing that this led to the dissolution of key organisations and a durable decline in political power that lasted decades. Nothing is said about the decapitation campaign of black leadership by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Nor does Graeber address the series of urban rebellions in response to police brutality. Direct democracy is a challenging task for organisations operating under totalitarian regimes. Unorganised uprisings were critical for the making of the Civil Right movement. The politics of the street, which challenged the politics of the ballot-box, took two, conjoined forms. Further, nothing is said about the 1992 uprising in Los Angeles, nor does Graeber address the formation of abolitionist organisations such as Critical Resistance. Graeber is surely guilty of a bit of left colour-blindness. So am I; so are many of us. However, black-led and race-centred social movements have histories and strategies that Graeber's brief analysis misses. The police abolition movement is a legacy of these histories and has captured the collective imagination like few others. The abolitionist movement is a black-led and race-centred social movement. The abolition of slavery, the lynch mob, segregation, prisons, police, and other forms of institutionally reinforced racism has been the long, enduring dream of the Black radical imagination. Put another way: insofar as race is the central organising feature of U.S. American politics, it is imperative that we recognise how

race-centred movements have put racial terror organisations, such as the police, at the centre of their tactics, strategies, and aspirations.

The U.S. state stands at the precipice of a covert civil war. The storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021 involved the performance of seizing power without a corresponding intent to actually claim it or a strategy of what to do with it. Ultimately, the QAnon Shaman outfitted in a clownish headdress and face paint standing atop the empty Senate Chambers was a fitting substitute for the Trump Administration. The far-right is not opposed to state or police power; they desire state power as a means to employ police power. Police violence is not solely for the benefit of political elites, but the desired end of white nationalists. It is necessary to describe the U.S. American far-right as allegiant to a homegrown form of *police fascism*.[91] They brandish their own flags and celebrate their own mythic vigilante superheroes. The Thin Blue Line and Punisher skull have become symbols of a fascist political project that defends a license to kill.

The burning down of Minneapolis' 3rd Precinct, on the other hand, was the first glimmer of a *real* proto-revolutionary moment. The George Floyd uprisings were qualitatively different than the urban rebellions of 2014 and 2015 largely because they began with laying siege to a fortified castle of police power. This was not stochastic property destruction, but a targeted action against a singular institution known to terrorise whole communities. Those who gathered in the late days of May 2020 were not interested in seizing state or police power, but in destroying it. They discovered that not all protests are fated to end in beat downs, tear gas, and arrests. Victory, even if ephemeral, lays in the burned wreckage of an unusable base for projecting police terror. The burned husk of the state's repressive apparatus did far more for

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[91] For those interested in reading more about the "fascism debate" within U.S. American politics, I must shamelessly suggest my article on the subject (Johnson, 2019).

the powers of imagination than ginormous *papier-mâché* puppets. In that moment, the police abandoned their heroic privilege and meta-human authority while running for their lives. For abolitionists, such as myself, "it was glorious indeed" (Maher 2020: 1). Police are not just institutions of racial terror; they are active partisans in inhibiting democratic social movements. The juxtaposition of these two events, the storming of the Capitol alongside the burning of the 3rd precinct, portends two alternative futures, one an impossible hope the other a terrifying assurance.

The George Floyd uprisings, in Minneapolis and elsewhere, followed similar anti-police uprisings in Ferguson, in Baltimore, and elsewhere from 2014 to 2015. The Black Lives Matter movement is a black-led but also multiracial movement. The work of building and sustaining multiracial coalitions, however, remains fraught. Strategically, movement success has largely been due to street actions and *un*civil disobedience. The most explosive moments of these anti-police protests lacked the consensus-process that Graeber fetishizes. Non-profit organisations and political leaders, however, have thrived in their efforts to co-opt and pacify the energy which propelled the movement. Direct democracy missing within the grassroots, has resulted in movement capture through indirect command by established institutions.[92]

The re-emergence of democratic socialism has expanded the terrain for leftist social movements. Bernie Sanders's primary campaigns followed and emulated the Occupy Wall Street movement. The general assemblies of the Occupy encampments were directly inspired by anarchists, such as Graeber. However, their defeat, largely through the police repression, exposed a valuable lesson. The political power of the 1% remains invulnerable without a class of political leadership and a set of public policies aimed at dispossessing them of power. The

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[92] For two representative statements, see Shemon and Arturo (2020) and Soto and Terrell (2021).

Bernie Sanders movement was limited because it was based upon the economic populism of a liberal strand of Occupy. The political power of the 1% remains invulnerable so long as police power is overwhelming. Democratic mayors have increased funding for police. The policy reforms pursued by the Obama, Trump, and Biden Administrations have sought to strengthen the capacity of U.S. police forces. There is a set of actionable public policies that could diminish the political power of police. Abolition represents an untapped source of antibureaucratic populism. Abolitionists have succeeded in establishing police defunding as a public policy position. Defunding the police is the policy plank of the democratic socialist wing of the abolitionist movement. "Defund the Police" effectively distils the strategy and reasonableness of abolitionists; however, it also inadequately translates public anger over state-sanctioned police executions into a budgetary dispute. Without political power and the political will to exercise it, abolitionist imaginaries and the soundness of their public policy proposals remain hollow. Police have been empowered in the wake of uprisings against them. This is not due to public opinion, but the intransigence of liberal political leaders. The mystery of the Democratic Party's allegiance to a class of armed bureaucrats that despise and oppose them is due to the structural necessity of police for projecting state power. *Police are partisans in a covert war against society*. Police maintain the incommensurate authoritarianism of states, spanning the breadth of the entire world, lording over and dominating society, through means of hi-tech violence, including guns and bullets, body armour and teargas, prisons and borders, totalising surveillance, through bureaucratic rule, in concert with talking heads and courts of law, in defence of a capitalist class immersed in institutionalised raiding and extortion. There is no democracy with a political evil so profuse.

I am an abolition pessimist. Through public policies and/or insurrectionary fervour, I desire a world without police authoritarianism. Despite these dreams of utopia, our once and future reality is assuredly dystopian. A world without police is less probable than the continued hoarding of finite resources, ecological collapse, political dysfunction, maintained by ever-increasing and sophisticated forms of police violence and terror. Abolitionist organiser Mariame Kaba (2021) has popularised the adage: "hope is a discipline" (26). My pessimism should not be mistaken for defeatism. Our chosen ideologies are not contingent upon the realisation of our loftiest ends. Rather, it is an honest accounting, but also one based upon an assumption that abandoning hope is the first step to bringing about a real state of emergency. Commons sense folk optimism is one cause of widespread political apathy. We have been disciplined into a hope without promise. Abolitionist Andrew Dilts proclaims that justice is conditioned on its failure (Dilts 2017). So too, abolition is premised on its assured failing. Mark Neocleous, one of the most prominent critical theorists of police, describes police (quoting W.P. Prentice) as "original, absolute, and *indefeasible* [my emphasis]" (Neocleous 2021: 21). Neocleous is another cryptic abolitionist, someone of impeccable radical bona fides but who does not adopt the language of abolition.[93] Abolitionists would do well to heed his warning: *police are indefeasible*, meaning their power cannot be annulled. A peculiar nature of police power is its automatic immunity to eradication. We are not free to renegotiate or radically transform our heavily policed societies. The abolition of police remains impossible via liberal democratic means. Liberal democratic states retain police as background support, a recourse to a tremendous, terrifying power in the final instance. As Stuart Hall and his Birmingham School comrades admitted: "The history of radical politics… is the history of missed

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[93] See Brucato 2020 for a thorough explanation why.

conjunctures" (Hall et al. 1978: 250). If Hall et al. (1978) once thought that "[t]here is light at the end of the tunnel - but not much; and it is far off" (316), the window of opportunity for radical social change has breached an irreversible threshold. The empty promises of the future are foretold in the repeated failures of the past. Our collective dreams for emancipation have always been messianic, a horizon that never arrives. Hope dies last. It is not possible to shed the tyranny of police terror through thought alone. Abolitionist hypotheticals, therefore, have a limited material force. Imagined futures are the last refuge for those who cannot reason with a world gone mad. The imaginative wall that Graeber, and so many others, have sought to overcome and tear down is a mystical revolutionary fantasy. There are real walls. They have names and addresses. They house armaments and prisoners. It requires no magic to make them crumble and wither away. We know their melting point because we have burned them down before and will do so again.

EXCURSUS: THESES ON THE HISTORY OF POLICE

I: Haunted by the Police

> *There is no political solution*
> *To our troubled evolution*
> *Have no faith in constitution*
> *There is no bloody revolution*
> -The Police, "Spirits in the Material World"

No theory of police gets far without referencing Walter Benjamin's characterization of the ghost-like nature of police. Let us indent the quote for effect.

> [A] consideration of the police institution encounters nothing essential at all. Its power is formless, like its nowhere tangible, all-pervasive, ghostly presence (Benjamin 1978: 287).

I had come to hate the police long before I read this line. I had been scared and scarred without ever needing to imagine them as frightful apparitions. Nevertheless, this was the line that first inspired me to begin this study. Why would Benjamin choose to describe police as ghostly? Benjamin's "*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*" ("Critique of Violence") is a serious and dense text, even if an enigmatic one.[94] The reference is not accidental. Its poetic symbolism functions as a clue to be deciphered, a secret to be unraveled, a mystery to be solved. This line, smack in the middle of Benjamin's essay, flashes up in an instant, at the moment of most danger, and blasts open the continuum of the text. It is this line which haunts the history of political theory. We know the importance of this critical juncture. We know what comes next. But, alas, we don't

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[94] It is important to note that the German word "*Gewalt*" refers not just to violence, but also coercion and legal authority. The ambiguity of Benjamin's use of "Gewalt" thus mirrors the dual role of police, as both welders of violence and general administrators.

know what it means that police are like ghosts. We just know that we are enchanted by the thought.

The study of police reveals that their political role is mysterious. This is the most immediate and simple interpretation of Benjamin's allusion. When it comes to police: things are not quite what they appear. Everyone knows the police. Even in Benjamin's day the institution and its earthly representatives loomed large in popular culture. Few images are as universally recognizable as the policeman in a uniform, with a badge, and belt of weapons. Yes, they have the magic to disappear things, but no one is under any illusions as to where the disappeared have gone (the jails and the morgue are always a good place to look). Benjamin the soothsayer was wrong! Police are ubiquitous! Police are commonplace! They are a material fact that can stop, arrest, and kill you if you were ever in doubt. This is precisely Benjamin's point. Their ubiquity, their everyday familiarity, masks and disguises their fundamental truth, their spiritual essence, their political role. Police have an aura! Those of us who study police seek to uncover the symbolic power that lies behind the badge.

Benjamin's essay is a forceful deconstruction of the social contract tradition. Violence is necessary for lawmaking *and* law-preserving. The moral standing of law, particularly as fabricated by Immanuel Kant, is undermined by its *continuous* reliance upon violent force. Police make their appearance within the text because they are the principal means in which the law is continuously preserved through the threat of force.

Benjamin refers to the police as a "spectral mixture." He also references their "spirit." 19th Century German philosophy afforded "spirits" and "specters" a special status. G.W.F. Hegel's magnum opus tracks the emergence of "*Geist*", often translated as "spirit" (Hegel 1977a). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel's in their most famous tract begin with the claim: "A

specter is haunting Europe - the specter of communism" (Marx and Engels 1978: 473). The next line introduces a holy alliance organized against this specter, in which German police-spies play a noted role.

For Jacques Derrida, all this talk of specters and spirits and ghosts is illuminating. In his essay "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority", Derrida analyzes Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" so as to deconstruct legal authority (with a particular focus upon the police-ghost metaphor) (Derrida 2002). In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida argues that democratic theory is haunted by political conflict (Derrida 1997). In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida analyzes Marx's references to spirits, ghosts, magic tricks, and the dead, arguing that Marx's materialism remains haunted by Hegelian idealism (Derrida 1994). *Specters of Marx* was written in the aftermath of the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and in response to pronouncements that history (and political conflict) had come to an end. Derrida predicted that Marx would continue to haunt contemporary politics despite the failure of state communism. Derrida coined the term hauntology as an impressionistic way to inscribe a political logic upon our ghost stories.[95]

Derrida's "risky reading" of Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" is a portrayal of the hauntological nature of the police. Police are not just policemen but embody police *powers*. Police are the ultimate representatives of the "force of law": they are a) free-floating street-level law enforcers, b) those whose force is *a priori* legitimated by law, and c) those who can be called upon by everyday bureaucrats in the final instance. Even when police are not present the threat of police remains. Even in their absence *the power* of police is *felt*. Benjamin says the police are nothing, nowhere, without essence, such that you cannot touch them, without

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[95] Commentators normally situate *Specters of Marx* as the origin of the hauntology concept, however *The Politics of Friendship* and "Force of Law" were both presented beforehand.

form, but still somehow present, in fact present everywhere, all-the-time. People are haunted by the police when they drive in their cars, fearful that a police cruiser could be just around the corner. Derrida mentions the increasingly sophisticated forms of technological surveillance, which he tellingly calls panoptic. The panoptic power of police conveys the haunting feeling of being watched at all times. Police are ghostly because people internalize their presence even when they are nowhere to be seen. While many of us (at least myself) *feel* a physical tightness and discomfort in our bodies knowing that at any moment an inopportune traffic stop could result in cuffs or execution, many others are haunted by traffic toll cameras. Derrida describes police as a formless, faceless mass. The imagery of a formless, faceless mass is laid bare in a series of hooded executioners, a row of riot cops in menacing helmets, men without features watching from the shadows, filing paperwork, machines automating judgments, verdicts, and executions, everywhere, ceaselessly, even here.

Derrida suggestively refers to police as the *Dasein* of the *polis*. Being-in-the-polis thus entails, always already, being-with-the-police. There is no *polis* without police. The police powers of the state are the legal justification for the state to do just about anything.[96] For Derrida, police play a liminal role as the spiritual essence of the state and its material capacity. Police officers lay claim to authority as state representatives. Police re-present the state on the street; they allow the state to roam freely. However, the state itself is always absent and ethereal. Whenever anyone asks who commands the police there is no principal to be found. Police command themselves, but mainly others. Often police claim to act in fidelity to the transcendental power of the law. It is odd to think of police as the ghost in the political machine. Our commonsense intuition is that political elites are the ones issuing orders from behind their

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[96] In United States Constitutional Law, the police powers are the capacity of the state to regulate the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the public.

curtains and police the state machinery for carrying out those orders. One way of reading Derrida is as a rejection of this type of state-police dualism (or law-police dualism, or a state-law-police ternary). No higher political consciousness commands police as a mechanical entity. Rather, the riot police standing in the way of democratic social forces are protecting a system of laws and political elites that are nowhere to be found. Giorgio Agamben refers to this as the empty throne. Put poetically, if before the law stands a gatekeeper and behind it the law is nowhere to be found, all the law is is its gatekeepers. For any men from the country who come asking about the law it will find only the echo of an empty shell which says "攻殻機動隊" ("Mobile Armored Riot Police") again and again and again.

Mark Neocleous, who undoubtedly is the thinker who has done the most to put a broad concept of "police power" at the forefront of contemporary political theory, argues that liberal legal fetishism operates in a similar way as commodity fetishism. In Neocleous' words: "Law becomes a mystical answer to the problems posed by power" (Neocleous 2021: 206-207). Legal fetishism entails a belief in the democratic and just application of law; popular sovereignty and procedural fairness are legitimate substitutes for the arbitrary use of power. Derrida's criticizes the legal fetish as a faith without basis. Authority is conjured up, as it were, out of thin air. Liberals value the rule of law as a useful, necessary thing-in-itself. The high price they attach to the rule of law belies its false appearance and hollow content. For Agamben, the history of the legal concept "*force de loi*" begins with Roman law but is only fully developed in the French Constitutions of 1791, at the very moment in which legislative bodies sought executive powers (Agamben 2005). "*Force de loi*" refers to the earthly effect that laws hold over society after they are passed. Laws bind society. Through acts of necromancy, legislators bring to life laws that transcend sensuousness, making them stand with

feet on the ground, summoning out of their paper brain grotesque ideas far more wonderful than if they were to begin dancing of their own free will. Agamben's neologism "force-of-~~law~~" underlines the empty content of law, utterly reliant upon its fill of force. Every law requires the violence of its maintenance. More to the point: every law must come alive by possessing an earthly vessel. Institutions are *this force* which gives the law force. Police possessed by an otherworldly realm haunt everywhere the legal spell has been cast. Liberal legal theory is predicated upon this metaphysical conjuring trick. The power and authority of states (and law, and police, and everyday bureaucrats) is phantasmagorical. This is why critical theories of the police turn time and time again back to Benjamin's enigmatic description of police as ghostly. For Agamben, and Neocleous, and Derrida too, police are the remnant and residue of an authoritarianism which liberalism claims to disavow but can never exorcise. For critical theorists, what makes liberalism so objectionable is its organized hypocrisy. Liberal democratic societies are haunted by police because they reveal an inadmissible guilt that contradicts their founding justification. Derrida takes particular note of Benjamin's comment that police appear everywhere the same but only in liberal democracies does their appearance result in the "greatest conceivable degeneration of violence" (Benjamin 1978: 287). This is a debate we will return to. However, the history of mass atrocities committed by liberal democracies confirms their guilt and is the reason for their haunting.

Hauntology is analytically useful for explaining how the past plays an outsized role in present-day politics. Anthropologists explain the widespread belief in ghost stories as a form of mourning and remembrance of past ancestors. Few put it better than Marx in his famous retort within the "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "all dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living" (Marx and Engels 1978: 595). Ghostly hauntings

are a way that people make meaning out of the way that *figures* from the past linger long after they have departed the earthly realm. For Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the unenlightened imagine themselves haunted because they "feel abandoned, and attribute their pain to the deceased who cause it" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002:178). Ghosts are frequently said to haunt places when they are no longer honored by their ancestors. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a key literary source for Derrida's concept, the ghostly father haunts the land of the living because he was unjustly killed, demanding to be avenged. According to Benjamin, a revolutionary left gathers its strength from the innumerable scores killed by the state and their police forces. In his haunting final essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin argues on behalf of an activist historiography that takes up the position of the traditionally oppressed. Whereas the Angel of History would like to pull the emergency brake upon the catastrophe of human wreckage piling high, a revolutionary left has the capacity to intercede into human affairs. For Benjamin, history is useful insofar as it is a wellspring for revolutionary zeal. He surmises that an avenging politics is preferably to a politics of redemption. A politics based upon better, more just futures would make the "working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice" (Benjamin 1968: 260).

Derrida's reading of Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" acknowledges it is haunted twice over, first by Benjamin's death and second by the Holocaust. The hauntology concept works as a register of social and political violence and the collective trauma endured by those who survived. The list of mass atrocities is a list of repetitive episodes where police played leading or supportive roles. As the model atrocity of the 20th century, the Holocaust is remembered as a police operation. In Derrida's words: "[T]he 'final solution' is both a historico-politico decision by the state and a police decision, a decision of the police, of the

civil and the military police, without anyone ever being able to discern the one from the other and to assign the true responsibilities to any decision whatsoever" (Derrida 2002: 295). A couple historical facts are worth considering. First, even though Nazism began in a nominal democratic republic, by the time of the final solution Nazi Germany was a single-party, single-ruler dictatorship. I do not think that the list of police atrocities is more pronounced, in number or ferocity, in liberal democratic regimes than autocratic regimes. Second, Walter Benjamin killed himself by swallowing a lethal dose of morphine tablets. He was not killed by force of law. The caveat: at least not directly. Benjamin continues to haunt us from beyond the grave largely as one of the innumerable victims of European fascism. Benjamin died in an aborted escape attempt. The immediate impetus for Benjamin's suicide was Spanish border police refusing him entry. Benjamin's divine sacrifice was based upon an imminent threat of incarceration, brutality, and death by German police forces and aided and abetted by Spanish police forces who obstructed his line of flight. If, as this thesis argues, politics is haunted by the police, it is through the afterlives of their victims.

Benjamin's vengeful historiography should not be our only recourse to a failed politics of messianic redemption. Increasingly few people believe that a better, more just future is possible. The first decades of the 21st century have resulted in a severe deflation of expectations about the future. Mark Fisher applies the hauntology concept to the widespread experience of futility felt by present-day political activists (Fisher 2014). For Fisher, we are not just haunted by the lingering traces of the past, we are also haunted by the lost futures no longer afforded our imaginations. According to Avery Gordon: "We're haunted by historic alternatives that could have been and by the peculiar temporality of the shadowing of the lost and better futures"

(Gordon 2018: 234). To steal and bastardize a line from Stuart Hall: a militant politics of sacrificial rage can be sustained by a nostalgia for what can no longer be (Akomfrah 2013).

The hauntological role of police for contemporary politics is surely fun and interesting, at least for me, providing a license for expressive exposition, but its utility for social movements dedicated to diminishing the political power of police remains vexing. Abolitionists have made the study of police a somber, demanding, and existential task. Metaphorical allusions to ghosts and hauntings do little to explain or undermine police unions, budgetary expenditures, automatic immunity, or solve intractable issues like mass shootings or gender violence. Ghosts are not real! The stakes of the present struggle demand that we forsake such fantasies and extravagances. Critical theory, at least the snapshot presented here, risks turning scholars into psychic oddballs, whose work is put into relaying inaccessible messages, exegetical seances of our favored thinkers, and/or peering into crystal balls. Philosophical indulgences about empty thrones might read well on paper but matter little to those advancing a political struggle. Hence, the oft repeated criticism that critical theory has forsaken the hard work of politics and is now merely an academic fad. As Frantz Fanon notoriously counseled: "no phraseology can be a substitute for reality" (Fanon 1963: 45). Nevertheless, George Floyd's face shines forth from the afterlife. You see it clear as day as you read his name. As Tobi Haslett put it: "Martyrs drive this movement: they are its origin and blazing emblems" (Haslett 2021).

The slogan of Avery Gordon's book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* is that "life is complicated" (Gordon 1997: 3). Abolitionists have advanced a political struggle though a material analysis of the political power of the police. They have done so even though politics and power are complicated and despite police planning and

operations often being conducted in secret. That life is complicated is, however, also a justification for the continued scrutiny of the metaphysical role that police play in our political mythologies. The complicated nature of social and political life is the reason why I originally found Benjamin's description of the ghost-like nature of police so inspired and alarming. Benjamin's description of police as ghost-like is not a literal proposition. Rather, it as an expressive way of admitting that our understanding of police is circumscribed and remains piecemeal. It is also a dramatic way of describing police as weird and eerie, paranormal, and ultimately mysterious. Material analyses unfairly neglect the psychic dimension of life's strangeness. Police power is established upon false appearances. Pointedly: the liberal image of police does not match their actual behavior. Police secrets remain hidden and concealed, awaiting discovery. That being said: the unreasonableness of police is not sufficient for them to melt away. After all, social movements also aspire to conjure up revolutionary masses and imagined worlds. The organized hypocrisy of police authority is not a strategy for their dissolution.

To write of police as haunting, spooky phantoms is to write political theory as something akin to a horror story. It is therefore worth confessing: this is a dissertation written under duress. I have never been able to shake the presence of police in my life. That police produce a haunting effect is not just a political statement but a personal one. Like an echo, a wound, an invisible presence pestering me from another dimension, police have continuously haunted my waking life and this dissertation is an answer to that call.

II - On Pigs and Bastards and Other Such Fairy Tales

The ghost-like nature of police ought to unnerve and terrify the reader. Spiritual possession, summoning the dead, and/or hauntings are fantastic descriptions of the monstrous and the horrifying. One must wonder if Benjamin intended his police-ghost metaphor to scare his audience into concerted opposition against police forces. And if so, it is worth considering whether ghosts are the best monster-metaphor or the most terrifying. The ever-present watching eye of the police-ghost is unsettling. However, their intangible nowhereness, intended to evoke an indefinable untouchability, conversely depicts them as unthreatening. Ghosts have a limited ability to interfere with the external world. To be haunted is certainly to be preferred over being devoured. As the jingle goes: "I ain't afraid of no ghost."

Police in the real world are certainly more terrifying than any Gothic imaginary. Police are more than their surveilling power. They do more than haunt their surroundings. Police can intercede into the material world, quite literally lay their hands upon you, sink their teeth into you; they can detain, disappear, and execute at will. If police are social monstrosities, it is worth asking: what kind of monsters are they?

Anyone who observes the spread of anti-police ideology is aware of the popularity of derogatory pejoratives. Police are most commonly derided as pigs and bastards. The acronym ACAB, standing for All Cops are Bastards, was once a cultural slogan relegated to Europe. Even small towns were adorned in anarchist graffiti. ACAB iconography is now just as prevalent here in the United States. The most important connotation of the phrase is the universal qualifier "All Cops." *All* Cops refuses any distinction between good and bad cops. However, the descriptor "Bastards" is puzzling, largely because of its dual meaning. A bastard is a vicious brute prone to aggressiveness. Bastards also refer to children born to unwed parents. Police are certainly vicious brutes prone to excessive violence. By most accounts,

referring to police as bastards is intended to signify their status as unwanted orphans of a corrupt and debase system. However, I am discomforted by the underlying sexual politics at the core of the phrase. Police, far from being bastards, are the enforcers of compulsory sexual mores and traditional familial structures. Children born out of wedlock do not deserve to be castigated as killers and crooks. They deserve to be freed from the compulsory policing of their birth. The ACAB slogan maintains the residue of the Victorian moralism which bore it.

A similar critique can be logged against the use of the term pig as an abusive slur lodged at police. If ACAB grew in popularity amongst punk subcultures, calling police pigs was the pejorative of choice amongst black radicals. Does not the underlying dehumanization at the core of this phrase portend a cure that imitates the disease? Referring to police as pigs is to characterize them as filthy and animalistic. When juxtaposed to the image that police maintain of themselves, as dedicated to dirty work, compelled to get their hands dirty, in an effort to cleanse society of its refuse, such rhetoric reproduces the logic that justifies police violence. The list of police atrocities is chock full of folk devils, demonized others, dehumanized, subjugated out-groups. The logic of dehumanization that propels police violence is dramatically displayed in the opening monologue of Costa-Gavras's film *Z*:

> This year, leaflets are being dropped by air to inform our peasantry of the ideological mildew threatening our country… With the outbreak of such "isms" as socialism, anarchism, imperialism, communism, etc., sunspots began to swarm across the face of the diurnal orb. God casts no light on the Reds. Scientists have announced a major increase in sunspots since the advent of beatniks, Provos, and, most of all, pacifist tendencies from Italy, France and Scandinavia. As the chief of law and order in the north, I use this occasion to address you high-ranking civil servants. We must preserve the healthy parts of our society and heal the infected parts (Costa-Gavras 1969).

Sylvia Wynter, in their essay on the pervasive use of the acronym N.H.I. (No Humans Involved) by officers of the Los Angeles Police Department, argues that such extra-cognitive

expressions are not prescriptive categories but pre-selected degrees of worth (and thus disposability) (Wynter1994). Let me be clear: I do believe that police are unworthy and that we should dispose of them. Does such an ideological stance justify the use of patriarchal and/or dehumanizing pejoratives? Ultimately, especially if it gets under their skin, calling police pigs and bastards is comical and galvanizing. Mockery is an effective form of direct action. Moreover, the harm of dehumanization is less its rhetorical power and more evident in its use (structured dominance) and results (group-differentiated vulnerability to violence). Anti-police slurs allow subjugated peoples to ridicule the powerful and hold them in bold contempt. For the Black Panthers, referring to the police as "the pigs" allowed them to fend off fear and intimidation and portray their communities as deserving of dignified lives. The purpose of my intervention is not to hand wave or discourage police-bastard and police-pig pejoratives; it is to investigate the role of such taxonomies for political action and thought. Benjamin refers to the police as ghosts. I have defended a silly abolitionism of dressing up police as clowns. To repeat my pithy adage: "we can retain the presence of police so long as we outfit them in outlandish costumes, tricycles, and squirt guns" (Johnson 2021). David Graeber, in hopes of deducing why police hate activist puppeteers and their puppets, quotes one of his comrades: "Obviously, they hate to be reminded that they're puppets themselves" (Graeber 2007: 393). Allusions to police as puppets, or as leashed attack dogs, depict police as class traitors and tools of elite interests. The most accurate descriptions of police monstrosity cause the most acute damage to their social power.

The history of political theory has established its own compendium of mythological beasts. No study of Niccolò Machiavelli can neglect his advice to would-be rulers to act as a half-beast, at once a lion and a fox. Marx symbolized his adversary Mr. Moneybags as both a

werewolf and a vampire. In (what many find) the founding document of political theory, Plato's *Republic*, there are oblique references to police as domesticated dogs. Oblique because Plato does not refer to police but to guardians. Police advocates have a vested interest in making the inference that police are so-called guardians. Police-guardians are one of the foundational myths that necessitate police forces. This led to the comical inclusion of a quote falsely attributed to Plato in the Obama Administration's *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Here, liberal police reformers aim to nudge the organizational culture of police to adopt a guardian ethos (and renounce the history of police as a type of warrior society). To emphasize their appeal, they call upon well-known defender of democracy Plato.[97] "In Plato's vision of a perfect society — in a republic that honors the core of democracy — the greatest amount of power is given to those called the Guardians. Only those with the most impeccable character are chosen to bear the responsibility of protecting the democracy" (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services 2015: 2). The President's erroneous citation hails from a tribute to police work called *The Nobility of Policing* (Nila 2008).[98] Upon an actual reading of Plato's *Republic* we do find a curious description of guardians as tamed dogs. The guardian class plays a foundational role in Plato's divided city, ambiguously caught betwixt the ruling class and the ruled. The importance of police-dogs for Plato is their friendliness to familiar faces and hostility to strange newcomers (Plato 376a). As Adriel Trott argues, the capacity to recognize the familiar and the strange is philosophically crude (Trott 2020). If the guardians instead differentiated good from bad, they might not attack friendly strangers or seek favor from malicious neighbors. The police-dog metaphor is further complicated when Plato admits that cruel or neglectful shepherds can transform dogs into wolves (Plato 416a). For Plato, the wolf-

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[97] In my "Introduction to Political Theory" course, we learn that Plato was a notorious skeptic of democracy.
[98] The credit for this fine detective work goes to Andrew Dilts.

tyrant is the primary threat to the flock of sheep the ideal city protects. A subversive reading of Plato can extract two warnings. First, police-guardians are politically useful for advancing Polemarchus's sort of justice: helping friends and harming enemies. Socrates's retort to Polemarchus establishes the injustice that results because friends and enemies cannot be accurately recognized. Second, police-guardians easily become tyrannical. Plato's metaphor falls prey to the dual role of dogs in the popular imagination. Dogs are domesticated predators. Calling someone a dog is a familiar trope used by racists and misogynists, while simultaneously owning dogs as property is a form of class status. Whereas this conversation started via the image of police as leashed attacks dogs controlled by capitalist and political elites, historically police have been the ones holding the leashes of actually existing attack dogs as they viciously assailed black bodies. The history of slave hounds and the use of canines to brutalize Civil Rights protestors is juxtaposed with the social media campaign focused upon the widespread police practice of killing pets in raids or house calls. A thin (blue) line separates the good pet from the wild beast.

Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* is often cited as another founding document justifying the necessity of police. One example is the fascist political theorist Carl Schmitt, who claimed that the establishment of civil government out of the state of nature is the very definition of police (Schmitt 2008: 31). Hobbes also relies upon a monster metaphor to describe his sovereign: the Leviathan. For Schmitt, the political symbolism of a terrifying sea-serpent fails precisely because Hobbes imbues the sovereign ruling over the body politic with a mystical consciousness. By substituting the state for the sovereign, Schmitt replaces the Hobbesian frontpiece with a towering, all-encompassing police-machine. "The end result is therefore not a 'huge man," but a 'huge machine'" (Ibid: 98). Schmitt, more than most, ought to know that

police are soulless. For Franz Neumann, the Nazi Behemoth was structured for police to have substantial bureaucratic autonomy (Neumann 2009). Schmitt's criticism of Hobbes is that he humanizes the state. This is the exact opposite of my reluctance to employ dehumanizing rhetoric against police. Does it make sense, instead, to think of police as machines? There is a rich history within the science fiction genre whereby police forces are staffed by cyborgs or androids: *Blade Runner*, *Terminator 2*, and *Ghost in the Shell* are some of the most notable examples. The increasing use of surveillance technology, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), and big data for policecraft portends a terrifying future where racist police are replaced by racist algorithms. The promise of the police-machine metaphor is that it exposes police work as components of complex systems. Machines are human creations, use power to apply force, and can operate is dissimilar ways (automated vs. autonomous machines, for example). Moreover, the machine-metaphor provides a useful rejoinder to the debate over the presumed humanity of police officers. There is a difference between referring to a cop as a pig and labeling them a tool of an oppressive system. Police, after all, do have names and addresses. Our criticism of them is not that they have forsaken their humanity but that they play social roles and assert political functions that are harmful. Police are an institutional personae. Police officers wear badges and thereby become governmental subjects. Police present themselves as metahuman political beings bestowed with spiritual powers and programmed purpose. This is why the slogan All Cops are Derek Chauvin, or All Cops are Uvalde Cops, more effectively distills the essence of police authoritarianism than the use of pejoratives. As is convention within abolitionist thought: Derek Chauvin is not an anomaly but an effect of the system functioning as it was designed.

"Cops, being neither human nor animal, do not dream." Or so writes Sean Bonney. In an exquisite display of comedic effect, this bold proclamation is followed by the disclaimer: "Don't expect me to justify that" (Bonney 2019: 272). Bonney's playful rhythm is no gimmick. The lesson of Bonney's poem, "What Teargas Is For," is that police wage war on the unknowable, so desperate are they to define the reality of any given situation. The teargas is for police, so that they do not have to confront their lack of imagination. Such profundity is not on display in Bonney's poem "ACAB: A Nursery Rhyme" (Bonney 2017). Bonney instead imitates the poetic genius of N.W.A.:

> for 'I love you' say fuck the police / for
> "the fires of heaven" say fuck the police

In a later stanza, Bonney reveals his big idea:

> all other words are buried there
> all other words are spoken there / don't say "spare change"
> say fuck the police

The content of Bonney's poem is its repetitive form. Miguel James uses the same trick in his poem "Against the Police" (James 2013). The name of the poem expresses its meaning.

> My entire Oeuvre is against the police
> If I write a Love poem it's against the police

There is no need to come up with creative ways to caricature police if the intention is to disparage them. N.W.A. established the philosophical slogan of the abolitionist movement in 1988. The abolitionist minimum is to be against the police. The political function of anti-police pejoratives is to popularize anti-police sentiments. Authoritarian mythologies depict police as metahuman beings. The cosmological role of police in U.S. American culture is protected, in part, by their glamorization in the media and Hollywood as a class of superheroes. Police are not guardians; they are vigilantes. Police are not superheroes; they are super-predators. Anti-

police proponents, and by this I mean abolitionists in the minimal sense, create art, slogans, policies, and theories as tools of what David Graeber calls mythological or symbolic warfare. Ghosts, clowns, puppets, pigs, bastards, attack dogs, and machines are conceptual personae put to work by our critical imaginations in a contest of ideas against police authoritarianism. As an abolitionist, I endorse contentless pejoratives, but as a political theorist I prefer content-laden theoretical abstractions. Each can be effective. Each exposes police as some type of social monstrosity. Each are, as Bonney's subtitle alludes, fairy tales.

Monsters are a substitute for political evil. Police are no stranger to the logic of monsters, being monsters themselves. By imagining the social world as full of predators they have justified the need for super-predators. The recursive logic at the core of policing threatens to taint all counter images of police. Monster mythology is how political theory justified the necessity of police in the first place. Monsters, though, police remain. There is an additional fear that the overuse of metaphors undermines the reference. As Derrida warned: "Monsters cannot be announced. One cannot say: 'here are monsters', without immediately turning monsters into pets" (Derrida 1989: 80). Creative license can have the inverse effect of making political evil appear ordinary and natural, or even worse, sympathetic and harmless. Casper the Friendly Ghost is not hostile, just misunderstood and lonely. Wilbur the Pig symbolizes the innocence of humans and animals alike. The becoming-animal of police renders them playful, whereas the becoming-machine of police is a hallucinogenic vision of their potential invincibility. It is therefore worth asserting: the scariest stories are always historical events.

The title of Darius Simpson's poem is already parenthetical. "THERE ARE GOOD COPS" is in quotation marks as a sign that the title is disingenuous (Simpson 2022). The first part of the poem imitates this effect through the use of oxymoronic tautologies. There are

indeed, by miraculous contradiction, pro-life executioners, scissors without sharp edges, venomless snakes, affordable housing, and classrooms where learning happens. The repetitive list is a slippery slope to a defense of the belief that Not All Cops. Even if by miracle, there are pious officers within the force. Put another way: only ideally, are police good, presidents peaceful, and/or democracies free. The second half of the poem reverses the flow of time to resurrect a dead uncle, seemingly killed by a mix of police, poverty, and tobacco. It is his death that haunts the poem, especially the final line. The cigarettes were always going to kill him. In this possible world, however, they killed him because he stole them.

and the owner did (not) call 9-1-1 because monsters do (not) exist

The (not) is in parentheses as a signal, again, that the negation is disingenuous. The owner did call 9-1-1. The reader can only assume that is how the uncle died. The police are only named in the title and alluded to in the final line. They are, nevertheless, the primary actually existing monsters that animate the poem. The executioners, presidents, tobacco companies, and grocery store owners, reflecting various social conditions and political institutions, fill the poem with a set of complimentary monsters. The owner's decision to call 9-1-1 is not necessarily monstrous, but quite human. It is an act of weakness and cowardliness, not evil. The true evil can only be alluded to off-screen, outside the stanzas of the poem. The economic and political institutions created the social conditions that caused the uncle to steal a pack of cigarettes. A necropolitical death-making institution waits off page, haunting the text. My reading of this poem is that monsters (do) exist. Police did not create them *ex nihilo*. Contrary to much abolitionist thinking, people commit grave unforgiveable acts of social harm. The world is factious and violent, full of everyday horrors. This does not excuse the police effort to become themselves monsters. Police are monstrous because they kill with impunity. That police

institutions are monstrosities is not dependent upon beliefs in the supposed innocence of humanity. The proposition that monsters (do) exist, and that police are one such type of monster, is best demonstrated by proofs of their political evil.
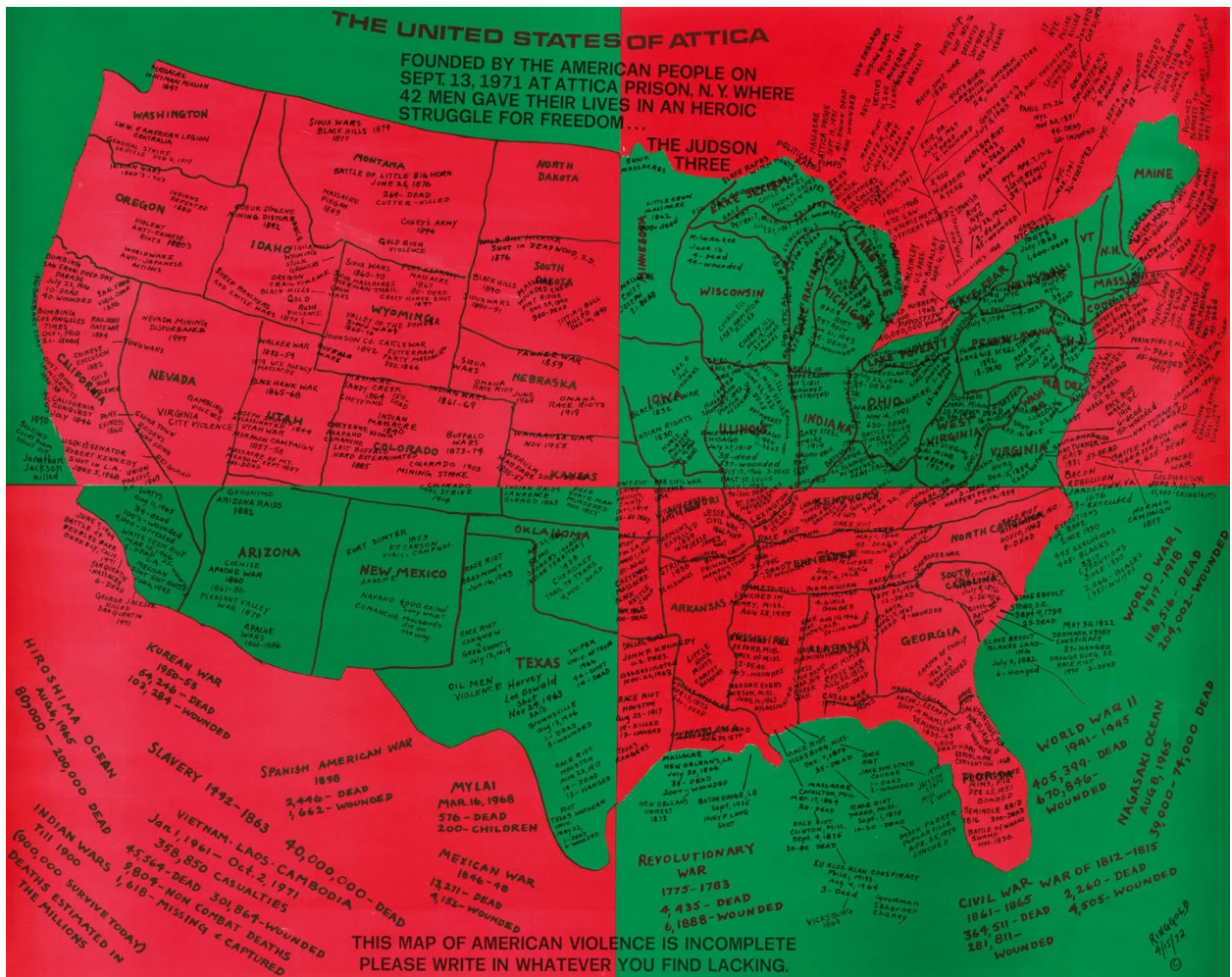
III - The List

Figure 7: "The United States of Attica" by Faith Ringgold

A dissertation, like most writing projects, goes through multiple drafts. I have tried to introduce this thesis multiple times, each time with a different list. The list is a creative way to

grab the reader's attention and alert them to the gravity of the situation at hand. I teach the benefits of the list as a writing technique to my students. I often refer them, despite fears that this could be perceived as self-aggrandizement, to the opening paragraph of my essay "Ur-Fascism and Neo-Fascism" (Johnson 2019). What this introduction does well is clue the reader into a series of current events, events whose context they know, as the basis for the theoretical discussion that follows. The list works by stylistic repetition. The list rests on the reader's political awareness. The list is a stand-in for the world as it is happening.

The list(s) for this dissertation, as you can no doubt imagine, are manifold. Just the feeling of thinking, of being forced to think for oneself, about the many possibilities of different types of lists ought to precipitate a deep sense of discomfort and horror (amongst a list of other emotions). Why not use the list here and now? There is, after all, a demand that we "Say Their Names".[99] I am not going to say their names. The list is more than names. I once wrote, for example, an introduction to this dissertation as a world tour of countries and the particular, peculiar way that in each police permeate social life and structure intractable political conflicts. But, it is true, the list is also names. One of the most important parts of the list is the names. You know their names (at least some of them). You know that the reason why these names are important is because they are not here anymore. The names haunt the text. By not enumerating the names, by forcing you to think of them yourself, and holding them in silence, it allows the haunting effect to work all the more.

The stylistic use of absence is not the only reason for not including the list here and now. I have assuredly written an introduction to this study of police using the names of people

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[99] Actually, the demand was to "Say Her Name", to emphasize that black women killed by police are not met with the same intense outrage as when black men are killed by police, despite the fact that the founding generation of abolitionists scholars and Black Lives Matter™ founders are black women. May the memory of S----- B---- be forever a blessing.

killed by police. The problem is that there is always somebody, or something, missing from the list. The remainder haunts the list. As the patron saint of the Do-It-Yourself anti-folk punk scene Kimya Dawson sings: "We will honor the dead of every age and every gender / 'Cause we can't just have it be the brothers' names that we remember" (Dawson 2017). The demand to "Say Her Name" was to call attention to what is often missing from these lists. By doing so, black trans women (and men) are noticeably excluded. The purpose of a *good* list is to make sure that an appropriately diverse selection is included. There is a politics of the list. The social justice police, who do not exist and have no statutory powers, are ever watchful that the use of lists is prescribed in a manner deemed acceptable. Just in case they are reading: there are even white people included in the list. There is no list possible that can fully include everything. As Faith Ringgold *might* say: "the list is lacking."

The list is qualitatively complex. There are different types of lists. The missing remainder is a problem for all lists and not just the list of names. The missing remainder is thus also a problem of relations. How are the different lists connected? What is the chain of signification that the author intends? Is there is a list of all the lists? Alain Badiou, in one of the most audacious attempts at grand theorizing, once attempted to establish a political theory of the list. According to Badiou, "mathematics *is* ontology" (Badiou 2006: 4). By mathematics, Badiou just means the list. People can be counted, seen, or, to use the language of James C. Scott, made legible. Badiou uses the watchword The Void to refer to what is missing from lists. The state keeps lots of lists, and someone, or some particular class of someones, is systematically not counted and left off the list. The political event is when a class of people notice their exclusion, demand to be included, and encourage others to act in fidelity to this truth. What many have found useful about Badiou's political philosophy is its inventive way

of theorizing the politics of exclusion. For example, The Void represents those who lives do not matter. The list is the Void in the Badiouian sense. The expectation to name names is because the list often refers to what is traditionally missing or excluded. The problem is the regressive logic whereby inevitably someone, or something, cannot be named. Or, those named, cannot any longer be included because they have been killed. For Badiou, the remainder is constitutive of the excess of being. Put in my own words: while the list is always a stand-in for the world as it is, the world is always more than any list. Politics always exceeds any and all lists, whether that be events, forms, relations, truths, and/or subjects. A primary shortcoming of a political theory of lists is that lists are infinitely divisible. As Faith Ringgold *might* say: "the list is incomplete."

Half-way through my course on "Global Policing", I was shocked by a particular student's keen remark concerning that week's reading of Martha Huggins' "From Bureaucratic Consolidation to Structural Devolution: Police Death Squads in Brazil" (Huggins 1997). They expressed that they were becoming numb and desensitized to the class material, as every week we learnt about another set of atrocities in another country and/or region, not unlike the atrocities studied every week prior. My first response was shock that of all the weeks to become jaded they did so during our reading of Brazilian death squads. If Martha Huggins cannot scare you, then I am afraid I cannot muster much more. However, there was an essential honesty in their response. In this course, "Global Policing" came to stand-in for a large number of historical atrocities. I could list them. It would be a long list. It would be impossible to list every mass atrocity. Their comment revealed the extent of mass atrocities in which police played a leading or secondary role. Rather than reducing or abolishing violence, the historical appearance of states and their police forces has resulted in an intensification of violence in

every corner of the globe. State violence exceeds in magnitude, by a significant margin, social violence. Despite the fondness for datasets within the positivist social sciences, no dataset yet exists of all those killed by police, or permitted by police to be killed, historically, transnationally, and organized by variables. The list evokes the scale of police violence. The list is thus composed of numbers and the names of events, not just individual names. The anti-police uprisings in the past few years were foregrounded by the sheer scale of police violence (annual rates of police killings, number of people incarcerated, the percentage of residents with outstanding fines and warrants, etc.). The list, understood as an aggregate, an infinitely divisible mass, reveals the distribution of group-differentiated life chances. The list is thus a depository of political evil. By this, I do not mean a metaphorical evil illustrated through the telling of monster stories. The list is a telling of historical stories. Real stories. Of names remembered and forgotten. Of total death counts. Of high numbers. No dataset can perceive as perceptively as the Angel of History. Benjamin pictures history not as discontinuous, but a catastrophe repeatedly endlistly. My referral to the list is synonymous with Benjamin's historical wreckage: an innumerable pile of bodies growing ever skyward. Finally, we must return to my student and the warning embedded in their comment. The fundamental danger is the normalization of mass atrocities. We know that saying the names and naming names have not stopped the list from adding new names. The anger over police atrocities quickly dissipates amidst an attention economy. The list thus reveals the tragedy of history and the sense of powerlessness that many feel about politics. As Faith Ringgold *does not* say, but we might say: "The map is too small. What is lacking is a pessimistic imagination. Please say there is more than writing-in new names and dates of police violence."

There is no list listed here. There is only an abstract, general list, a floating signifier where a true list must be imagined. The list, as it has haunted a dissertation about police, is a testament to how long I have been writing about an unfolding crisis. The list as it was originally conceived was to direct the reader to a host of events which happened in the years 2014 to 2016. By that time, the gravity of the situation was clear for all to see. I could have written another list of the riots, rebellions, direct actions, and even assassination of police officers which happened during those years. Now, in retrospect, that list no longer carries the same weight. Some names have been said so much that they have begun to lose their magic. I would need to write an entirely new list now with particular attention given to the well-known people killed by police in the year 2020 (as I could also write an even larger list of names not well-known). The gravity of the situation does not need to be creatively rendered to the reader's attention. Already there is a list of people killed by police in the first half of the year 2022. Another list, entirely new, would be there waiting to be named by the time it takes to submit a final dissertation proof. The list expands and expands, piling ever higher, a catastrophe without end. For those seeking a hopeful kernel, one positive development is the difficulty it would take to list the innumerable clashes with police throughout the long hot summer of 2022. Perhaps, someone should create a dataset. Rebellion to the list was everywhere. As Faith Ringgold *might* say: "the list is incomplete, and we can help fill it in."

IV - Burn Down the American Plantation

The demand in graduate school is to "publish or perish." So competitive is the academic job market that it is now a common expectation that Ph.D. students and prospective faculty

have multiple publications. Such advice prioritizes professional aspirations at the expense of scholarly rigor and precision. This project is a continuation of an article I published on Michel Foucault and his "secret history of police" (Johnson 2014). This article is still a source of great pride. It appeared in a special issue of *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Thought* devoted to political theory and policing. It is a testament to how long I have been working on this topic. The origins of my research into Foucault and his secret history predate its eventual publication by half a decade, many years before there was a massive nationwide movement in opposition to police. However, this article, at least for me, now stands as a testament to how wrong I was back then.

I spent the summer of 2014 laboring over the final edits of this essay. This was the summer that Ferguson Police would shoot and kill black teenager Michael Brown. I vividly recall distracting myself from the painstaking work of editing by reading about the tragic news. As I was stuck in a library basement, something was happening in the streets outside, something soon-to-be happening all across the country. The extra-judicial execution of young Brown by Officer Darren Wilson was not the pure origin of the Black Lives Matter movement, but it was certainly a catalyzing moment. The intensity of the protests in response to this needless killing felt different. Anyone paying attention could perceive that a shift in political consciousness was materializing. Any illusions of a post-racial liberalism came crashing down that fateful summer. My article was published in December 2014. Soon thereafter it was reported that Officer Wilson would not be indicted for the murder. Ferocious protests again erupted in the streets of Ferguson. I vividly recall sharing the news of my publication in between posts about the thousand-person anti-police protest at the Mall of the Americas outside Minneapolis, Minnesota. Something was happening indeed.

For me, these events proved to be a more powerful teacher than French theory. The Black Lives Matter movement, already an inadequate label, revealed the contradictions that formed the basis of my work on Foucault and the history of police. Nothing could be more dull and inconsequential than the outdated thoughts of another white man. The Black Lives Matter moniker found its original antagonism in police violence but was quickly applied to a wide array of institutions and practices structured in racial domination. The U.S. discipline of political science, for example, was notably founded by white supremacists (Blatt 2018). The subfield of political theory has made an art of the canonization of whiteness. Put poignantly by Charles Mills in *The Racial Contract*: "White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today" (Mills 1997: 1). According to Mills, the omission of race within political theory is not accidental but constitutes the means for the reproduction of racial hierarchies. Let us pause here to emphasize this point. Police are the preeminent institution that structures racial domination. So too, the study of political theory, by centering the work of figures such as Michel Foucault, acts to reproduce that same racial order.

A close, retrospective reading of my article on Foucault's "secret history of the police" is instructive. Foucault's secret history is an inadequate explanation for the excessive use of violence by U.S. American police forces. The policing of the grain market pales in significance to the policing of cotton and sugar plantations. Panopticism is not the history of our present; legal lynchings established a precedent that police continuously renew. The history of European police distracts from the peculiar instantiation of police here in the U.S. and elsewhere. Many now cite "Foucault's Boomerang" as the thesis that techniques of police administration created in the colonies return to the metropole, with devastating effect (Graham 2010). This is actually an argument first made by black thinkers and associated with decolonial

thought (Césaire 1972). Foucault spends little to no time analyzing the transnational spread of police practices from the colonies to Europe, or, for that matter, from Europe outward. The subtitle of my article "Critical Theory of the Police in a Neoliberal Age" is especially embarrassing. My reading of Foucault in this article asserts that the *raison d'être* of police is the control and domination of an exploited underclass. I refer to vague paupers and a mysterious sub-proletariat without any material analysis of who makes up this criminal class. The general explanation advanced throughout the Black Lives Matter movement was that race not class is the crucial variable leading to mass incarceration and high rates of police executions. Foucault is hardly a scholar of neoliberalism, and if he is, he is a scholar of a woefully inaccurate and piecemeal report on neoliberal ideas. His lecture course *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979* predates the elections of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and has a singular focus upon economic theory (Foucault 2008). Neoliberalism is not reducible to an economic ideology promoted by Gary Becker, Milton Friedman, and/or Alan Greenspan. Foucault offers no explanation for how or why neoliberal ideas proved victorious through political struggle. The 1970s is indeed a defining decade in the expansion of law-and-order populism. The birth of neoliberalism was occasioned as a political solution to racial conflict *and* capitalist crisis. Omitting race in accounts of neoliberalism's ascendance is to misread and misrepresent that history.[100] I argued that neoliberal ideas incentivized policy makers to see police as potential entrepreneurs and a source of corporate profits. I cite the killing of Trayvon Martin as an example of neoliberal policing because he was killed by a member of the neighborhood watch. The sanctioned use

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[100] Writing in the eye of the crisis, Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies wrote the single greatest study of neoliberalism back in 1978. For them, race, police, and political struggle are forefronted.

of social violence by para-police forces has a long history, even longer than formal police institutions. The danger posed by para-police is not just privatized policing for-profit, but also the traditional and free use of violence, a mixture of possessive individualism and communal authoritarianism, to assert racial and patriarchal domination. I make only one comment about the disproportionate policing of communities of color, in reference to Victor Rios. As an example of Foucault's critical theory of police, I compare the policing of Mardi Gras and Louisiana State University football games with ominous public statements by university police involving the introduction of a full-spectrum surveillance system throughout campus. Ignored was the infamous Angola Prison less than an hour north of Baton Rouge. Angola was named after and built upon a former slave planation and to this day permits forced labor. The word "abolition", or any variant, never appears in this article. Angela Davis's article criticizing Foucault for ignoring the slave trade and plantation system in his history of the modern penitentiary was published over a decade prior (Davis 1998). Davis would return to Foucault in her groundbreaking *Are Prisons Obsolete?* and cite him as an inspiration for abolitionist ideas (Davis 2003). For Davis, it was Foucault who revealed that policy failures involving prisons conditions precipitated liberal reform that gave prisons new, more threatening powers. If the final section of my article was intended to examine "Post-Foucauldians in a Neoliberal Age" it noticeably missed those figures who admit Foucault's influence and who in the next few years would become the central protagonists in the political struggle against police.

Let me confess. My interest in police was long standing. However, the reasons for my gravitation to this topic were personal and not motivated by any particular racial consciousness. Baton Rouge has since become a key node in the burgeoning movement against police (particularly in the aftermath of the police killing of Alton Sterling), but during my time there

I was hardly involved in any organizing, either within local black communities or against police. My interest in race, at least at the beginning of my graduate career at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB), was newfangled. The shortcomings of my article on Foucault inspired me to study what the late great Cedric Robinson called the Black Radical Tradition. My interest in figures like Foucault, but also Benjamin and Derrida, was due, in part, to the sequestering of pressing questions directed at police institutions within political philosophy and the university at large. I felt these figures were addressing an issue of critical importance being conspiratorially ignored. Such is the whiteness that was baked into the foundations of my early education of political theory (no doubt, also the whiteness baked into my own upbringing and maturation). Black intellectuals have long centered the role of the police as one of the preeminent institutions that structure racial domination. Black radicals, spearheaded by women of color feminism, helped create the contemporary abolitionist movement in the late 1990s. Cedric Robinson had been a prominent member of the UCSB Political Science Department but retired shortly before my arrival. Fellow political theorists Brian Lovato and Jasmine Nolle Yarish spoke of themselves and a network of scholars throughout the discipline as "Cedric People" (Johnson and Lubin 2017), a claim that I had no right to. Lovato and Yarish were also founding figures behind the journal *Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics*. This is embarrassing. Please do not publish this in the *ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis* database. But I had never read Cedric Robinson. I was not that familiar with prison or police abolition. I had not taken classes on these topics (I still haven't), was unfamiliar with the abolitionist work being done by organizations like Critical Resistance, and was only familiar with abolitionist thinkers, such as Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, in passing.

This is embarrassing because the expectation in academia is expertise. I am a bad academic largely because I have been drawn to questions I do not know the answer to. I therefore tend to write about my own confusions. There is a similar logic at play in movement spaces. I make a bad ally largely because my solidarity with those targeted by racial and sexual injustice has come through long stints of ignorance.

I was an abolitionist before I knew there was such a thing.[101] One unfortunate result of publishing upon a canonical theorist is that your professional reputation becomes linked to their philosophical project. At the time this article was published, I did not think of myself as a Foucauldian, a Marxist, or even an anarchist, which only served to make me more of a Foucauldian. As for my article, it concludes with a relatively abolitionist incantation: "Police will not be ameliorated with better laws or more judicious officers; discretion and control are inherently linked up with the *policing* function.… We cannot abide a normative nominalism when it comes to the police. The police act in service of the [s]tate, and the modern neoliberal [s]tate acts in service of capital" (Johnson 2014: 24). The study of abolitionism was a revelation for me largely because abolitionists connected theory with practice. Abolitionism is less a hyperbolic antagonism directed against police than a thorough analysis of political institutions. This dissertation has largely been spurred by the ways in which abolitionist thinking has left me confused. However, what most attracted me to the abolitionist framework was the transformation of a critical theory of police into a political strategy for the diminishing of their political power. Calling oneself an abolitionist does not qualify anyone to be expert in Black radical thought. I certainly do not think of myself as one. If anything, this dissertation is evidence of an expertise in 19th and 20th century German and French political theory. My essay

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[101] I would point to Derecka Purnell's fabulous *Becoming Abolitionists* as a superlative example of the use of personal narratives on behalf of social movements (Purnell 2021).

on David Graeber is another study of a white man, someone I label a cryptic abolitionist in the most minimal sense. Even my article "Ur-Facism and Neo-Fascism" suffers from a lack of analysis of fascism by black radicals (see Toscano 2020 for a careful review). My study of the Black radical tradition was necessitated because it was not possible to study police without analyzing the particular, peculiar way police have enforced the dominant racial order. Put differently: no study of political theory and/or political science is complete without a thoroughgoing analysis of white supremacy, the oft-unnamed political system that structures much of contemporary politics. I could never be an expert of an experience that is not my own. Rather, I am a *student* of the Black radical tradition, of abolitionist thinking and organizing, and of social movements generally. This dissertation aspires to be a modest attempt at social movement driven theorizing, not the other way around. It is only by rejecting false expectations concerning my so-called expertise and instead emphasizing my humility, general confusion, and the complexity of the issues at hand that I can say something that is in the first instance honest.

No telling of the origins of this dissertation is possible without highlighting the publication of another article in the same special issue of *Theoria*. Ben Brucato's essay "Fabricating the Color Line in a White Democracy: From Slave Catchers to Petty Sovereigns" is a far superior study to mine (Brucato 2014). He has updated his *Theoria* article in a new essay published in a special issue of *Social Justice*, edited by Mark Neocleous and the Anti-Security Collective: "Policing Race and Racing Police: The Origin of U.S. Police in Slave Patrols" (Brucato 2020). In both articles, Brucato takes aim at Neocleous's concept of police power and its avoidance of race. Neocleous commits the same folly as Foucault, and myself, by minimizing the role of colonialism, the Transatlantic slave trade, and plantation

management in their telling of the emergence of modern police institutions. Neocleous is not the only scholar guilty of such sins of omission. Many histories of U.S. American police overlook slave patrols as early forms of police. Speaking the language of abolition quite plainly, Brucato invokes W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of the color-line to provide a materialist analysis of class conflict in the United States. Only by centering racial conflict as a foundational aspect of class conflict, can oppressed peoples unite against a common oppressor. Brucato provides a crucial addendum to "The 1619 Project" (Hannah-Jones 2019). According to Brucato, race became the basis for slavery only after the fact. Brucato retells a harrowing account of a 1655 ruling, one of the first to legalize lifetime servitude, where a free black man, Anthony Johnson, was said to "own" another black man John Casor. In Brucato's words: "It is perhaps the darkest irony that the legal basis for racialized chattel slavery came from a case brought by a Black slaveowner" (Brucato 2020: 123). Brucato marks the emergence of the police in the Caribbean plantation system. British colonial administrators in Barbados adopted slave codes in 1661. By 1690, South Carolina would model its slave codes upon the Barbados ones. Slave patrols and slave catchers were voluntaristic; all white men had the right, *even obligation*, to stop, detain, question, and torture unsupervised black people. Slave patrols were supplemented by militias and military units, but their sanctioned free use of violence is imperative for understanding present-day racism and police violence. Early police established a precedent whereby white citizens were given sovereign powers. In a neoliberal age, George Zimmerman was free to act as an unlicensed police official, what Brucato refers to as a petty tyrant, and effectively get away with murder. Final note: Brucato disagrees with Neocleous that the police mandate is to fabricate the social order. Brucato's retelling of U.S. American history demonstrates that the earliest police mandate was to prevent black insurrection.

In a comical episode, the fact-checking website Snopes.com questioned the veracity of claims that police originated in slave patrols. According to their most prestigious historians, the close relationship between slave patrols and police is a "persistent rumor" spread by "internet memes" (Binkowski 2016). Indeed, Brucato's peer-reviewed articles are examples of such "memes". I was inspired to learn more about the history of slave patrol largely because of Brucato's work. The history he recounted was fundamentally at odds with the history of police that I was most familiar with (i.e. that the first U.S. American police were created in the mid-1800s in predominately northern, metropolitan cities). What was most fascinating to me was the long historical story Brucato told and its importance for present-day politics. For Brucato, police institutions are haunted by their racist past. An account of the structural racism at the core of police must travel further in time than the emergence of neoliberalism, the War on Crime and Drugs, and law-and-order populism. Such an account must travel back in time even further than the Southern authoritarianism colloquially labeled "Jim Crow" and beyond the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Slavery and racism play approximately the same role in U.S. American history as original sin plays in theology. Brucato expresses a familiar criticism of police made by abolitionists. Police institutions were the preeminent means of establishing racial domination and control throughout U.S. American history. Racism is institutionally enshrined in their mode of operation. According to Angela Davis: "There is an unbroken line of police violence in the United States that takes us all the way back to the days of slavery" (Davis 2014). This argument is now taken as common sense and not the embellished rhetoric of black radicals. U.S. District Judge Shira Scheindlin made this succinct declaration: "The story of the police begins with their role in slavery" (Schindlin 2015)   This argument is familiar to many because of the popularity of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim*

Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness and Ana Duvernay's documentary *13th*. In the words of Alexander: "As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it" (Alexander 2011: 2). One of my earlier intentions with this dissertation was to investigate the long arc of racial domination by U.S. American police institutions as a foolhardy attempt to discuss criticisms of these historical narratives as potentially reductive. However, I am not a trained historian. I am a political theorist interested in the use of historical narratives for political purposes. Nothing nowadays could be more banal than another vacuous statement concerning the limits of class-based or race-based historical explanations. Besides, other more esteemed scholars have provided valuable criticisms of the abolitionist propensity for "original sin" historiographies. Nikole Hannah-Jones's "The 1619 Project" triggered something akin to a civil war amongst historians (Silverstein 2019). Daryl Scott has challenged the nonchalant acceptance that the 13th Amendment converted slavery into incarceration (Scott 2021). James Forman Jr. has taken aim at the use of Jim Crow analogies (Forman Jr. 2012). My personal favorite of the genre comes from abolitionist icon Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who boldly proffered that the "new slavery" argument rests upon "thin evidence" (Gilmore 2007: 21). Gilmore instead introduces a materialist analysis for would-be abolitionists.

Wendy Trevino's poem "When You Hear People Say 'Burn Down the American Plantation'" is assembled from her own version of the list. The poem reprises a series of names and places that refer to historical incidents of social and state violence. The repetitious use of the word "here" evokes the past-present. Each "here" serves as a memorial of something destroyed. For Trevino, this series illustrates the lesson of the poem hinted at in the opening

line: "Look at it this way: 'sometimes you have to burn things down / To rebuild'" (Trevino 2020). Trevino's poem is dedicated to the Revolutionary Abolitionist Movement (RAM), an organization whose pamphlet "Burn Down the American Plantation" the poem refers to in its title. The pamphlet is noteworthy for its impassioned defense of insurrection. Trevino, much like RAM, hopes to grow the list of destroyed relics commemorating police violence. The title betrays an ironic contradiction. The so-called American Plantation has been destroyed before, and each time rebuilt. Like the mythical phoenix, the American Plantation always already rises from its ashes. The historical origins of the U.S. police play approximately the same role in politics that the mythological origins of pre-modern police play in Plato and Hobbes. The historical search for true origins is akin to the search for prophecy in the entrails of sacrificed animals. Debates surrounding history, while often framed in terms of historical accuracy, are struggles over whether this or that historical narrative advance a favorable form of politics. History is wielded as an allegory both by skeptics, who observe tainted genealogies, and optimists, who profess obstinate faith in the long arc of slow progress. For too long, reactionary political histories have been memorialized. This has precipitated the fervor and rancor with which anti-racist activists have attacked statues honoring colonialism and the Confederacy. The latest activist historiographies have not just sought to tear down these offensive relics but have also sought to create new histories told from the standpoint of the oppressed. The new historicism is devoted to a politics where constant oppression is accentuated at the expense of insubstantial improvements. There are critical limits to the appropriation of history for this style of politics. There is no way to atone for the past. Historical injustice is a source for positive affects such as solidarity and rage, but likewise produces useless or deleterious emotions such as shame and grievance. A historical ontology of intractable racism forecloses

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efforts at transformational change. The so-called American Plantation belies the political sins of the present through its comparison with an inescapable past. When you hear people say burn down the American Plantation, you should ask them how they will prevent it from being rebuilt.

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