The Word Hoard

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Issue 5 Scum & Villainy

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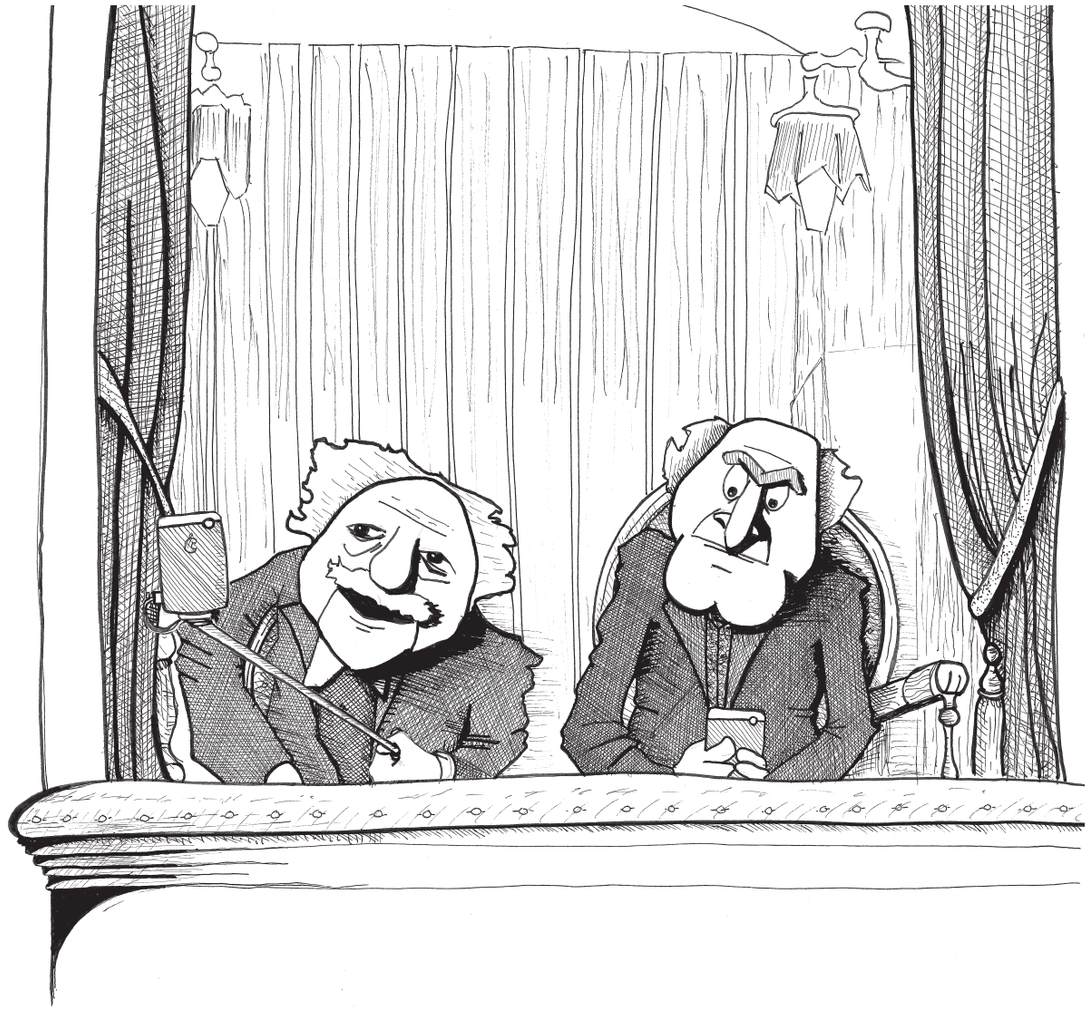
/wərd/hôrd/ ***n.*** **1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.**



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Masthead

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{ Editors' Introduction }

You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.We must be cautious.
—Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi, *Star Wars: Episode IV — A New Hope*

	Yes	No
[…]	[…]	[…]
I/we have visited a farm and will be going to a farm in Canada.	☐	☐

—Canadian Border Services Agency, "Declaration Card"

I/we have recently visited an iconic film. I/we have had contact with an iconic film line. No matter how often a phrase has been repurposed, I/we risk failure that repurposing. No matter how far a phrase is carried, I/we risk carrying with it its local, incubating muck. I/we would like to get this out of the way: my/our purpose in importing "scum and villainy" to *Word Hoard* was not to crystalize an issue around *Star Wars*, sci-fi, or even filmic villainy, but to prompt you/you to think about how the phrase might explode/implode with meaning when shuttled within geographically, temporally, textually, or contextually broader circuits.

Our own explosion of the phrase, fertilizer-bomb style, began in the waste of etymology: the phrase's fascinating yoking of the Germanic (*schuum*, froth, dirt, the lowest of humanity) and Latinate (*villanus*, farmhand, yokel, the urban outcast). We proceeded to ask how this yoking—both a joining-together and a holding-at-appropriate-distance—persists in the association of the opportunistic (muggers, grifters, the debased) and the conniving (psychopaths, traitors, the corrupt) or the anti-social abject (the undesirable by-product) and the anti-social agent (the threating excess). As ever, we are incredibly pleased with the range of

responses to this, *Word Hoard*'s fifth, call for submissions.

Your answers begin with selections from Trevor Abes's prose poetry sequence, "The New Frontiers of Conceptual Art." These three pieces of notional ekphrasis are commissioned, it seems, by the very art industrialists whose canvasses he slashes, including auction houses, private collectors, and British conceptual artist Damien Hirst. Despite Abes's pointed satire, he shows an unmistakeable tenderness toward the quotidian scum of his media. Tom Cull, Poet Laureate of London, Ontario, responds with his own trilogy of poems, "Untitled Series (flies, shark, sap)." Cull refocuses and refigures each of Abes's pieces through the lens of Hirst's infamous *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*—which may be considered, if nothing else, a successful yoking of the scummy (formaldehydic decay; the physical mind; con art) and the villainous (shark; death; Hirst).

In the issue's first essay, "Bandits and Biopolitics: Power, Control, and Exploitation in *Cidade dos Homens* (2007)," Stephan A. Cruikshank deploys Foucauldian biopolitics to examine the link between scum (poverty, disenfranchisement) and villainy (violence, banditry) in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Cruikshank argues that the favela's *bando* ("bandit") is best understood through its relation to Agamben's *homo sacer*, a figure paradoxically both cursed and sacred. Kate Lawless responds with her own essay, "Beyond the Bandit: Dispossession and Recovery in Paulo Morelli's *City of Men*," by insisting on the opacity of *Cidade dos Homens*' medium. With Benjaminian scepticism toward Cruikshank's reading of the film as emancipatory, Lawless insists that it participates in the maintenance of the biopolitical status quo by obscuring material dispossession beneath a tale of villainous, and heroic, fatherhoods.

David Huebert returns us to poetry with "The Renegade Poets," a sensorially thick villanelle. Through a disorienting, high-speed montage of past (and possibly future) British imperial aesthetics, Huebert suggests that villainy is less the malevolence of a witch stirring a cauldron than it is a swirling pattern in the rubbish of history. *Word Hoard* editor Andy Verboom responds with his own villanelle, "There Emigrate Bullets." Employing the practice of deliberate and thorough mishearing developed in his and Huebert's recent chapbook, *Full Mondegreens*, Verboom replaces each board and nail in Huebert's poem with its phonetic doppelganger. The

resulting poem lampoons a world without villainy, one in which the phrase "guns don't kill people, bullets do" has been elevated to eschatological policy.

Justyna Stiepanow's essay "The Personally Ugly and Socially Unacceptable: Villains by Choice, Nature, or Circumstances?" considers the vilification of "public enemies," especially in the context of American capital punishment, as a campaign of dehumanization required by the social contract logic around which Western criminal justice systems are built. Arguments for the moral depravity of criminals, Stiepanow suggests, are deployed post facto to justify the punishments imposed on them. But the very biographical detritus deployed to confirm criminals' depravity, Stiepanow insists, can also function as the occasion for compassion. *Word Hoard* editor Meghan O'Hara responds in the form of an interview with Georgia Innocence Project intern Sarah Marshall, focusing on the trend in popular narrative media toward this very *re*-humanization of the monstrous criminal, such as the Netflix series *Making a Murderer*. O'Hara and Marshall's interview, "Archetype, Fantasy, and Vital Outrage," explores the tangled temporality of vilification and re-humanization through questions about popular fascination with the psychopathic, doubt in the criminal justice system, the intersections of vilification and race, and social media engagement with redemption narratives.

In the issue's first fiction piece, "Gutless," Bridget Canning sends us on a drive with her soliloquizing narrator, whose gastrectomy-induced crime spree implies a deeply embodied relation between abjection and petty criminality. But if her narrator is pathologically criminal—a loss of gut bacteria leading to a loss of inhibitions—then Canning's true villain is disconcertingly socially acceptable, suggesting our conception of mental health might include not only obeisance to social order but also participation in "tolerable" violence. Philip Glennie's two-part response, "The Trouble with Jerry," provides insight into Canning's "post-gut resistance." Blending critical and personal essay, Glennie delves beneath the revenge fantasy at the story's surface to consider how Canning's story might participate in feminist thought about masculinities and the labour required of feminist men in undermining their own privilege.

Elizabeth Johnston offers the issue's fifth and final poem, "Vegas, Stripped: On Returning for a National Teacher's Conference," itself a response to Romantic poet Charlotte Turner Smith's

"Thirty-Eight." Meditating on Johnston's return to Las Vegas after a decade and a half, the poem begins with a re-vision of Sin City's extravagances as poverties. But the poem quickly turns to self-indictment, suggesting that the privilege of theoretical distance and the easy disdain of *mea non cupla* render academic critics of capitalism complicit with the villainy they think to unseat. Ross Bullen responds with "The AdjunctPod," a George Saundersesque short story that, conversely, considers academics as the scum of the universe. Extrapolating the current exploitation of adjunct faculty, Bullen envisions a future in which the corporate university has abolished salaries, the wireless classroom has cyborgized professors, and the first tenure-track job in fifty years might still go to a medievalist.

The issue's final academic essay, David Christopher's "The Dialectic of Fantasy Displacement and Uncanny Allegory in the *Star Wars* Prequel Trilogy," returns us (almost) to our theme's place of birth. Deploying notions of Žižekian paranoid fantasy and Benjaminian allegory, Christopher argues that while *Episodes I – III* seek to create a comforting distance between the American-body-politic-as-benevolent-Republic and the American-political-administration-as-evil-Empire, such an uncanny distinction only confirms the democratic anxiety it might relieve. Taking issue with the reduction of sci-fi (or, rather, "SF") to psychoanalytical fantasy, Greg Bechtel's personal essay "Our Villains, Ourselves: On SF, Villainy, and… Margaret Atwood?" explores the relation between the love-hate felt for SF villains and the vilification of certain authors within SF literary communities. Interrogating his own vilification of Atwood for her denigration of SF as lowbrow literature, Bechtel examines the backlash against "social justice warrior" SF by those who would figure themselves as the genre-fiction-scum of the literary scene.

Closing out the issue are three reviews, each exploring the relation between the "scum" of embodied life and "villainy" of a different type—political, social, and ecological. Nathan Tebokkel critiques John Ibbitson's pseudo-biography *Stephen Harper* for burying traces of Harper the Man beneath celebrations of Harper the Politician. Jacob Evoy recommends Breanne Fahs' rigorous and recuperative biography *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (And Shot Andy Warhol)* and applauds the artists behind *The Inspirational Scum Manifesto Calendar* for

reinvigorating passages from Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*. Finally, Riley McDonald commends Heather Houser's literary study *Ecosickness in American Fiction: Environment and Affect* for describing the interactions between places and bodies as ambient and evanescent rather than relying on oversimplified models of environmental cause and demographic effect.

As with any collection of cultural criticism, this issue of *Word Hoard* risks entering the world immediately out-dated. While our contributors wrote and revised during the recent American presidential campaign, none of us could have foreseen the final shape of that new constellation of scum and villainy that rose above the horizon on the night of November 8, 2016. There's certainly nothing new about politicized for-profit hate, but the role of social media in its promulgation has turned everyone, across the political spectrum, into scum of one sort or another. And it has turned quite a few of us, American or not, into villains through our consent, complicity, or contempt.

We hope that, as you read this issue, you bear in mind the work of our veteran cover artist, Hinson Calabrese. With prescience, his cover for this issue depicts Statler and Waldorf—the curmudgeonly, heckling Muppet theatre critics who scorn every entertainment as "terrible" but who never fail to return for another show—in the apotheosis of their self-involved disdain. In our drift from consumer culture into producer culture, this image should remind us that we are what we make. We all love to hate.

Andy Verboom, Content Editor-in-Chief
with Meghan O'Hara
and Emily Kring

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The New Frontiers of Conceptual Art

Wherein the author speculates about the future of conceptual art in the name of the Christie's, the Charles Saatchi, the Holy Sotheby's, Steve Wynn.

Trevor Abes*

#17: Invoicing the 1%

Tanner Bartholomew, fruit bruise remover at Ivor's Cakes and Ices, collects buckets filled with slices of rotten banana, apple, peach, mango, pear, and watermelon in his parents' shed. He leaves the door unlatched and the buckets half-covered so as to attract fruit flies for breeding.

After three days, Tanner enters the shed wearing a hazmat suit for which he traded at a pawn shop a gold ring his mother never wears and he hopes she won't remember owning. He quickly snaps the lids shut and drills small holes in each, through which he then pours a quarter cup of rubbing alcohol.

Five minutes pass.
He bags the cleanest specimens, vacuum seals them, and ships them express to Damien Hirst's studio in Baja, Mexico, for incorporation into his next round of fly paintings. Tanner includes an invoice in the package for $675, 000 USD.

**Trevor Abes is a poet and essayist with a penchant for conceptual art. His work has appeared in* Torontoist*,* untethered*,* (parenthetical)*, and* The Hart House Review*, among other journals. He is currently theatre critic at* The Theatre Reader.

#14: I Got That Work

Paul Sheboygan, copy editor for the Government of Canada, proofreads answers to the pre-approved questions texted to politicians' Blackberries before their radio and TV interviews. Every day at 5:30 a.m., he reports to an office in a building perpetually under construction and sits at a desktop computer monitored by three security cameras. One is above him on the ceiling, another is set on him from the top of his computer screen, and the last is set on the computer screen from the top of his high-backed chair. A middleman, known only as Dashiel, emails Paul an encrypted .docx document divided into question and answer pairs that he is to return corrected at no more than seven minutes per page. Dashiel then cuts it up and distributes it to the appropriate talking heads. The document contains no information about who the Q&As are for or on which programs they will air. Paul's contract includes a clause that threatens jail time if confidentiality is broken.

Viewers are invited to guess Paul's per-page pay rate and leave the difference between their guesses and the correct answer as his Christmas bonus.

#13: Drawn and Quartered

Norm Lietzke, unpaid intern, develops feelings for a tree on his walks to work. It sulks from last November's ice storm and descends the greyscale, siphoned by dandelions committed to frugal living.

Compelled by heart flutters, gut stirs, and brain bells, Norm takes a machete to the dandelions and blends them into fertilizer. He applies it under the tree with the certainty of a medieval monarch, the first in his *Drawn and Quartered* series.

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Untitled Series (flies, shark, sap)

Tom Cull*

17. Armageddon. Flies and resin on canvas (2002)

"I think it was Thomas Hobbes who said people are like flies brushed off a wall. I like that metaphorically. Your whole life could be like points in space, like nearly nothing. If you stand back far enough you think people are just like flies, like the cycle of a fly is like your own life. When you make that connection with the paintings... it is like all the people in the world who die in a hundred years. That amount of death is pretty black." Damien Hirst

The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living. The physical impossibility of death in the mind of all the people in the world. The physical impossibility of death in the mind if you stand back far enough. The physical impossibility when you make that connection with the painting. The physical impossibility of death when you think people are just like flies. The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living the cycle of a fly. The physical impossibility could be like points in space if you stand back far enough. The physical impossibility of all the people in the world who die in a hundred years. The physical impossibility of someone living is pretty black. The physical amount of death is pretty black like all people in the world who die just like flies. The physical amount of a fly is like your own life. Is like your own life. Like nearly nothing if you stand back far enough. The physical impossibility when you make that connection with the paintings

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**Tom Cull teaches creative writing at Western and runs Thames River Rally, a grassroots environmental group. His chapbook, "What the Badger Said" was published in 2013 by Baseline Press. He is currently the Poet Laureate for the City of London.*

is pretty black in the mind of someone living. The physical impossibility is like all the people who said people are like flies brushed off a wall. The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living back far enough is like all the people in the world. I like that metaphorically. I like that metaphorically when you make that connection with the painting. The physical impossibility when Thomas Hobbes brushed flies off a wall if you stand back far enough is like all the people who die in a hundred years of death. The physical impossibility of your whole life could be like a fly when you make that connection. The physical impossibility of death. The physical impossibility of death I like. The physical impossibility of death is like your own like all the people in the mind of someone living. The physical impossibility of Thomas Hobbes is like your own life. Like your own life is like your own life. The physical impossibility of death when you think people are just like flies. The physical impossibility of the cycle of a fly is like your own life when you make that connection. I like that metaphorically when you make that connection. I like that metaphorically if you stand back far enough.

14. Shark Tank

Mid-career, mid-level museum curators compete to curate a featured show at the MOMA. The judges include Damien Hirst, artist; Donald Trump, US President; and Jean des Esseintes, A.I. computer program extrapolated from the protagonist of J.K. Huysman's fin-de-siècle classic *À Rebours.* In the penultimate episode, three finalists pitch their exhibitions standing on trap doors emptying into a huge aquarium containing ravenous tiger sharks. The aquarium has been built by President Trump and is a fantastic aquarium, a really really great aquarium because no one builds aquariums like Trump, because he's the real deal, big league, and aquarium people, all people, really love him. At episode's end, Trump hits a big red button that says "you're hired," and the winner falls into the tank, quickly torn apart and eaten. In the final episode, the losing curators return for a reunion that concludes with one of the sharks being caught, killed, pumped full of formaldehyde, and dissected. The shark is displayed in a huge glass tank at the Tate Gallery. The work is entitled, *Art Explained*. Didactic plaques ask visitors, "Can you identify body parts in the shark's stomach?"

13. The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living

You guys have heard the story of how George and I met?
Cindy points across
the street to a front lawn where a white oak once stood

The tree was massive, symmetrical, the trunk 4ft in diameter
but the new owner
couldn't park his boat in the driveway, so it had to come down

News spread, citizens signed petitions, sought injunctions
the owner's resolve strengthened
people came, tied ribbons on trees up and down the street

George read about in the paper, biked across the city to see
talked with Cindy on her porch
a neighbor took notice and invited both for dinner

One night the owner girdled the tree with his circular saw
cut two parallel rings
two inches apart, then flayed the bark between the cuts

The wound spelled the tree's death but no local company
would remove it
he had to go as far as Sault St. Marie to find someone

The day it came down, the owner put the house up for sale
we look at the young oaks on lawns up and down the street
George appears smiling. He has drinks. "Progeny" he says.

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Bandits and Biopolitics:
Power, Control, and Exploitation in *Cidade dos Homens* (2007)

I am Favela
Yes, but the favela was never the refuge of the marginal, I said
There are only humble people, marginalized
And this truth does not appear in the newspaper
The favela is a social problem.
—Bezerra da Silva[1]

Stephen A. Cruikshank*

The urban slums of Brazil, known as "favelas," are sanctuaries for bandits, villains of state power, that have drawn public attention through the narratives of twenty-first century Brazilian film. Else R. P. Vieira notes that "Brazilian films have been sweeping over the *favelas*, catching Brazil's and the world's eyes, making ever more visible the burgeoning of these quintessential sites of exclusion, as if they were self-contained cities within the metropolitan sprawls of São Paulo and Rio" (xiii). Such sensationalism is evident in the 2002 hit film *Cidade de Deus* (City of God), co-directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. Originally adapted from Paulo Lins' 1997 novel of the same name, the film's plot is loosely based on real events that depict the criminal undertakings and drug wars in the Rio de Janeiro favela Cidade de Deus occurring between the late 1960's and early 1980's. *Cidade de Deus* was met with both domestic and international success, receiving four Academy

**Stephen Cruikshank is a 2015 SSHRC doctoral prize recipient and a Ph.D. student in the department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. His research focuses on Latin American Studies and culture, with particular attention to the Caribbean and Brazil.*

Award nominations in 2004. Two years following the film's initial release, Meirelles and Lund, with the support of 20th Century Fox and TV Globo, went on to direct the four-season television program *Cidade dos Homens* (City of Men) between the years 2002 and 2005. The series met with similar success and was watched by millions of viewers across Brazil who witnessed the unfolding story of two young friends growing up in a favela in Rio de Janeiro among a community of drug traffickers, hustlers, and fellow teenagers. The popularity of the series led to its cinematic release under the same title in 2007, directed by Paulo Morelli.

Morelli's adaptation of Meirelles and Lund's cinematic depictions of criminal youth in Rio de Janeiro's favelas is backed by a local and international acclaim that speaks to a broad public interest in favela narratives. Why, however, is the favelado (the resident of a favela) so popular? The answer to this, I argue, is found in the depiction of "banditry" in the favela and its contingent identification with subaltern struggle that is depicted in the outlaw narrative of the protagonists. As bandits, the youth in films such as *Cidade dos Homens* are positioned outside of the law and segregated economically as poor, racially as Afro-Brazilian, and territorially in the favela. Their marginalized position in the favela consequentially critiques the two sides of a long-standing urban conflict in Brazil between the metropolis and the slums, between the citizen (o *cidadão*) and the favelado. I contend that what allows the film to cultivate the successful national image of favelados is the presentation of the "biopolitical event" of urban resistance,[2] an event that has its roots in the hegemonic power system of the favelas. Here I employ the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics, drawing on this term's use by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and the post-Marxist philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In this respect, I see the existence of the favelas as representing a history of hegemonic control over marginalized territory in Rio de Janeiro and the consequential urbanized exploitation of human bodies. Films like *Cidade dos Homens* provide an effective medium to advertise the biopolitical event of the favelados, aesthetically drawing the viewer into the inherited struggle against poverty, racism, economic seclusion, and urban violence experienced by the "multitude" of favelados.[2] *Cidade dos Homens*, in this manner, documents a narrative of banditry that exposes the viewership to the hegemonic oppression of favelas and, in doing so, obliges the audience to confront the modern constructions of new subjectivities in Rio de Janeiro's urban culture.

Hegemony is at work in the favelas. This is evidenced not only through the urban war against drug trafficking, but also through the coordinating power of urban

design that, beginning in the late nineteenth century, designated the favelas as the urban "leftovers" to be herded into shantytowns—an example of what Foucault calls a society's "threshold of [mercantilist] rationality" (102) and what Agamben later attributes to Foucault as the "threshold of biological modernity" (3). Otherwise said, favelas are a threshold of biopower, a place designed by the rationalized exercises of state power to distribute and distinguish wealth amongst urban elite and legitimate this through "bio-logical" segregation tactics in urban environments. Favelas are ruled by biopower because what is truly at stake is not so much the city itself but rather the safety, security, and basic biological rights of its human inhabitants—the favelados—who, as Janice Perlman elaborates in *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro* (2010), are subjected to the "lack of a well educated labor pool, safe drinking water, [or] reliable electric power" and the "fear of getting killed on the way to work or having one's child mugged on the way home from school" (9). The lack of physical security in the favelas represents an urban strategy of marginalization, representing what Foucault describes as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species become the object of a political strategy" (16)—an urbanized stronghold of biopower.

To connect the body with the favela implies two important features of biopolitics: firstly, it implies that bodies are created agents, contingent in the struggles of urban hegemony. Secondly, it implies that the body's agency is therefore always-already an ambiguous construction. Bodies make up the definitive building blocks of the hegemonic binary: the formative and the resistant, the legal and the outlaw, the political and anti-political, the citizen and the bandit. When these bodies become active in a "multitude"—what Hardt and Negri describe as "an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally" (*Multitude* xiv)—their constructed representation realizes biopolitics. Hardt and Negri assert that biopolitics "is a partisan relationship between subjectivity and history that is crafted by a multitudinous strategy, formed by events and resistances, and articulated by a discourse that links political decision making to the construction of bodies in struggle" (*Commonwealth* 61). Therefore, if we are to consider the favela to represent such a political construction of bodies, what then is the struggle of these bodies, the favelados? This is an important question that Morelli targets in the film *Cidade dos Homens.* In particular, the title of the film blatantly attributes this struggle as an event both within *a cidade* (the city) and occurring between *os homens* (men)—a point that the directors Lund and Meirelles highlight in their television series by playing with the name of their previous

film *Cidade de Deus*. The titular change to *Cidade dos Homens* speaks not only to the continuation of their initial work, *Cidade de Deus,* but also to what appears as a thematic overture of the man-made, rather than God-granted, agency of the favelas. The very change of the titles speaks to the formation of a biopolitical narrative. Depicting the favela as a "city of men" highlights the human condition of favelas. The temporal being, *o homen*, rather than the eternal God, *o Deus,* becomes the proprietor of urban space. Here, St. Augustine's theological establishment of the *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), the analogical root of the favela of the same name, gives way to the humanized establishment of the "city of men." The human bandit, not God, becomes the faculty of violence in the urban world, changing the course of urban design from an omnipotent designation of power to a temporal struggle for power; the power shifts from uncontested sovereignty to the enigmatic resistance against hegemony. *Cidade de Deus* in many ways uses the title of the favela to satirically compare the godless violence and depravity that inhabits it. The title *Cidade dos Homens*, in this sense, removes the satire and presents the favela as what it truly is: not a satire of God's creation but an honest critique of man's inauguration of poverty and violence.

Man-made urban violence, a pivotal theme of *Cidade dos Homens*, defines the hegemonic interplay between powers of the state and the powers of *os homens* (referring here specifically to the favelados). On one side, the law, arriving from outside of the favela, condemns the violent resistance to the law; on the other, *os homens* within the favela experience this violence as a daily reality. This violent reality is what tests the bond between the key protagonists of the film, the two best friends Luís Cláudio (known as "Ace") and Uólice (known as "Laranjinha"). Meirelles and Lund's television series originally depicts both characters as young boys. However, in Morelli's film version both Ace and Laranjinha are seen as adolescent men entering the heavy responsibilities of adulthood and the temptations of the violent gang-life in their favela community of Morro da Sinuca. The young men are seen throughout two revolving plots of the film that often jump from one to the other. In one plot the film narrates Ace and Laranjinha's new developments as eighteen-year-old men. For Ace, this involves the recent challenge of fatherhood. Abandoned by his girlfriend Cris, who leaves for São Paulo to find work, Ace is left to raise his young son Clayton by himself. Laranjinha's development involves the challenge of being fatherless. Turning eighteen obliges Laranjinha to adopt a last name on his identification papers, motivating him to search for his father, who has recently been released from prison after serving fifteen years for murder. With Ace's help, he finds his

father, Heraldo, after tracking him down using a photo of a football team he was known to be a part of. The second plot revolves around the violent outbreak of a gang war in Morro da Sinuca. After a gang member named Fasto betrays the gang leader Madrugadão (Midnight), Morro da Sinuca turns into a war zone. Outgunned, Madrugadão's gang flees to another favela, Morro do Careca, to recruit new members and Fasto takes over Morro da Sinuca. The two plots are connected through the shared experience of Ace and Laranjinha, who are forced to flee Morro da Sinuca to escape the violence. The war is particularly threatening to Ace since Fasto thinks he is working for Madrugadão and orders his henchmen to kill him. Ace is left on the streets and flees to another favela named Morro do Careca, where Madrugadão and his gang attempt to recruit him into the gang violence. Upon hearing of Ace's dilemma, Laranjinha leaves to search for him. Laranjinha discovers the truth of his father's crime when he confronts Ace, who is beginning an assault on Morro da Sinuca with Madrugadão's gang. There, Ace confirms that his father was shot in the back by Laranjinha's father. The air of betrayal is thick in their encounter, and Ace holds a gun on Laranjinha. The tension, however, is overcome by a heartfelt bond of friendship, and the two later flee the violent favela together with Ace's son, Clayton.

The cinematic portrayal of violence in the lives of Laranjinha and Ace in many ways represents a historical objective of Brazilian film, which since the early Cinema Novo movement has used the art of cinema to publicize the aggressive poverty and violence of Brazilian culture. In the essay "An Esthetic of Hunger" (1965), the Cinema Novo writer and director Glauber Rocha claims that Brazil's incessant poverty gives form to a "culture of hunger" in Brazil. He is adamant that Brazil's cinema is defined by the objective of relaying the struggle of hunger and poverty through violence: "There resides the tragic originality of Cinema Novo in relation to world cinema. Our originality is our hunger and our greatest misery is that this hunger is felt but not intellectually understood […]. Therefore, only a culture of hunger, weakening its own structures, can surpass itself qualitatively; the most noble cultural manifestation of hunger is violence" (60). According to Rocha an aesthetics of violence in cinema "before being primitive, is revolutionary" (60). For Rocha, then, violence is revolutionary because it defines the moment in which the colonizer becomes aware of the colonized subjects and of their strength and values what they bring to culture. *Cidade dos Homens* continues Cinema Novo's trend of violence, only now it represents the urban-colonial resistance of the favelados. Acts of resistance are presented to Laranjinha and Ace

as two-fold: there is either the resistance to the law, occurring through gang violence in the favelados, or the resistance to the violence within the favela, via escape. Opting for the latter, their decision is motivated by their friendship which, in order to remain, must overcome both the past violence of their fathers and the current gang violence of their present. Their friendship, therefore, depends on both a separation from their past and a revaluation of their position in the present. Thinking in line with Glauber Rocha's work, one could understand that the two friends are fighting not only against the institutions of violence engrained in the life of favelados but also against their very own culture (the culture of hunger). What Morelli cinematically portrays as an aesthetics of violence, then, is in fact thematically subverted in the film, as Laranjinha and Ace opt instead to leave the violent favela to save their friendship.

Ace and Laranjinha's subversion of violence takes place as the two fatherless young men come to terms with their newfound adulthood and discern the violence within the favelas that, particularly in their case, has been the direct cause for fatherless children—something both Ace and Laranjinha want to prevent happening to Clayton. The figure of the father is, without doubt, the key subject in the film. The film's narrative balances between, on one end, Ace's struggle to identify himself as a father to Clayton and, on the other end, Laranjinha's struggle to identify himself without a father. In both cases, the film emphasizes the consequential social breakdowns of a fatherless society. Stephen Holden connects this with the rise of the bandit, or "outlaw": "That the sins of the fathers are passed on to the sons is the somewhat thudding message of a movie that hammers home its point by having Ace and [Laranjinha] reach an impasse in their friendship that parallels the relationship of their fathers two decades earlier. In a society of fatherless boys craving role models, glamorous *outlaws* fill the void" ("Movie Review"; my emphasis). In a "city of men," it is men who both cause the violence and create the fatherless society that galvanizes this violence. The bandit is therefore the victim not only of political marginalization but also of paternal marginalization—both being causes of systemic violence and paternal abandonment. The bandit's biopolitical resistance, in this manner, is two-pronged: the resistance against state legality and the resistance against patriarchal dereliction. In this way both Ace and Laranjinha must learn to survive the war of the favela as well as to battle their warring identities as fatherless men. Their full victory is only found by fleeing their violent-trodden home and in doing so differentiating their lives from that of their fathers.

It can be said that fatherless favelados, such as Ace and Laranjinha, epitomize a form of banditry or resistance

against both biological life and political life—between the father and the state, the former absent and the latter exploitative. The combination of both biological and political resistance transforms Ace and Laranjinha into what Giorgio Agamben's philosophy denotes as a *homo sacer*, a man (according to old Roman law) designated as both "sacred" and "accursed," the two denotations of the Latin word "sacer." On one hand, their identities as a favelados differentiates them as "sacred" because they are placed outside of the urban elite's legislation; on the other hand, it is this very position that "curses" them, leaving them fatherless. As "sacred," the bandit is found within the marginalized favela and thus secured against the political violence that threatens it. However, as "accursed," the bandit is found amongst the marginalized violence occurring within the favela itself. This is to say that the bandit is both venerated from the outside and condemned to the violence on the inside. Consequently, violence (the culture of hunger) marginalizes the bandit from all sides. Furthermore, Agamben notes that *homo sacer* is the man "*who may be killed and yet not sacrificed*, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert" (8; emphasis in original). He traces this figure from Roman exiles to the "accursed" runaways of the Middle Ages and as far as the inmates of Nazi concentration camps. As Thomas Lemke notes, each of these cases are connected through one common trait: "although they all involve human life, they are excluded from the protection of the law. They remain either turned over to humanitarian assistance and unable to assert a legal claim or are reduced to the status of 'biomass' through the authority of scientific interpretations and definitions" (55). To this extent, while Agamben's use of the term "camp" cannot be conceptually divorced from the concentration camps of WWII, it can be used in the context of favelas, for example, to provide a schema through which to think about marginalized social spaces regulated by biopower and subject to politicized violence.

For Agamben, *homo sacer* represents the limited boundaries of rational sovereignty that oversees people's "bare life," which can be understood as the basic existence of people, their bodies, their health, and their well-being. Although not related to their political existence, "bare life" proves to be what makes up the political body, a body that denotes the life and death of human beings as the decisive objective of sovereign power. This is what Agamben considers as "the new biopolitical body of humanity" (9). The "bare life" of the *homo sacer* is labelled as the "sovereign exception" (6); one's exception as "sacred" becomes defined by the sovereign power as "accursed." In this way the "bare life" of *homo sacer* is brought from the margins of political order, outside of the law, and

placed within the very political objectives of sovereign power itself. In our case, for example, the very existence of life for the favelados becomes part of a biopolitical order. The life of the favelado, in this sense, sees an awkward union between what Agamben denotes as bare life (natural being) and political life (political existence). Respectively, these are what Agamben denotes as *zoē* and *bios*, the etymological division of the Greek words for "life": *zoē* being "the simple fact of living common to all living beings" and *bios* being "the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (1). Agamben's new biopolitical body of humanity therefore sees both forms of life subsumed under sovereign rule. As such, the *homo sacer,* whom Agamben confirms as our figure of a "bandit," sees his way of life (*bios*) overcome by the political demand over his life (*zoē*). Agamben explains his perspective of *homo sacer* as the bandit:

> Let us now observe the life of *homo sacer*, or of the bandit […] his entire existence is reduced to a bare life stripped of every right by virtue of the fact that anyone can kill him without committing homicide; he can save himself only in perpetual flight or a foreign land. And yet he is in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him precisely insofar as he is at every instant exposed to an unconditioned threat of death. He is pure *zoē,* but his *zoē* is as such caught in the sovereign ban and must reckon with it at every moment, finding the best way to elude or deceive it. In this sense, no life, as exiles and bandits know well, is more "political" than his. (183)

As Agamben clarifies, the bandit's life—both its "sanctity" and "curse"— is political. It is political because—thinking in terms of our bandits Ace and Laranjinha—these favelados have been both "banned" and "banished" by political forces. There is a difference between the two acts: they are "banned" from the urban elite but are later "banished" from their home in the favela due to the violence occurring against the state.

To better understand the connection between the bandit and the actions of "banning" and "banishing," I turn to Pablo Dabove's literary analysis of banditry *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin American 1816-1929* (2007). Dabove considers the bandit as "perhaps the most important in a series of *dramatis personae* that in postcolonial Latin American culture function as frontiers between 'domains of sovereignty'" (7). Etymologically, Dabove traces the word "bandit" to the Spanish "*bando*" which represented a written proclamation that ordered outlawed criminals to appear before their given authorities for trial (9).

Rather obviously, it is unlikely that the bandit would appear before the authorities. The bandit therefore sees his identity embedded into a position placed before the law through the *bando*. The law is therefore placed upon him rather than the bandit placing himself within the law. In this sense, the *bando* speaks less to the bandit's fulfillment of the law and more to the legitimation of the law itself. By placing the bandit outside of the law through the written *bando*, the bandit becomes marginalized from the power of the law and therefore becomes a focal point for the multitude of similar subaltern subjects. Furthermore, the bandit's marginalization from the law consequently legitimates the state's performance of power through the act of exclusion. It is for this reason that the favelado represents the modern version of a bandit being that he is a marginal and excluded citizen within the shantytowns originally created by the hegemonic practices of the Brazilian state. In this way, the bandit, the *homo sacer*, is sacred to the extent that he is outside of the state law and yet "accursed" because he is condemned by the *bando*. His very being is defined by his *zoē*, yet labeled by his *bios*, the sovereign *bio*power that overlooks his operations and dictates the quality of his existence. We can acknowledge, therefore, that Ace and Laranjinha are both sacred-and-thus-"banned" (that is legally marginalized through the proclamation of the *bando*) and accursed-and-thus-"banished" (that is obligated to flee the impeding violence).

Both Ace and Laranjinha are caught in the paradox of the *homo sacer*. They are bandits, residents who are exceptions to the law yet inceptions to marginality. Their *bando* is inherited, destining them to a life of survival within a marginalized territory. Agamben, as previously mentioned, localizes their situation in the figure of the "camp"—"the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule" (168). In our case, the camp is the favela, the place where bandits become judged by the *bando*, and thereby placed within the sovereign oversight of a state-mandated biopower. They are exceptions outside of the law, yet they are ruled from within it. In effect, our bandits' *zoē*, their common ability to live with all beings, is interrupted in the patriarchal failure inherited in their society of violence. *Bios* interrupts their "bare life." Interestingly, *bios,* the prefix of *bio*-logy (realized here in the absence of a *bio*-logical father) represents the "accursed" life of our bandits. On the outside, they live as part of a "sacred" multitude of favelados that have historically transformed the oppressive lack of basic needs into a flourishing community; however, they remain "accursed" due to the *bios*-logical repercussions of being on the outside. As such, they suffer the consequences of their own people's violent resistance, dealt by the system that has

marginalized them. Being an *out*-law has consequently "outed" their need for patriarchal reform; the exclusion from sovereignty has left these young men likewise excluded from their own families.

Despite Agamben's unique observation of the connection between politics and biological life, his philosophy remains limiting in cases like Ace and Laranjinha's. Lemke has argued that biopolitics, for Agamben, becomes above all a demonstration of "thanatopolitics" (53), whereby the political project of life is really identified with that of death. Indeed, according to Agamben, "[a] law that seeks to decide on life is embodied in a life that coincides with death" (186). In this sense, the *bando,* proclaiming the favelados as marginal citizens, would correspondingly imply the assertion of a death penalty, definitive of either a physical or a political death. For Agamben, exclusion is death, inclusion is life, and in both cases it is the sovereign power, the nation-state, that is in control: "the body is always already a biopolitical body and bare life, and nothing in it or the economy of its pleasure seems to allow us to find solid ground on which to oppose the demands of sovereign power" (187).

In contrast, Hardt and Negri's interpretation of biopolitics challenges Agamben's assumption on the basis that biopolitics represents not resistant politicized "lives" unable to oppose the sovereign discourse of biopower, but rather a political "event" characterized by resistance. This resistance is not futile, as Agamben would assume, since it "it is always a queer event, a subversive process of subjectivization that, shattering ruling identities and norms, reveals the link between power and freedom, and thereby inaugurates an alternative production of subjectivity" (*Commonwealth* 63). Surely Ace's and Laranjinha's lives are conflicted due to the collision of their *zoē* and *bios*. However, the "camp" of the favela, through which their bare life and political life are subsumed into one, does not imply their immanent subjectivity to the state and its *bando*; rather, it leaves room for Hardt and Negri's concept of "de-subjectification," and, therefore, for resistance. This is evidenced in the moment when Ace holds a gun to Laranjinha's head. The path of *bios* urges for an ending in violence. Ace's *zoē* should be subject to his preconditioned environment and history. He should shoot Laranjinha and follow his immanent death as a henchman, leaving Clayton as fatherless as himself. But this is not what happens; the cycle does not repeat. Ace is obliged by his deep-felt friendship with Laranjinha to cut ties with their fathers' past and depart together from the favela and its violence. Following their stand-off, the two friends return to a family residence where Clayton is being safely cared for. Ace, holding his son, declares his love for him, promising to always be there. Laranjinha has likewise chosen to risk his life for his

friend while acknowledging the inevitable failures of his father. New subjectivities are formed, ones in which the fatherless becomes the father, the violent forgiving, and the trapped liberated. Ace and Laranjinha's choice to identify themselves as "other" than what the favelado has for so long been labelled not only reflects Hardt and Negri's notion of biopolitical resistance and the formation of new subjectivities but also gives way to a new form of life, both for the two young men and for the future life of Clayton. As the film reminds us, all resistance affects generations to come.

To a certain extent the connection of *Cidade dos Homens* with Agamben's biopolitical paradox reminds us as viewers to look beyond the urban structures of poverty and violence found in the favelas and into the physical life of their inhabitants. The film narrates violence as something inherited within the favela and recycled by favelados—a revolving social problem not of marginal citizens but of marginalized people. The bandit narrative of the *favela* reminds us that the "evil" violence is rooted in a hegemonic system long inspired by political objectives. Unlike Agamben, Hardt and Negri's biopolitical agenda proposes a much-needed solution to this, proposing that "love" provides a path for creating a place of self-rule and democratic organization among the common poor. Love, for example, gives Ace and Laranjinha a second chance at life, the courage to stay loyal to each other, leave the favela, and take care of Ace's son Clayton. This example, however, only posits a deeper problem of favelados, revealing an inevitable tension between love and violence, desire and reality: if violence and poverty contain one inside the favela and love obliges one to leave, the favelado remains trapped between the physical refuge of his body and the material refuge of his home. In either case refuge is lost, and the bandit must choose between his local safety (his "sanctity") or his departure from home (his "curse"). The bandit must choose to lose his body or his place—all-in-all revealing the paradoxical dilemma of biopolitics. In light of this conflict, Hardt and Negri explain that "[l]ove needs force to conquer their ruling powers and dismantle their corrupt institutions before it can create a new world of common wealth" (*Commonwealth* xii). Whether such a force, politically speaking, is possible is a question that cinematically remains overshadowed by powerful images of violence. As it is, any force of love in Brazilian favela films, in lieu of violence, is realized as nothing more than a cinematic gesture of escape, a mere displacement of marginalized bodies within a culture of hunger.

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[1] "Eu sou favela," a well-known samba piece, was composed by Noca de Portela and Sergio Mosca in 1994 and has

been popularized in the song versions by Bezerra da Silva and Seu Jorge. For the English translation and further discussion on the samba lyrics see chapter six "Marginality from Myth to reality" where these lyrics are quoted in Janice Perman's *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro* (2010).

[2] See "De Corpore 1: Biopolitics as an Event" in Hardt and Negri's book *Commonwealth* (2009).

[3] I follow the meaning of "multitude" as an expansive politicalized network and common unity of cultural differences as stipulated in Hardt and Negri's work *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004).

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Beyond the Bandit:
Dispossession and Recovery in Paulo Morelli's *City of Men*

Kate Lawless*

Let's begin with a maxim: *Changes in material conditions produce changes in human perception.* Clearly materialist in its influence, such a maxim derives in large part from the work of Walter Benjamin, whose insights on the history of technology continue to influence the dialectic of politics and aesthetics today. In 1936, illustrating changes in perception that accompanied the inventions of film and photography, in what would become his most oft-cited essay,[1] Benjamin wrote: "*Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception*. The way in which human perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only by nature but by history" (emphasis in original, 23). What becomes increasingly clear in this and later works is not only that the modes of human perception and social organization change over time, but that these changes are historical, meaning they are inextricably linked to shifts in the material circumstances of production. Benjamin describes this tendency more explicitly in his exposition of modernity via Baudelaire (1939): further elaborating tensions between subjectivity and mediation, Benjamin describes the historical shift in perception he names "the shock experience" and its relationship to changes in social organization that emerged at the apex of modernity. I quote at length a passage that elucidates the transition from one technological formation, one social formation, to another:

> Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man 'a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness.' Whereas Poe's

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> passers-by cast glances in all directions seemingly without cause, today's pedestrians are obliged to look about them so that they can be aware of traffic signals. Thus, technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met with film. In a film, perception conditioned by shock was established as a formal principle. What determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the same thing that underlies the rhythm of reception in film. (175)

Here, Benjamin not only demonstrates the ways in which human perception and subjectivity shifted with the new forms of social organization that accompanied rapid urbanization; he also reveals the ways in which such an experience is formalized in the aesthetic production of a given historical moment. The crowd, the traffic signal, and film are all part of the same formalization of shock that characterizes the overwhelming experience of modernity under the industrial mode of production. More importantly, all three are technologies that subject the human sensorium to a complex kind of training that produces a particular historical subject.

While Benjamin sought to elucidate the *politics* of mass media—film in particular—and its effects on human perception in the age of industrial production (especially in terms of the sharp rise of Fascism he witnessed in the first half of the 20th century), aligned with insights by Foucault, Agamben, and Hardt and Negri, contemporary media theorists have replaced Benjamin's *politics* with *biopolitics* in order to imagine the ways in which visual economies participate in the biopolitical imperative to preserve life—in Foucault's words, to "to make live and let die" (*Society* 241). In this regard, Allan Meek argues that "[b]iopolitical theories require us to think about media beyond its uses, its social impact, its representations, its ownership and control, or its technological development and to consider how media record, monitor, analyze, classify and harness life as biopower" (2). More specifically, drawing on Benjamin's adaptation of Freud's "protective shield," Meek maintains that "[m]edia form part of an apparatus of immunity that promises to insulate us from actual destruction" (2). Pasi Valiaho takes a slightly different tack. Extending Benjamin's materialist rather than Freudian leanings, Valiaho emphasizes the ways in which the function of screen media has shifted with historical changes in the mode of production. "If the visual economy of cinema in the early twentieth century corresponded with modes of Fordist production and sensibility," he argues, "one could say that postcinematic images correspond with post-Fordist

production, neoliberal ideologies, and contemporary biopolitical ways of taking charge of the life of individuals and populations" (8). Focusing more narrowly on the biopolitics of film in particular, Nitzan Lebovic is concerned not with the apparatus of immunity but rather with the emancipatory potential of biopolitical film. In particular, he identifies the ways in which biopolitical film not only "seems to focus on the urgent need to expose and undermine the fallacy of centrism and consensus" but also demonstrates "how thinking through catastrophe can be an emancipatory power for the reconsideration of norms, whether political, political-theological, or aesthetic" (n.p.). Despite their varying approaches, all three suggest that film and media are not only viable sites for theorising the biopolitical but also central vehicles for the production and reproduction of biopolitical life.

Offering an account of the varied ways in which the visual economy intersects with the order of biopolitics in a world shaped by information networks and financial speculation, these recent interventions suggest that instead of simply applying biopolitical theory to the object of analysis, we should consider the ways in which the object—for example, the 2007 film *City of Men*—engages in the maintenance of the current biopolitical order. Such an approach complicates Stephen Cruikshank's essay "Bandits and Biopolitics," which proposes a straightforward application of Agamben's theory of *homo sacer* to that cinematic text and which reads the figure of the favelado as a manifestation of banditry that exemplifies bare life.[2] This kind of analysis conceives of the text as a direct reflection of reality (though if this is the case we really have no need for the film in our analysis of the favelado); more importantly, however, it overlooks the ways in which the text is rather a carefully constructed and complex system of signification that emerges dialectically within a given social, political, and economic order. In contrast to Cruikshank's claim that *City of Men* provides an "effective medium to advertise the biopolitical event of the favelados" and "urban resistance" (Cruikshank 8), we should ask how the favela film engages in the production and reproduction of a biopolitical subject in the age of information and digital media. Melanie Gilligan opens this line of inquiry when she asks: "Is representation the answer to 'social exclusion' or one of the mechanisms of its reproduction?" (n.p.). In biopolitical terms, the question becomes: Does the favela film work to counter the effects of social and economic exploitation, or does it reinforce an existing order in which images not only reproduce but also capture and direct the "potentials of life" (Valiaho 7)?

In keeping with our original maxim, and building on the insights of Meek, Valiaho, and other biopolitical media theorists, we should begin by examining how

the formal and narrative structures of the favela film in general, and *City of Men* in particular, reflect, register, and facilitate the transition from industrial to financial, or perhaps cognitive, capital.[3] If we agree with Benjamin's claim that "[f]ilm serves to train human beings in those new apperceptions and reactions demanded by interaction with an apparatus whose role in their lives is expanding almost daily" (26), then it serves to reason that the favela film must contribute to the training of human beings in those new apperceptions and reactions demanded by the *biopolitical* apparatus. Benjamin names the complex form of training invoked by film in the age of industrial production "reception in distraction," a process by which, instead of being absorbed by the work, the "distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves" (40). Writing around the same time, often in dialogue with Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer saw this "cult of distraction" as a potential source of emancipation in which the speed and disjointedness of distraction would serve as a critique of bourgeois individualism and alienation by "aim[ing] radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes [social] disintegration rather than masking it" (328). While the modernist films of Kracauer's and Benjamin's era mediated the shock and alienation of industrial production, the biopolitical films of our contemporary moment provide a seemingly transparent window onto the catastrophes and traumas of globalization. Accordingly, the complex form of training that emerges in the age of biopolitics is *reception in recovery*, wherein a fantasy of redemption merges with *history from below* to conceal the ongoing material conditions of exploitation.

In the favela film, the history of dispossession and alienation that accompanies global crises of housing and labour are re-written as narratives of personal struggle that participate in what I have elsewhere called the preservationist aesthetic—that is, the principle of preservation at the heart of new practices of cultural resistance and new forms of enclosure and assimilation worldwide.[4] Marx famously defined the process of enclosure or primitive accumulation as the separation of the worker from the means of production, using the land enclosures of 16th century England as a prime example. However, contemporary thinkers have argued that this process is not so much historical (in that it marked the inception of capitalism) as continuous: that is, the original violence of accumulation must be repeated forever anew.[5] Furthermore, as the mode of production changes, so too must the means of separation. In the age of industrial production, the separation of the worker from the means of subsistence was primarily material or land-based; in the age of information, however, image-based or cognitive dispossession becomes the dominant mode of expropriation through which

material dispossessions are rewritten as moral flaws.

Despite this shift in emphasis, the process of enclosure has, since the beginning, contained both material and epistemological dimensions. Silvia Federici emphasizes this dual aspect in her rewriting of the history of primitive accumulation from the perspective of the European witch craze when she states: "Saving this historical memory [of the expropriation of women's bodies] is crucial if we are to find an alternative to capitalism" (10). By placing Early-Modern witch hunts at the center of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Federici reveals not only the androcentric nature of traditional theories of primitive accumulation but also the enclosures of memory and knowledge through which teleological narratives of history, including Marx's claim that capitalism is a necessary step toward full communism, foreclose or exclude the narratives of marginal and subordinate populations.[6] Attempts to make these stories visible emerge alongside equally strident attempts to preserve traditional histories. At the same time, images of struggle operate as secondary modes of enclosure through the mediation of the material remains by which the original violence is covered over by a new narrative of redemption and recovery.

Given the prominent tensions between preservation and exclusion within the existing biopolitical order, we would be wise to consider the ways in which these tensions are reflected in and reproduced by new technological advances, as well as new cinematic genres and forms. Accordingly, we might ask: How does the dialectic of enclosure and emancipation that underwrites the preservationist aesthetic, and mirrors the fundamental paradox of biopolitics (killing in the name of preservation), operate within the economy of images? What mode of perception does the favela film, a subset of biopolitical film conditioned by the logic of enclosure, produce? Using *City of Men* as an example, I argue that the favela film participates in the production and reproduction of the current biopolitical order in two primary ways: 1) it naturalizes the violence of enclosure through the alchemical reversal of nature and history, and 2) it facilitates reception in recovery through the revitalization of a neorealist aesthetic and the narrative of loss and redemption.

City of Men opens with a grainy, washed out close-up of two young boys viewed through a water-dappled pane of glass. We then fade into a nostalgic scene of the boys walking arms over shoulders—a leitmotif that continues throughout and signifies a kind of brotherly love or loyal comradeship. The boys age as the credits roll and eventually the camera pans from a faded blue sky to a bird's eye view that lands on Dead End Hill, the eventual site of a bloody gang shoot-out and the coveted property of Midnight, the current leader of

the ruling gang. The gang sits idle on the hilltop, oppressed by the unrelenting heat, discussing the question of what to do, while an apparently unrelated domestic scene unfolds below—Acerola ("Ace"), the reluctant teen father, is awoken by his partner, Christiane, who reminds him that he must care for their son Clayton while she works. The two scenes converge when Laranjinha ("Wallace") arrives on his motorcycle and Ace, against his better judgment, accompanies him to the beach with Clayton in tow.

While Paulo Morelli's use of heat in this opening scene necessarily appears fleeting and incidental, it not only plays a significant role in framing and mobilizing the narrative but also performs an ideological sleight of hand that both naturalizes the violence of enclosure from the outset and incorporates an aesthetic of nostalgia that places the spectator in the position of witness and moral ally. The metaphorization of heat draws implicitly on the naturalist aesthetics of early twentieth-century American literature, in which it overdetermines the role of environment in characters' actions and dispositions.[7] In *City of Men*, the oppressive temperature both foreshadows and provides motivation for the ensuing violence. However, it also enacts what Max Pensky in his analysis of the natural history of capitalism calls a "reverse polarity," by returning the product of capitalism—in this case the "excluded," the "bandit," the "collateral damage" of primitive accumulation—to its so-called historical origins. In the natural history of enclosure, in which the exploited are transformed (if not by the film itself then by its biopolitical interpretation) into bare life, "nature, developed to the point of its most extreme significance, appears as the saturation of time—that is, as fully timely, hence historical being—where humanity as a historical phenomenon in turn appears under the sign of the historical repetition of catastrophe, and therefore as mythically recursive and static, that is, as nature" (66). The oppressive heat, as historical subject, motivates the leader's decision to go to the beach despite the fact that, as Wallace exclaims, "Midnight hasn't left the hill in three years!" In this way the metaphor naturalizes the eventual struggle for the hilltop, effacing the role of the state in the history of enclosure through its reification in the figure of "heat." And just as heat passes over from nature into "fully timely, historical being," the figure of the favelado-bandit as a historical phenomenon appears as "mythically recursive and static, that is, as nature," (Pensky 66) or "bare life."

The alchemical reversal initiated by the metaphorization of heat and the personification of bare life in the figure of the favelado-bandit is further reinforced by the coupling of neorealist aesthetics with a personal narrative of loss and redemption.

According to Lebovic, biopolitical film has largely returned to a 1920s German aesthetic that derives from a "growing suspicion of democratic politics," "a fascination with biological catastrophes and cultural crisis," and "a renewed interest in… radical experiments in aesthetics, philosophy, and politics" (n.p.). Similarly, New Brazilian Cinema, a movement that laid the foundation for the favela film, draws more predominantly on the techniques and innovations of 1940s Italian neo-realism, including "nonprofessional actors, location shooting, handheld camerawork, and a limited script" (Villarejo 125). These stylistic techniques produce a sense of authenticity and transparency that are also elements of documentary. Aline Frey points out that in addition to these particular stylistic choices, New Brazilian Cinema perpetuates a narrative that not only reduces class conflict to personal strife but also proposes migration or escape as "a romantic solution to poverty" (59). Gilligan draws a similar link among the favela film's "style of fast cutting, abbreviated exposition, tinted colour palettes and perpetually moving handheld photography," its "restag[ing of] class conflicts as a series of personal narratives" and the "passing over [of] primordial act[s] of state violence" (n.p.). State violence is overshadowed, sealed off into the past, concealed by the romantic narrative of redemption and escape to which the nostalgic revitalization of neorealism lends authenticity.[8]

Eclipsing the role of state violence in the production of the favelado-bandit, *City of Men* reframes the story of historical violence in the favela as a story of lost fatherhood, resulting in a moral chaos and gang warfare that moves towards a Hobbesian state of nature. Despite the fact that the history of "banditry" in Rio's favelas only emerged with the rocky transition away from military rule towards full democracy, the figure of the fallen father looms large from the outset and is, in fact, a metonym for the state and the implicit cause of internal social breakdown.[9] Its first instantiation appears in the initial beach scene where, in a sudden feverish quest to help locate Wallace's father before his impending eighteenth birthday, Ace accidentally abandons his three-year-old son, who runs wailing along the shoreline with a pacifier dangling precariously from his mouth. The figure of the fallen father is doubled as Ace inadvertently mirrors the gestures of Wallace's absent father. Ace's mistake materializes explicitly in Wallace's grandmother's vitriol toward the absent father. The two boys rush back to the beach only to find that Clayton has disappeared, and is, unbeknownst to them, safely (or not) in the hands of Midnight's gang.

The problem of fallen fatherhood in the favela intensifies over the course of

the film as Wallace not only finds his father, who reluctantly embraces him (less as a son than as a potential comrade), but also discovers his father's responsibility for the questionable and untimely death of Ace's father in a botched robbery. Wallace eventually watches as his father is apprehended by police and tossed in the trunk of a car on the way back from the innocent act of buying a package of cigarettes. As Ace, through a series of inauspicious events not of his own making, becomes increasingly enveloped by Midnight's gang, Wallace and Ace are forced to decide whether or not they will repeat the fateful demise of their fathers' friendship or forge a new path that resists the inheritance of fallen fatherhood (and, with it, fallen brotherhood). The film ends with the three boys—Wallace and Ace, each hand-in-hand with Clayton—walking along the beach, toward a new life beyond the borders of the favela. As they head to Wallace's father's now-empty apartment, Ace assures Clayton that he is going to teach him everything he knows, beginning with the lesson of looking both ways before he crosses the street. Escape from the favela and the transmission of knowledge in this final scene is represented as an individual choice devoid of socio-economic realities. And, despite Wallace's parting letter to Camilla, in which he recognizes the favela as a kind of home, the favela is represented as a space of corruption and violence in which the possibility for legitimate (bourgeois) fatherhood is foreclosed. The redemption of the favelado-bandit through the restoration of the father as the guardian of the moral order of knowledge transmission not only effaces the socio-political and economic realities of favela life but also reinforces an ideology of bourgeois individualism that constitutes the favelado-bandit as a threat to liberal democracy rather than a product of exploitation and dispossession.

Given Agamben's indebtedness to Benjamin and his multiple forays into media theory,[10] I would like to close by re-reading one of Cruikshank's claims—that *City of Men* reveals the bare life of the favelado-bandit—against Agamben's theory of "gestural cinema" in order to demonstrate the ways in which these humanist theories themselves participate in the same cult of recovery and production of the biopolitical order as the favela film. Benjamin Noys summarizes Agamben's theory as cinema's desperate attempt to recover the massive loss of gesture experienced by the Western bourgeoisie at the end of the 19th century. Reflecting elements of Benjamin's dialectical image as much as Deleuze's movement-image, gestural cinema reveals "the image as a force field that holds together two opposing forces. The first is that the image reifies and obliterates the gesture, fixing it into the static image. The second is that the image also preserves the dynamic force of the gesture, linking the gesture to a whole" (Noys n.p.). Furthermore,

affirming Agamben's claim that "[c]inema leads images back to the homeland of gesture" ("Notes" 55), Noys argues that the power of cinema lies in its capacity to "reveal the potential of the image, and release what has been frozen in [it]" (Noys n.p.). However, a careful reading of "Notes on Gesture" reveals that Agamben's theory comes not so much from an attempt to "release what has been hidden" but from a desire to recover true humanity through the redemption of the gesture, pure unmediated human experience, a form of experience that was lost with the advent of modern media.

Despite belonging to different philosophical schema, Agamben's theories of gesture and bare life derive from a unified aspiration: to recover humanity. Meek highlights the commodifying function of media in this context: "What Agamben sees as the commodification of human experience in the media image resonates with his account of biopolitics as reducing individuals to a state of bare life" (10). Adapting the concept of bare life from Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," Agamben not only defines bare life as "that which may be killed but not sacrificed," but also uses it as a synonym for *zoe*,[11] (*Homo Sacer* 4) or "natural life" (*Homo Sacer* 6). It is, in Arne De Boever's words, "a life that is neither human nor animal, but rather an inhuman kind of life that exists at the limits of ethical and political categories," "a life stripped of its form of life" (30). Bare life is absolutely subject to the state, "human life that is completely exhausted in its status as the correlate of sovereign action" (Ross 2). Bare life is the negation of all human gesture, and gesture is what recovers the form of life to life itself: "Without gesture, life is bare life 'ready for the massacre'—no strings attached" (Birmingham 132). For Agamben, bare life is the universal condition facilitated by the commodifying effects of mass media, which stripped humanity of the only thing that distinguishes life from bare life: gestures.

A biopolitical reading of *City of Men* that focuses on the figure of the favelado-bandit as the embodiment of bare life, a personification of social exclusion, ultimately fails to account for the ways in which this figure emerges as material remains, the collateral damage of capitalist accumulation. Agamben's theory of gesture posits cinema as a mode of resistance to the production of bare life through the recovery of gesture. But his theory participates in the very cult of recovery in which preservation of life at the level of representation not only covers over the material conditions of exploitation but necessarily appears as the humanist morality of the bourgeois order—an order that re-writes, for instance, the history of dispossession as the story of fallen fatherhood. Only by recognizing the bandit for what it is, a reification of the material conditions of dispossession, can we truly

begin to imagine the transformative possibilities of biopolitical film.

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[1] "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" is the second version of his most widely cited essay, which was originally published as "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

[2] Please see pages 8 – 9 of Stephen Cruikshank's "Bandits and Biopolitics" for a discussion of favelas/the favelado.

[3] I use these designations reluctantly given the ongoing controversy among Marxist theorists as to the usefulness and/or correctness of such phrases. Briefly, "Cognitive capitalism" is generally understood as the current stage of capitalism following the earlier stages of mercantile and industrial capitalism in which accumulation takes an immaterial rather than material form. However, some historical materialists are critical of this term, and its claim that labour has become increasingly immaterial, due to its alleged misinterpretation of value theory (i.e., Hessang Jeon's "Cognitive Capitalism or Cognition in Capitalism?" *Spectrum: Journal of Global Studies* 2.3 [2014]: n.p.). Others argue that cognitive capitalism is in fact an advanced stage of capitalism beyond the third stage of financial capitalism (i.e., Yann Moulier-Boutang's *Cognitive Capitalism*. Oxford: Polity, 2012. Print.).

[4] For an in-depth analysis of new forms of enclosure, see Midnight Notes. *The New Enclosures* 10 (1990): n.p.

[5] See Mezzadra, Sandro. "The Topicality of Prehistory: A New Reading of Marx's Analysis of 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation.'" *Rethinking Marxism*. Trans. Arianna Bove 23.3 (2011): 302-21; Massimiliano Tomba's "Historical Temporalities of Capital: An Anti-Historicist Perspective." *Historical Materialism* 17 (2009): 44-65; Tony C. Brown's "The Time of Globalization: Rethinking Primitive Accumulation." *Rethinking Marxism* 21.4 (2009): 571-84; and Werner Bonefeld's "The Permanence of Primitive Accumulation: Commodity Fetishism and Social Constitution." *The Commoner* (2001): 1-15.

[6] In her counter-history of the inception of capitalism, Federici offers feminist rejoinders to both Marx and Foucault. If Marx had placed women at the center of his analysis, she argues, capitalism could never lead to liberation. And if Foucault had done the same, the promotion of life forces that accompanies the transition from sovereign power to biopower would have appeared not as mysterious but as the harnessing of women's reproductive capacities for the controlled reproduction of the labour force.

[7] See, as prime examples, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. New York: Scribner, 1995; Nella Larson's *Passing*. 1929. New York: Penguin Books, 2003; and Zora Neale Hurston's short story "Sweat." 1926. *Literature and Its Writers: An Intro-*

duction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. Ed. Ann Charters and Samuel Charters. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 351-360. Print.

[8] In his analysis of the time of globalization, Tony C. Brown describes two models of presentation in Marx's theory of primitive accumulation: entombment and prefigural. The first corresponds to the time of representation, which seals the violence of primitive accumulation or enclosure off into the past. He notes that for Marx this tendency to "stress a temporality of historical violence that…seal[s] primitive accumulation off into the past" (578) is precisely why an act of historical recovery in the sense of describing the "marks of capitalist accumulation historically" is not enough. The "tomb" in this model is a metaphor for the remains of historical violence; it is that which in representing them simultaneously conceals them. Interestingly, Millicent Marcus uses the metaphor of the tomb in her discussion of the "memorial impulse" of neorealist film, stating: "Rossellini's first neo-realist films may be considered epitaphs, 'writing on tombs'" (82).

[9] Favelas in Rio de Janeiro were originally squatter settlements that housed itinerant workers for which the state refused to extend public services. During the 1940s the state began to develop temporary public housing projects as an alternative to the growing problem of urban slums. In response to the failure of such projects, the state then transported inner city slums to the periphery through programs of forced relocation. However, this process of removal and relocation ultimately failed to address the material conditions of Rio's housing shortage, as well as favelados consistent resistance to "integration." As a result, favela populations continued to grow over the next three decades or so.

[10] Not only is *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* an attempt to complete Benjamin's response to Schmitt, which argues that the state of emergency is the rule rather than the exception, but in many ways "Notes on Gesture" appears to provide a phenomenological account of Benjamin's theory of reception in distraction.

[11] In his theory of bare life, Agamben draws on Aristotle's distinction (via Hannah Arendt) between *zoe*, pure biological existence (life), and *bios*, a qualified or political existence that Arendt links with speech and action (the good life). For more on Arendt's definitions, see *The Human Condition*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

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The *Word* Hoard
/wərd/hôrd/ n. 1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.

The Renegade Poets

David Huebert*

The renegade poets still grope villanelles,
the villains in villas snort elephant tusk,
leave stories unmoored in heave and swell.

Breathe me a ballad in language of smell:
tell septic, wax menses, drone library musk,
the renegade poets mill groped villanelles.

Wail eerie, cry peerless, and howl infidel,
pheromone me the lifespan of a mollusk
while stories cross moors in the thunderous swell.

Stir magnets and atoms in brouhaha spell,
bring species to knees in the ravenous dusk
where vertigo poets still grope villanelles.

The hermits out begging for hand-me-down shells
on barnacled streets where forgotten chimps busk,
turn stories adrift in a baritone yell.

Expiry-date oceans ascend bunker shelves.
The body is story and story is husk.
The renegade poets kill groped villanelles
as stories lick tongueless through heave and swell.

**David Huebert is the author of the poetry collection* We Are No Longer The Smart Kids In Class *(Guernica 2015). His story, "Enigma," won the 2016 CBC Short Story Prize.*

The Word Hoard
/wərd/hôrd/ n. 1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.

There Emigrate Bullets

Andy Verboom*

There emigrate bullets: steel grapes filling hell.
Civilians sing, valleys snore, telephones rust,
history's unmoored, and heaven's svelte.

Bereave Neapolitan language of its melt
else skeptics ask, "Men seize, grown library-y! Must
there emigrate bullets?" Small grapes volleying hell
wearily creep, eyeless in bowels. Imps' fiddles
—for a moment alive—spawn off the mole-lust
hailstorm, rise coarse, more synthy than dressed well.

Storm, ammo! Dance in Adam's syncrude asphodels!
Spring specious tunes! Meander a Venice of dust!
Wear fur! Dig opiates! Steal! Grope! Fill in hell!

Deterrence mounts, wagging Thor-hammery tonsils
and bare knuckles, retreats via a clopping, chintz beast.
Currents tear, reefs are drifting, empire's autumnal.
Expired edicts, dozing accents, younger selves
stub on the historian's boringest truss.
There emigrate bullets till grapes fill in hell
and *sorry*'s slick tangles prove everything's well.

**Andy Verboom's poetry is forthcoming or has recently appeared in* Vallum*,* The Puritan*,* Arc Poetry Magazine*,* Contemporary Verse 2*, and* BafterC*. He is the author of* Tower *(Anstruther Press, 2016) and co-author (with David Huebert) of* Full Mondegreens*, winner of the 2016 Frog Hollow Press Chapbook Contest. He is also Content Editor-in-Chief at* Word Hoard*. For more, visit andyverboom.com.*

The Word Hoard
/wərd/hôrd/ n. 1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.

The Personally Ugly and Socially Unacceptable:
Villains by Choice Nature, or Circumstances?

Certainly the claim is justified that this criminal sanction falls more heavily on the relatively impoverished and underprivileged elements of society. The 'have-nots' in every society always have been subject to greater pressure to commit crimes and to fewer constraints than their more affluent fellow citizens. This is, indeed, a tragic by-product of social and economic deprivation, but it is not an argument of constitutional proportions under the Eighth or Fourteenth Amendment.
(Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., Furman v. Georgia, 408 U.S. 238, 1972)

Justyna Stiepanow*

Anthony G. Amsterdam based his chief argument against the death penalty in *Aikens v. California (*1972) on his observation that the sanction is reserved for "the poor and powerless, personally ugly and socially unacceptable" (qtd. in Steiker 263).[1] Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr. partially agreed with Amsterdam: he does not dispute the fact that American Death Rows are populated by poor inmates, however, in his opinion, their high rate should be explained by the reality of living in areas of low economic status rather than by discriminatory prosecution and sentencing. His stance seems to be in tune with another claim by Ernest Van den Haag in *Punishing Criminals: Concerning a Very Old and Painful Question* (1975), who suggests that any involvement in crime results in immunity against one's moral compass and finally leads to utter moral decay. Such belief is well established in a hard-working law-abiding society—poverty apparently goes hand in hand with utter moral depravity and indifference to basic social rules. What does the view reflect, however: the

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real nature of villainy or merely the logic of those who share the belief?

This paper seeks to prove how such views, when confronted with a more complex analysis of villains and their circumstances, are not only too general, but are in fact induced by thinking in limited terms of reason and the rules of social contract. This paper discusses the capital cases of Patrick Elmo Sonnier and Gary Mark Gilmore—individuals rendered by legal rhetoric as monsters and "public enemies"—and their depiction in two non-fiction American literary works: Helen Prejean's 1993 *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States* and Normal Mailer's 1979 *The Executioner's Song*.

Upstream Against the Established Notion of Villainy

This paper is exploring a long period in the U.S. culture that was initiated by the 1976 reinstatement of the death penalty, marked by increasing social support for the sanction[2], and the politics of the "War on Crime"[3]. All these social and political factors strongly influenced the pop-culture reflections of villains and murderers. The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a significant growth of popular interest in crime and criminals. Moreover, the horror of serial killings unlocked Hollywood filmmakers' imaginations: thriller films such as Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and Dominic Senna's *Kalifornia* (1993) excited the public, demonstrating the mass appeal of tales dealing with crime, murder, and realistic villains. A similar fascination was evident in documentaries: true-crime television series broadcast throughout the 2000s had titles such as *America's Serial Killers: Portraits of Evil* and *Born to Kill? Born to Kill?* posed a puzzling question in its introduction: "What drove [the murderers] to commit those horrific crimes? Was it nature or nurture?" Regardless of the answer that the show gave per episode, the underlying message was grim: media like these suggested that uncontrollable total evil threatened peaceful American suburbs.

However, beginning with the last decade of the twentieth century, the tide seems to have turned. Productions such as the three part documentary *Paradise Lost* (1996, 2000, 2011)[4] by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky, an Off-Broadway play *The Exonerated* (2002)[5] by Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen, Werner Herzog's documentary *Into the Abyss* (2012),[6] the television series *Death Row Stories* (2014),[7] and many others[8] have questioned the American justice system and, in so doing, attempted to re-humanize the figure of the villain. These works have significant social implications insofar as they introduce an image of the capital offender that is alternative to the mainstream notion of villainy with which

the public has become intensely familiar. As such, audiences may draw independent conclusions about what constitutes villainy, as the legal and popular notion of the villain obstructs the human factor present in individual cases.

Against God and the United States

Instead of rushing to describe the characterization of villainy, I will first establish the logic that forms its basis. It is believed that no one can be separated from their actions—they reflect who a person is. Thus, the notion of a villain as a capital felon is constructed through an understanding of his/her crime(s) and the prescribed punishments.

In popular views, villainy is often linked to immorality, yet according to the theory of positive law, morality and law are separate concepts—even though they both regulate human conduct, morality is not the source of legal validity.[9] Writing about English legal philosopher H.L.A Hart for *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Mathew H. Kramer gives an example of this distinction. Hart (1907-1992) maintained that while the normativity of law is not acknowledged to a legislative body, the content of legal norms may be influenced by moral demands (Kramer n.p.). Thus the separation thesis seems unenforceable in practice.

Both God and the State were included in the form of indictment that was used until the end of the nineteenth century: the defendant, "not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, [committed a crime] feloniously and wilfully, and of his malicious aforethought … and against the peace and government of the United States" (United States v. Sickles 1).[10] Here, the phrasing indicates a crime that has been perceived in terms of unlawful trespassing upon public safety and violating divine Commandments. A defendant is asserted to have disobeyed rules, thus disregarding God and letting the devil dictate their actions. This practice has continued to the present: while God has disappeared from legal arguments, it is not lawyers but rather twelve laymen who impose death sentences in the U.S. The principles by which they judge the accused remain unchanged.

The old-form indictment stipulates that the criminal act was committed against the public peace and the government, bringing to mind the Enlightenment thinkers—especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who also associates lawfulness with morality. In *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* (1762), Rousseau asserts that by accepting the rules of society, one becomes a *moral person*—one passes from *the state of nature* into *the civil state*, thereby abandoning instincts and embracing justice. Consequently, with self-restraint exercised in the name of civic duty, one's actions become moral. The citizen who

breaks the law demonstrates that they value his or her own interest more than they value the interest of the State. Acting against public safety, the malefactor becomes, as Rousseau puts it: "a rebel and a traitor to [his/her] country" (26). The contract violation is equal to losing civil rights, and Rousseau explicitly states that execution is an act of a higher necessity. The public safety must be placed above the individual's right to live. Moreover, Rousseau explains that in such extreme circumstances the state is putting to death a *public enemy* rather than a man. His phrasing emphasizes that a man without morality is reduced to the physicality of *the state of nature*: "such an enemy is not a moral person, but merely a man" (26).[11] From such a claim there is only one step to considering the criminal in terms of their animalism. Rousseau compares criminal activity to declaring war. In *The Death Penalty, Vol. 1* (2013), Jacques Derrida frequently returns to the latter claim stressing its impact on justifying the ongoing use of capital punishment (16, 81, 172). According to such logic, one capital felon threatens the whole society with his/her departure from the moral dictates. His or her death is thus justifiable.

Feloniously, Wilfully, and of One's Malicious Aforethought

The act of murder as such is not the main focus of this paper, but defining it helps clarify the image of the perpetrator. The notion of the capital felon emerging from the logic discussed above presupposes his/her deliberate, premeditated action against the social order; the deed confirms his/her monstrosity and moral depravity. Indeed, the old-form indictment argues that some malicious intent leads the defendant to the crime, implying that rather than acting instinctively, the villain decides on the action by the means of their intellect. Rousseau holds that reason may be used to achieve goals that defy moral demands. Driven by *amour prope*, self-interest, men excel in their reasoning not to serve morality, but to serve an opposite end. However, Rousseau's views on human nature are rather moderate: subscribing to Enlightenment ideals, he finds in humans a mixture good and evil propensities.

By contrast, Kant formulates in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793) a rather rigorous thesis on human inclinations: ethically, he claims, men are either wholly evil or entirely good, for they are either governed by moral law or they are not. Kant asserts the propensity to evil to be an innate and universal, and yet non-necessary,[12] quality that provides the motivation for action. Interestingly, Kant holds that moral corruption is not the result of one's circumstances, but is a rational decision. Facing a choice of the dominant maxim—good or evil behaviour—an agent either adopts moral law or deviates from it

towards the maxim of self-interest. Even though Kant's deliberations on evil propensities are not utterly radical (evil may not invade the agent and may be overcome by a total reform of character), the distinction between being either good or wholly deprived is sharp. I sense the influence of Kant's approach in popular formulations of the villain: he/she embraces evil, because he/she chooses so and will continue to do so.

Derrida remains very critical of Kant, referring to Kant's notion of murder, mentioned in contrast to homicide[13] in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). He explains it thusly: "a murder (*homicidium dolosum*): that is, a putting to death, a killing that implies a wrong, some treachery (*dolos, dolus*), a crime of malice, a malicious ruse, thus an evil (*un mal*), an evildoing (*une malignité*)" (124). Derrida emphasizes the Kantian insistence of the wickedness of the deed, particularly its calculated (that is, rationally chosen) and self-seeking nature. He dubs the murder, as defined by Kant, an "absolute crime" (141). Furthermore, he discusses the Kantian definition of murder in relation to Kant's idea of the death penalty as objective (because it is included in law) and disinterested (pure of any calculation, free of impulse-driven passions). Kant argues that execution is an act opposite to murder. Derrida strongly criticises this logic, arguing that there is no difference between murder and the death penalty. Both, as understood by Kant, are unrealistic constructs forced on popular imagination by black-and-white reasoning (141-144). Kant, who claims that human morality is rooted in the faculty of reason, presupposes the murderer's appreciation of right and wrong and thus presupposes premeditation. The legal definition of first-degree murder argues the same.[14]

Language of Justification

The image of capital offenders is closely related to the nature of their punishments. As such, at this point, I look away from the villain to explore the nature of the penalty imposed on him/her. Does society measure his/her punishments according to the perception of the one who will be punished, or, conversely, is it the other way around: is the image of the offender defined in order to fit the imposed punishment? David Garland's *Peculiar Institution: America's Death Penalty in an Age of Abolition* (2010) explains the correlation between the villain and the means of his/her ultimate incapacitation, arguing that in order to make sense, the death penalty must be rendered legitimate, intelligible, or even compelling to the public. This task is accomplished through narratives and metaphors, and two out of the five metaphors utilized by Garland resonate with Kant's and Rousseau's conceptions of villainy. First, Garland's metaphor of war explains

the death penalty as a weapon and a necessary act of a society's self-defence (63). Second is Garland's metaphor of healing, whereby the death penalty becomes a "cathartic act of cleansing, a way of ridding the community of moral contamination" (66).

Ritualized and explicitly violent early-modern capital punishment performed a different function than capital punishment performs today: in this period, it helped establish, strengthen, and exercise the power of the State. Execution was also a religious event focused on the condemned person's soul and his/her passage from life to death. Randall McGowen, quoted in Garland's monograph, explains that "theology [structured] and infused the gallows" (qtd. in Garland 79). Garland cites Richard Evans' *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (1996): the culprits were accompanied to the gallows by the clergy, were encouraged to repent and to take communion, and the execution was a part of their atonement for their crimes—their deaths were even compared to Christ's crucifixion. Evans states: "The language by which condemned people were described emphasized above all the moral and religious aspects of their status. They were known as 'poor sinners'" (qtd. in Garland 79). Never were the condemned deemed to be inhuman as they are today.

Since executions served to reinforce social hierarchies (Garland 76), the Early-Modern condemned were thus dying before a sympathetic crowd. V. C. A. Gartell asserts, for example, that the Hanoverian spectators, sharing the felon's low social status, offered their support (37). As a point of contrast, Gartell mentions pro-death penalty gatherings in contemporary America: "they have barbecues outside prisons on the nights of electrocutions. 'Burn, Bundy, Burn!' their T-shirts advised" (12).[15] Prejean describes similar sentiments: after an execution the victim's stepfather hoped that the culprit "fries in hell for all eternity" (112). The sympathetic early modern condemned, whose deaths led to their redemptions, have been replaced in the public imagination by despicable monsters who are not to be forgiven—even in the afterlife. This shift is a result of a long process of re-defining capital punishment in the face of social changes, whereby a new rhetoric is calculated in order to sustain and justify the death penalty.

According to Garland, since the nineteenth century the death penalty has operated in an increasingly problematic environment. In the face of new humanitarian sentiments, liberal democracy, and welfarism, the institution of capital punishment needed a new justification for its legitimacy. New modern philosophy by Hegel, Bentham, Mill, and Kant present the death penalty as a life-saving deterrent to crime and just retribution for a crimi-

nal's actions (95). The metaphors of society's self-defence and of cleansing moral pollution are posed, here, as crucial arguments to support the death penalty. As a result, the more inhuman the punishment appears, the more monstrous the culprit must become.

In 1961, Albert Camus noted the anxiety and embarrassment surrounding public executions in his "Reflections on the Guillotine." In 1975, Michel Foucault published his now seminal work on the punitive system, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, in which he remarks that the "monstrosity" of the capital felon is now a key factor in putting him/her to death. Garland comments on the shift, explaining that "[i]n order to kill the condemned person, it had become necessary to distance him from the human race" (96). Evans discusses this necessity in *Rituals of Retribution*: "a new language of justification," he explains, emphasizes the dangerousness, bestiality, and inhumanity of the offender (qtd. in Garland 95). As the early modern poor, pitiable sinner gives way to the monster, the once supportive audience polarizes into those who oppose the death penalty and those who support it, with the latter more unrelenting than ever before. Putting capital felons to death becomes a last resort; an exceptional measure "[j]ustified only at the extremeness of criminal wickedness, incorrigibility and danger" (Garland 91). To argue imposing a death sentence and to win the argument, prosecutors need to include these three factors and employ their metaphors accordingly.

Patrick Elmo Sonnier: The Social Other

Having established the legal and philosophical rhetoric used in conceptualizing the villain, I will now move to test this logic in the context of individual narratives. First, I will look at Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* a work by a death penalty opponent written to advocate against the sanction. Despite the bias of her anti-death penalty stance, Prejean offers a logically coherent account: her tone is even-tempered, and each disturbing fact is counterbalanced by an account showing the human side of the villain. Including the arguments from the side of Sonnier's victims, Prejean frequently states that what she has experienced escapes black-and-white assertions. *Dead Man Walking* unravels many shades of grey, which are often neglected in legal considerations.

When commencing her correspondence with Patrick Elmo Sonnier, Prejean knows only his name and the nature of his crime. [16] Yet these are sufficient to trigger a feeling of terror, as she writes: "my blood chills" (4). She notes that the newspaper comments about Sonnier's crime have what one could call a

Rousseauian/Kantian undertone, even though she does not identify the logic as stemming from the social contract theory: "'It is hard to imagine that there may be somebody in this fine community of ours who could contemplate, much less carry out, this vilest of vile deeds'" (15). Prejean is aware of the effect the biased message must have had on the readers: "it makes the murders all the more vicious, because St. Martinsville … is one of the friendliest, most hospitable places on earth … If murders are prone to happen everywhere on the face of the earth, this is the place one would least expect" (4). The serene neighbourhood aggravates the image of the perpetrator: the more genial the victims, the more dehumanized the killer becomes. A *moral person of the civil state*, as Rousseau defines him, would not dare to disturb such tranquillity. Sonnier represents what society fears the most: a sheer violence—taking whatever one desires and has the physical power to obtain. St. Martinsville citizens perceived him accordingly, that is, through his violence and the terror it inspires.

Prejean further studies newspaper clippings, and again, what she reads employs the binary opposition between the depiction of the victims and their killers:

> I look down upon the smiling faces of a teenage couple. The young man is laughing eyes and the young woman, a serene half-smile. The article tells how on the Friday evening before the murders, David LeBlanc, age seventeen, and Loretta Bourque, eighteen, had been "just two happy faces in the crowd at a Catholic High School's homecoming football game." The couple had been each shot three times at close range in the back of the head with a .22-caliber rifle … It takes a month to capture the killers. Their sneering faces appear on the front page of the *Iberian* December 2 issue: Elmo Patrick Sonnier, age twenty-seven, and Eddie Sonnier, age twenty. (15)

The expressions of happiness and serenity of LeBlanc and Bourque are contrasted with the scorn of the killers—two beautiful unfolding lives snatched away by bestial individuals. The victims' last outing to a nearby football game renders them familiar to the reader of this local paper, whereas, on the Sonniers' side, there is nothing to balance the scales, as if they have come from nowhere. They are represented, instead, by the .22-caliber rifle they used, and the technical details of the killings speak about their detachment from humanity. This contrast puts the Sonnier brothers at a further disadvantage; they are "personally ugly and socially unacceptable" strangers who do not belong to the community.

Prejean re-humanizes Sonnier by providing what is missing from the media coverage, namely individualized details which draw her and her readers closer to the villain. On a personal level, Sonnier is

difficult to label as a monster: "I begin to think of him as a fellow human being, though I can't for a moment forget his crime, nor can I reconcile the easygoing Cajun … with the brutal murderer" (13). Notably, the prison employees warn Prejean "to never relate on a *personal* level with inmates"—their detachment helps them through the execution (180). Disregarding their advice, she allows emotions into the relationship and is able to see beyond the stereotype of Sonnier as villain: "The sheer weight of his loneliness, his abandonment, draws me. I abhor the evil he has done. But I sense something, some sheer and essential humanness, and that, perhaps, is what draws me most of all" (22). The villain has, after all, a human face. Not all wicked, they escape the distinction drawn by Kant and Rousseau. However, the re-humanization, as Prejean shows, is possible only on a personal level.

Living in Different Worlds

Countless instances in *Dead Man Walking* make the reader realize that the victims and the killers were raised in two utterly different words. Prejean, coming from the peaceful world of the victims, very consciously describes the counter-world. She makes the clash discernible not by commenting on it, but rather by contrasting her experiences with Sonnier's.

Prejean's education and structured upbringing made her who she is: a reasonable person capable of living a moral life. Notably, from the dedication one learns that *Dead Man Walking* is a tribute to her parents: "To my mother, Gusta Mae, and my father, Louis, who loved me into life" (vi). In contrast, Sonnier grew up in abject poverty, in a broken home, moving constantly between parents. He dropped out of school in eighth grade. His father, a sharecropper, had a criminal record. Sonnier's fondest memory of his father is when Sonnier was twelve years old: after an all-night drinking binge the father and son cycled back home intoxicated. The Sonniers made their living as hired hands working for the lowest wages, constantly struggling to satisfy their most basic needs. The family lived on the margins of society and law. Yet, in popular coverage, this fact did not suggest the Sonniers deserved compassion, but rather suggested proof of their depravity. Lloyd LeBlanc, David's father, has the following opinion of Sonnier: "an evil man who hung out around bars with thieves and 'trashy' people, who spouted obscenities, who stole, and who abducted teenage kids and raped young women" (65).

Growing up in different worlds means perceiving the reality with varying sensitivity:

> [Sonnier] chuckles remembering how his mother would help him with the rabbit hunt and it was always her job to put the dead rabbits in a sack and to "finish them off"

> with a stick if they weren't dead yet. "And we'd be stalking along and behind us we'd hear *whack, whack, whack*—Mama beating the hell out of those rabbits." I cringe, but he tells the incident nonchalantly. I'm thinking of the clobbered rabbits. He is thinking of the food. (29)

Clearly, Sonnier's insensitivity towards the rabbits' deaths makes Prejean uncomfortable, but this does not destroy his human image. On the contrary, to a socially conscious person an awareness of Sonnier's circumstances becomes a mitigating factor when it comes to judging his violence towards the animals.

The day prior to Sonnier's execution, Prejean faints while visiting him. She recovers in the prison infirmary and returns to the Death House. Her reappearance leads to an emotive moment: Sonnier is relieved and grateful as has not expected her back. Prejean writes: "In the face of this man's utter poverty, I feel humbled" (82). She then leaves the prison and spots her siblings awaiting her in the parking lot. They came to drive her to her mother's as soon as they heard of the indisposition. The contrast is striking: Sonnier is alone in the Death House; Prejean is surrounded by her attentive, caring family. The "poverty" Prejean mentions, here, should not be understood only as the lack of financial security. Instead, it refers to his complete depravation of love, friendship, self-worth, and proper moral guidance.

Prejean never forces her comments on the reader. However, her contrasting approach raises questions: How can Sonnier's moral depravity be objectively measured? How can he be expected to understand concepts that are strange to his world? With each newly revealed fact, it becomes evident that Sonnier is in an unequal match with judgement based on Rousseau and Kant's logic.

Gary Mark Gilmore: The Psychological Other

Norman Mailer's narrative about the execution of Gary Mark Gilmore, *The Executioner's Song*, has an effect on readers that is similar to Prejean's with one exception: he takes no emotional stance in the debate on capital punishment. His work, an example of New Journalism, gathers numerous accounts—in the forms of letters, newspaper clippings, and trial transcripts. Mailer draws a broad panorama of the local community participating in the drama of Gilmore's trial and aftermath. By doing so, he shows the drama from every possible angle, thereby allowing the reader to sympathize with both sides. The demarcation line between good and evil established by Kant becomes blurry, thus placing the legal notions of right and wrong into question.

In posing capital punishment as a pre-emptive measure, a felon's future dangerousness becomes a crucial argument in a jury's choice of sentence (i.e. death or life without parole). Many American capital statutes stipulate future dangerousness combined with previous criminal records among aggravating factors, giving juries an incentive to choose death over life without parole. Garland takes note of contemporary attempts at scientific objectification of a felon's future dangerousness, explaining:

> Medicine, psychiatry, abnormal psychology, and positive criminology—the new human sciences that emerged in this period [of the modern death penalty]—helpfully supplied a new language of monstrosity, each of them providing a positive source of scientific legitimacy for the institution, much as they do in the sentencing phase of American capital trials today. (96)

Gary Mark Gilmore,[17] the protagonist of *The Executioner's Song*, is presented at his trial as a case study example of the "public enemy." His pre-trial psychiatric report states: "[Gilmore] has a high hostility component towards the establishment" (Mailer 379), diagnosing him with a "personality disorder of the antisocial type" (382). Gilmore's psychiatrists claimed that he had an appreciation of the distinction between right and wrong, subscribing to Kantian formulation of *homocidium dolosum*. More importantly, they discovered Gilmore's great intellectual potential: he scored high during IQ testing. The evaluation suggests that his previous criminal records indicate a pervasive pattern of disregard for law and the needs of others. The District Attorney noted, following Rousseau's *amour prope*, that Gilmore was likely to use his intelligence to achieve immoral goals.

Did Gilmore, however, intend to continue on a path of immorality? The reader does not find any answer from Mailer. His third person narrative takes the reader inside the minds of many characters, but not inside Gilmore's. Instead, Mailer constructs Gilmore's character through his direct speech (letters, oral statements) and his actions, leaving the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. Consequently, one cannot escape doubts as to Gilmore's mindset and motivations. The reader's confusion at the D.A.'s certainty about Gilmore's future dangerousness raises a puzzling question: how could the D.A. know what neither Gilmore nor the reader knows? Thus, Mailer reveals a great deal of prejudice involved in the trial. Gilmore is shown by Mailer as deeply repentant—a quality of which a psychopath is supposedly devoid. Showing remorse only in personal interaction, in public—especially in the courtroom—Gilmore displays a great deal of hostility and arrogance towards authorities. His repentance remains unnoticed and is not

considered as a mitigating circumstance for determining his sentence. His hostility towards the establishment, on the other hand, confirms the concern that Gilmore, if kept alive, would be a threat to public safety.

No Obvious Motive

Gilmore's reasons for killing remained a puzzle for the prosecution, as his financial gain from robbing the victims was little. Asked what triggered the attacks, Gilmore could not offer any explanation. To the reader's dismay, the D.A. concludes that Gilmore killed to avoid potential witness identification. He makes a strong argument in front of the jury, calling Gilmore's crime cold-blooded and stressing the alleged plan: "He [Gilmore] served time for these [previous robberies]. And he's learned something because of that time. Do you know what it is? He's going to kill his victims. Now that's smart. If you are going to make your living as a robber, that just makes sense, because a dead victim's not going to identify you" (439). The D.A. uses "going to" to imply intent, prompting jurors to imagine a life that Gilmore decided to make for himself in which, in Rousseauian terms, his excellent reasoning skills are mobilized towards an immoral end. However, there is no indication of any such plan in Mailer's narrative. The reader sees Gilmore's crimes as the final straw in a seven-month route to self-destruction: paroled after long years of incarceration, with no practical craft to generate income and abandoned by his girlfriend, Gilmore failed to adjust to life in a hard-working and God-fearing community. His crimes, in a tragic and senseless way, concluded his failures. A part of him anticipated that, but Gilmore was too weak and too devoid of hope to break the chain of reaction. Even though he is lacking Prejean's emotional openness, Mailer achieves the same goal by noting meticulously the myriad of circumstances surrounding Gilmore's crime. Creating the full picture of the villain, Mailer subverts the social contract logic that paints the villain as a monster.

Similarly to Gilmore's, the Sonniers' crime is difficult to explain in terms of motive or premeditation. When Sonnier's brother Eddie confessed to the killings he claimed that it was LeBlanc's name, David (his girlfriend had just left him for a man named David), that prompted his rage: "he had 'lost it' … something the boy said had triggered his rage, something had 'come over him,' and the two Davids had blurred in his mind and the gun was in his hand and he had fired" (Prejean 16). The reason seems trivial and the murders impulse-driven rather than committed in cold blood. Yet, at Sonnier's pardon hearing the A.D.A. says: "there has been no doubt in the court's mind … that the killings were 'cool and calculated'" (64). In both Gilmore's and Sonnier's cases, the motive is invented to render them monstrous and to

obtain what community and victims' families demand the most—a death sentence.

The Question of Compassion

Both Prejean's and Mailer's narratives inspire sympathy for their protagonists. Compassion for the culprit is present in popular reception rather than in law, although it is not entirely alien to legal proceedings. In an early episode of the popular television series *Law and Order*, an Assistant District Attorney expresses serious doubts regarding the severity of his actions against a mother who has been charged with killing her disabled son. Even though the law prescribes harsh measures, he considers leniency in this extremely emotional case. "You can't let the sympathy for the defendant distort your primary responsibility,"[18] he hears from his superior ("Endurance"). The phrases "my responsibility is to the victim" and "I speak for the victim" are used many times throughout the entire series. These declarations reaffirm a well-established view: the law takes the victim's side. From the victim's point of view, whose absence in the courtroom speaks volumes, killing their monstrous killers seems fair. Therefore, the public are ready to accept the logic.

Identifying with the victims agrees with one's sense of moral superiority over the offender. Renouncing his/her dark side, a person declares himself/herself nothing like the monster. From such a stance, there is only one step towards a kind of self-righteousness that broadens the gap between the abstraction of the social contract logic and the reality of an offender's personal narrative. Therefore, to pass a fair judgement, one should rather acknowledge the dark side as an integral part of humanity than reject it as alien to human kind. Camus writes in "Reflections on the Guillotine" that "[there] is a solidarity of all men in error and aberration … and if justice has any meaning in this world, it means nothing but the recognition of that solidarity; it cannot, by its very essence, divorce itself from compassion" (166). Camus further advocates for allowing compassion in law. He argues that it is only by recognizing the weakness of men that one can bring back the meaning into the notion of justice, which is now a hollow concept, inapplicable in real life and thus signifying a system rather than the idea (133).

Stable But Not Still

However, the following question must be considered: does law offer any room for compassion? Indeed, the answer can be both yes and no, depending on one's approach. A careful scrutiny of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions reveals two opposed legal philosophies: strict constitutionalism and legal activism.[19] Dissenting in *Furman*, Chief Justice Warren

E. Burger writes: "Our constitutional inquiry … must be divorced from personal feelings … it is essential to our role as a court that we not seize upon the enigmatic character of the guarantee [of the Eighth Amendment] as an invitation to enact our personal predilections into law" (408 U.S. 238). A strict constitutionalist, Burger believed that the Constitution should be applied with judicial restraint and is critical of any attempts to broaden the application (alluding here to Justice Thurgood Marshall's judicial activism).

In *Furman*, Marshall holds the death penalty to be unconstitutional *per se* for a number of reasons, but his most striking argument comes at the end of a very long statement of opinion: "At a time in our history when the streets of the Nation's cities inspire fear and despair, rather than pride and hope, it is difficult to maintain objectivity and concern for our fellow citizens. But, the measure of a country's greatness is its ability to retain compassion in time of crisis" (408 U.S. 238). [20] Marshall writes about retaining—that is, upholding—the principle of compassion, or an inherent sense of kinship. Arguing that natural human instincts should have a voice in the criminal justice system, Marshall subscribes to the doctrine of natural law—recognizing the universal social nature of men.[21] He further affirms: "In striking down capital punishment, this Court does not malign our system of government. On the contrary, it pays homage to it … In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute. We achieve 'a major milestone in the long road up from barbarism'" (408 U.S. 238). Following the maxim: "Law must be stable, but it must not stand still," Marshall sees incorporating a non-legal rationale into the judicial review and legislation process as a manifestation of progress. [22] Sympathy neither distorts law's primary responsibility nor interferes with its stability; rather, it becomes the mark of a maturing society, the mark of improvement.

One may say that a similar fight between strict constitutionalism and judicial activism takes place within society every day. On the one hand, the obedience to law, drilled into men by a proper upbringing, constitutes an important part of their value systems. On the other hand, one cannot resist one's natural tendency to compassion. Thus sympathy softens the sharp picture of what constitutes right and wrong drawn by legal norms.

To conclude, the villain, understood in terms of the social contract, is virtually non-existent in personalized narrations like Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* and Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*. American Death Rows are inhabited by individuals whose fates are trapped by the insufficient, black-and-white logic of the criminal justice system: motivated by evil propensities, these individuals choose to violate the law and

to threaten public peace. Villains must be conceptualized as inhuman to justify their inhumane punishment. This becomes possible because capital criminals are not scrutinized in full; their "evil" sides are dramatically exposed while their human potential is conveniently omitted. This paper's epigraph from Justice Lewis F. Powell offers a voice in the discourse carried out by the judiciary who are reluctant to include compassion in their decisions and who seek their rationale in law or philosophy. The humanities, however, deal with general formulations of abstract constructs defined through binaries: evil is understood as the total absence of good inclinations. If applied to an individual narrative, this logic reveals only what the villain lacks. Capital offenders become a "personally ugly and socially unacceptable" by-product of making an ideal society.

In order to do justice to the condemned, sentiments like Powell's must be counterbalanced by an approach born out of compassion, brought about by a personal interaction with the condemned. Recognizing the social implications of her writing, Prejean writes in the introduction to *Dead Man Walking*: "There is much pain in these pages. There are, to begin with, crimes that defy description. There is ensuing rage, horror, grief and fierce ambivalence … I have been changed forever by the experiences" (xi).

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[1] Petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Earnest James Aikens, Amsterdam wrote: "[t]hose who are selected to die are the poor and powerless, personally ugly and socially unacceptable. In disproportionate percentages, they are also black" (qtd. in Steiker 263).

[2] Since its reinstatement in 1974, the percentage of Americans in favour of the death penalty continued to grow with its peak (eighty per cent in support) in September 1994 (http://www.gallup.com/poll/1606/death-penalty.aspx).

[3] The "War on Crime" was a policy launched in late 1960's by then-President Lyndon B. Johnson to improve crime control in the U.S. The initiative involved an increase in policing and penitentiary investments as well as in federal anti-crime legislation. Within twenty years, the "War on Crime" resulted in mass incarceration.

[4] *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* (1996), *The Paradise Lost: Revelations* (2000), *Paradise Lost: Purgatory* (2011) tell the story of a triple homicide committed on primary school boys in West Memphis, the investigation, the trial of three local teenagers, and its aftermath. Two of the accused, Jessie Misskelley and Jason Baldwin, were sentenced to life without parole, while the third, Damien Echols, received a death sentence. The charges were based on a false confession forced onto intellectually disabled Misskelley.

After fifteen years of incarceration they were released as the result of a procedural trick, which, though it allowed their freedom, let the state avoid taking the responsibility for the miscarriage of justice. The murders remain unsolved.

[5] *The Exonerated* includes first person narratives of six men who have been exonerated from the crimes that left them on Death Row, and combines their accounts with the trial records, thus providing the audience with an interesting clash of everyday language and legal jargon. The confrontation reveals how far legal theory has become abstracted and, as a result, inapplicable to particular cases.

[6] *Into the Abyss: A Tale of Life and Death* does not question the guilt of Jason Burkett and Michael Perry (the latter was executed within days after being interviewed by Herzog). The film equally features the law enforcement officers involved in the case, the relatives of the inmates, and their victims' families, questioning in general the moral base of the American capital system.

[7] *Death Row Stories* by Alex Gibney and Robert Redford, aired on CNN, has run for two seasons so far. Each episode tells a true story of a capital trial in which the guilt of the condemned has been questioned. Some of the death row inmates featured have been exonerated, but many still await their executions. The show focuses on overzealous prosecutors and legal procedural details, working to cast doubt on the whole American capital system.

[8] *c.f*: *At the Death House Door: No Man Should Die Alone* (2002) by Steve James and Peter Gilbert, a U.S. documentary following Carroll Pickett, a Death House chaplain at Huntsville, Texas. Pickett served at over ninety executions. His book *Within These Walls: Memoirs of a Death House Chaplain* (2002) is another example of writing from which a more humane portrait of convicts emerges. Likewise, the 2015 Netflix documentary series *Making a Murderer*, by Laura Ricciardi and Moira Demos, focuses on the Wisconsin case of Steven Avery's false imprisonment for sexual assault, his release after eighteen years, and finally his charges and conviction for murder. Avery is depicted as an outcast of the local community, lost in the procedural maze of the criminal justice system and misjudged by society. The series convincingly argues that Avery was framed for the murder of Teresa Halbach by both the local police and the prosecution.

[9] In an article from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* titled "The Nature of Law," Andrei Marmor explains the difference between *natural law* and *positive law*. *Natural law* is determined by human inclination to live in society. In the view of natural lawyers, morality can be both the source of natural law and the condition for its validity (Marmor n.p.). Here, one can see how Christian ethics (since these are Christian faiths which lay at the foundations of

Western civilisation) intersect with law. John Locke, for instance, holds morality to actually be natural law. In the *positive law* tradition, certain conditions of the validity must be met if a norm is to become law. A norm can only become law based not on its merits but depending on its source, namely on the sovereign decision (Marmor n.p.).

[10] *United States v. Sickles* was a murder case tried in the District of Columbia in 1859.

[11] The full quote by Rousseau reads as follows:

> [E]very malefactor, by attacking social rights, becomes on forfeit a rebel and a traitor to his country; by violating its laws he ceases to be a member of it; he even makes war upon it. In such a case the preservation of the State is inconsistent with his own, and one or the other must perish; in putting the guilty to death, we slay not so much the citizen as an enemy. The trial and the judgment are the proofs that he has broken the social treaty, and is in consequence no longer a member of the State. Since, then, he has recognised himself to be such by living there, he must be removed by exile as a violator of the compact, or by death as a public enemy; for such an enemy is not a moral person, but merely a man; and in such a case the right of war is to kill the vanquished (26).

[12] In the process of character development, evil may, but does not have to, dominate an individual's mindset, but when it invades an agent's character, then it corrupts the agent as a whole.

[13] Homicide (*homicidium*), in Kant's view, is a killing without evil intent. As an example of homicide, Kant offers a maternal infanticide committed in order to defend the mother's honour.

[14] FindLaw.com explains the term of First Degree Murder in the following way: "In most States, First Degree Murder is defined as an unlawful killing that is both wilful and premeditated, meaning that it was committed after planning or 'lying in wait' for the victim" (n.p.). The prosecution must prove the specific intent to end a human life. Deliberation and premeditation is determined on a case-by-case basis. It involves presenting the jury with a proof that the defendant had a conscious intent to kill which he or she then contemplated ahead of the killing and acted on it" (n.p.).

[15] Theodore Robert Bundy is perhaps America's most infamous serial killer. He was electrocuted by the state of Florida in 1989.

[16] Elmo Patrick Sonnier was sentenced to death for a crime he committed with his younger brother, Eddie James—the killing of a couple of teenagers, Loretta Ann Bourgue (18) and David LeBlanc (17), in 1977, in St. Martin's Parish, Louisiana. The couple was kidnapped, Borgue was raped by both brothers, and Leblanc was handcuffed

to a tree. Then the teenagers were forced to lay face down and shot at close range, three times each, at the back of the head from a .22-caliber rifle.

The brothers were convicted of the murders in 1978 and sentenced to death, however the sentence was overruled in appeal and new sentence hearings were scheduled. At this point, Eddie James Sonnier claimed that he had committed the murders. Under the Louisiana capital statute only the person who actually did the killings can be sentenced to death. The prosecution in this case claimed that Eddie's confession was a smoke screen aimed to cast doubts as to Patrick's guilt by offering an alternative version of the crime. Patrick was older, and the prosecution argued that he was the decider in the crime. Eddie's testimony was successfully challenged by the prosecution and Patrick was sentenced to death for the second time, while Eddie received a life sentence. He died in Angola State Penitentiary in 2014. Patrick was electrocuted in Louisiana State Penitentiary in 1984.

[17] Gary Mark Gilmore was paroled from a maximum-security federal prison in Marion, Illinois, to the custody of his family in Provo, Utah. In June 1976, about four months after his release, Gilmore robbed a secluded gas station in nearby Orem, Utah, and shot its employee, Max Jensen. The day after, he robbed a motel in Provo and shot the manager, Bennie Bushnell. Both killings were committed in a similar way: the victims, after handing money over to Gilmore, were forced to lay face down with their arms under their body and shot point-blank at the back of the head. Jensen was shot twice, Bushnell once; he was still alive when his wife found him. The police had difficulties linking Gilmore to the Jensen's murder. Therefore, he was tried for the second crime alone and sentenced to death in Provo, in October 1976. Gilmore was executed by the firing squad in January 1977. He was the first person executed in the U.S. after a nearly ten-year moratorium on the death penalty.

[18] The prosecutor's primary responsibility is bringing the offender to justice and making them pay for the crime. In a capital case, which is aggravated by its very nature, the punishment must be uniquely severe to counterbalance the crime. Retribution is a goal admitted even by the U.S. Supreme Court Justices: "The instinct for retribution is part of the nature of men, and channelling that instinct in the administration of capital justice serves an important purpose in promoting the stability of a society governed by law," writes Justice Potter Steward in *Furman* (406 U.S. 238).

[19] Strict constitutionalists recommend a literal reading of the Constitution, oriented with intent to discover its original meaning and to apply that meaning in contemporary ruling. The judges base their decision on legal rationale alone, rather applying the law than interpreting it. By contrast, judicial

activism is making judicial decisions based on one's religious, social or political considerations. Judicial activists are believed to decide cases before hearing arguments and to look for legal rationale in order to justify the ruling.

[20] Marshall was the only then-incumbent Justice with the defence attorney experience. Before his Supreme Court appointment, he had worked for NAACP Legal Defense Found and had litigated in many capital cases.

[21] See also Daniel Chernilo's *The Natural Law Foundations of Modern Social Theory: A Quest for Universalism* (2013), in particular Part Two "Natural Law" wherein the author reflects on Rousseau's theory of natural law. Rousseau claims that human behaviour is influenced by two instincts pointing us in opposite directions: self-interest and compassion. The latter is crucial, its goal being "'[m]oderating the activity of love of self in which individual, contribut[ing] to the preservation of the whole species . . . it is this which in a state of nature supplies the place of laws, morals, and virtues, with the advantage that none are tempted to disobey its gentle voice'" (qtd. in Chernilo 113).

[22] Attributed to Roscoe Pound (1870-1964).

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Archetype, Fantasy, and Vital Outrage:
A Conversation with Sarah Marshall

Sarah Marshall* and Meghan O'Hara**

Editor's note: this interview took place through an email exchange between Meghan O'Hara and Sarah Marshall from May 16th, 2016, to July 29th, 2016.

To: Sarah Marshall
From: Meghan O'Hara
Subject: Interview questions

Hi Sarah,

Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this email exchange with me.

Justyna's paper points to opposing cultural and social desires: on the one hand, we want to demonize capital criminals in order to justify their treatment by the justice system, and on the other hand, we seek out and consume stories which re-humanize them. Why are we, as consumers, so ready to accept the idea of the capital criminal as monster, while at the same time we voraciously read/watch narratives which rehumanize these same figures? I'm fascinated by the temporality of this—first, we're willing to buy into the (often media produced) image of the criminal as inhuman and/or monstrous, and it is only *after* that point that we're willing to potentially recognize the criminal's humanity? I'm also particularly interested in the form and the immense popularity of these re-humanizing narratives. I'm speaking here specifically of the more recent examples like Laura Ricciardi and Moira Demos' Netflix series *Making a Murderer* (2015), but also documentaries like Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's *Paradise*

**Sarah Marshall spent the summer of 2016 interning with the Georgia Innocence Project and deciding whether or not to apply to law school. The answer was "not." She is currently trying to figure out what else "not" entails.*
***Meghan O'Hara is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English and Writing Studies at Western University, where she researches contemporary performance practice and affect theory. She is also Managing Operations Editor at Word Hoard.*

Lost trilogy (as well as Amy J. Berg's *West of Memphis* [2012]), Werner Herzog's *Into the Abyss* (2012), or Errol Morris's *Thin Blue Line* (1988). What do you think fuels the public's interest in such narratives? Speaking specifically about *Making a Murderer,* what do you think is behind viewers' urges to not only watch the series, but also to become actively involved (via online petitions, or developing fan theories, etc.) in the case it presents?

Looking forward to hearing what you think!

Best,
Meghan

To: Meghan O'Hara
From: Sarah Marshall
Subject: RE: Interview questions

Dear Meghan,

I think—or at least, I like to think—that the combination of narratives that Justyna's paper reflects may come from a sea change in our cultural approaches to crime. To some degree, this has to do with our growing understanding that the American criminal justice system is marred not just by occasional mistakes, but also by grave, fundamental flaws. Most of the re-humanizing narratives you mention—*Making a Murderer, Paradise Lost, The Thin Blue Line*—focus, at least in part, on the stories of men who were convicted of crimes that they did not commit.

I think we are beginning to countenance the fact that our legal system is capable of depriving the innocent of their liberty, and sometimes of their lives, and I think this growing awareness may come, in part, from our increasing mainstream awareness not just of the subjectivity of criminal trials, but of police brutality. All of the central figures in the above narratives are white, but it seems as if white America's growing awareness of wrongful convictions like the ones depicted above has, to an extent, gone hand in hand with its growing comprehension of the police brutality endured by people of color.

I wonder whether Americans' ability to challenge the validity, the *justness,* of one element of the criminal justice system has allowed us to regard the entire system more critically, to entertain greater doubts, and even to feel more willing to maintain the presumption of innocence when we learn the details of a given case. When we take in a narrative as devastating as *Making a Murderer,* our ability to effect change in what small, workaday way we can—by voting, by writing to an elected official, by signing a petition—could and should remain dwarfed by our desire for greater change. Regarding the world around us more critically, and continuing to educate ourselves and each other as opportunity allows, is one way of keeping this spark

alive. Our desire to know more is, whether we know it or not, a desire to become better citizens, and better actors in our legal system, no matter how small those roles may be.

Looking forward to continuing our conversation, and all my best,
Sarah

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To: Sarah Marshall
From: Meghan O'Hara
Subject: RE: RE: Interview questions

Hi Sarah,

I think you're absolutely right to point to a rise in mainstream public criticism of the ways that the legal system often operates. However, I'd also like to dwell briefly on the public's role in what comes before the redemption stories—that is to say, the crimes, trials, and convictions. A common theme among these narratives (I'm again thinking specifically here of *Paradise Lost* or *Making a Murderer)* is the demonization of the suspect or criminal in the court of public opinion immediately following the crime, during the trial, or both. In the *Paradise Lost* trilogy, for example, much of the public's support for the suspects (Jessie Misskelley, Damien Echols, and Jason Baldwin) to be found guilty and receive sentences of life in prison or even death is the result of the characterization of the three young men as Satanists—a particularly damning depiction in their Evangelical Christian town. Similarly, in *Making a Murderer,* Steven Avery's earlier wrongful conviction, particularly because of its sexual nature, seems to cast him as already deviant in the eyes of the public before he is even tried for Teresa Halbach's murder. For me, these examples demonstrate a readiness (perhaps even an eagerness) to accept and consume the image of the suspect or criminal as "monstrous." I'm fascinated, then, by the turn towards re-humanizing narratives in the extended aftermath of a crime: the degree of sympathy demanded by such narratives seems equal to the amount of hatred or fear incited by the original "monstrous" image. As such, I wonder: must these two characterizations (of the monstrous and the human) exist in some sort of cultural symbiosis? Must narratives—and I use this term broadly here so as to include news media—create monsters for us to fear so that we might subsequently consume with equal voraciousness other narratives, which not only seek to question and reduce that fear, but also to grant us the opportunity to actively dismantle the image we once (perhaps) bought into?

Best,
Meghan

To: Meghan O'Hara
From: Sarah Marshall
Subject: RE: RE: RE: Interview questions

I'm fascinated by this question, because it suggests a generative approach to what I see as a broad cultural trend: the criminal justice narrative as a hero's journey. Simply put, the only thing more troubling than the realization that we impose plots on criminal trials is the fact that they often end up with pretty much the same plot as *Jaws,* or any other similar parable of masculinity: there is a force of evil, and there is a good man who must destroy it. The man either proves or attains his goodness through the destruction of an evil force, which may or may not take human form. How else but by destroying evil can goodness prove itself? these stories ask. And perhaps they ask, also: how can goodness *exist* without evil to throw it into counterpoint?

I love the way this philosophy manifests in fictional crime narratives about the hero who gets *too close* to the evil it is his job to combat, and who may even begin to empathize with its bearer. (It's hard to think of a more consistent use of this trope than in Thomas Harris' and eventually Bryan Fuller's saga of Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter.) The underlying assumption here is that evil is contagious, and that we must only get close to these specimens in order to destroy them.

How, then, do these dynamics map onto narratives in which we feel we are able to communally rescue an exoneree from the vilified archetype he has been cast as, and which has previously cloaked his humanity? I think our interest in not just disassembling but examining these archetypal forms suggests a more enduring interest in the forms themselves—that we may suspect they are overly simplistic not just when they shroud the innocent, but when we apply them to any human being, no matter how grave their offenses may be. If we see how much potential a figure like Damien Echols had and has to be read as the epitome of soullessness or the epitome of victimhood, we may realize how arbitrary the shape of any narrative's villain truly is, and see that this is an archetype that can only exist in the fables we distill from reality, but not within reality itself.

My best,
Sarah

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To: Sarah Marshall
From: Meghan O'Hara
Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: Interview questions

I'm really interested in your reading of the way that narrative and archetype can define how we understand and therefore

react to criminality. I wonder if, in light of recent events—the killings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, as well as the numerous other tragically similar cases in recent years—we might return to your earlier point about the racial identities of those typically involved in mainstream redemption stories. Quite problematically, in the examples we've cited, the re-humanized criminal is white. Lately, I've been thinking about how narratives of villainy or criminality are not just called into being as a crime is committed or prosecuted, but also exist in advance of any one individual or event. Could you reflect on the pre-existence of the archetypes you've spoken about? I'd also be interested in discussing how archetypes define the notion of threat—in what ways are these social narratives connected to our affects, even on an individual level? I ask because the perception of threat seems intimately linked to what we've been discussing: narratives define interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions by labelling certain bodies as threatening, and defining which lives "matter," or to borrow Judith Butler's term, are "grievable." Can the narrative of progress towards redemption and goodness which is so popular in the mainstream be equally possible for all members of our society? Are there alternative forms (such as, perhaps, the occupation of public space for protest)? How might we also understand the videos documenting these killings and their circulation (in the media, online) in terms of narratives of identity and justice?

Best,
Meghan

To: Meghan O'Hara
From: Sarah Marshall
Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Interview questions

I recently wrote a piece reconsidering the mythos of Ted Bundy, trying to interrogate just *what,* exactly, made his crimes such a communal robbing of innocence, and why he is now a kind of American true crime icon—the greatest American serial killer.

I think part of this had to do with the fact that, during the mid-seventies, when he was at large, the term "serial killer" hadn't yet made its way into everyday parlance, and for this reason his crimes seemed not just shocking, but *new.* We embraced the idea that Bundy, and the other serial killers whose crimes followed his (ignoring those that had preceded him and doubtless gone unnoticed in large part because investigative techniques yet sophisticated enough to detect them), were examples of some new evolutionary trend—the emergence of a psychopathic strain of humanity.

The myths about Bundy's brilliance suggest that we took a strange kind of comfort in this story. It meant that humans were

getting ruthless and reptilian, but it also meant we were getting *smarter.* Most disturbing of all though, I think, is how our attraction to the image of the brilliant psychopath (even when is he depicted as anything but brilliant) suggests that we think such behavior implies not disability, but strength. Does this mean we believe, on some level, that we would be better off if we could be cut loose from the demands of empathy and love, and become completely self-serving?

I think this is a fantasy we do indulge in from time to time, if not on an individual level then certainly through our broader cultural trends. And it's easy to see why. There is nothing more difficult or demanding than forming meaningful relationships with those around us. There is nothing more complex than growing and nourishing our secure attachments with the people we love. There is nothing more potentially wrenching than forming these attachments, because loving means risking loss, pain, and heartbreak. There is, I think, simply nothing more painful than living in the world in an emotionally present way—especially when doing so means waking up, looking at a video of a fellow human being breathing their last because they have been shot without provocation, and thinking: *this is the world I live in.*

The depth of the pain we must countenance in times like these—and at every time, if we're going to be honest—makes the fantasy we engage in so we can distance ourselves from this pain somewhat comprehensible, though not acceptable. Internalized racism, even of the most quiet and insidious variety, allows white citizens to look at the deaths of people of color and say, *this person died because they did something wrong.* It's an immensely destructive logic. It's an unacceptable response. But it's also worth noting that it effectively saves the observer from acknowledging something deeply painful not just about their nation or their culture, but about the world they live in: *an innocent person has been murdered.*

Not just one or two people but countless people are dying, not because they have done anything wrong, but because Americans live in a country that, on an essential level, does not value or protect citizens of color. We have to accept this. But if we wish to shield ourselves from the intrinsic pain of this awareness, we have a wealth of racist fantasy with which to protect ourselves. I can't entirely blame someone who shields themselves with this fantasy: I can hold them accountable, I can sit with them and try to bring them to a place from which they are ready to see the truth, but I can't say that the method they are using to comfort themselves isn't one I have never used in the past. I am ashamed of this fact, and I remind myself of it daily. For me, this is part of doing the work it takes to remind yourself that empathy is not a knee-jerk reaction, and that our prejudices can

inform our instincts far more powerfully than our higher natures. It takes daily care and effort to be emotionally present within this world. It is a painful endeavor. It makes us vulnerable. But it also makes us strong.

When people talk about Ted Bundy, they tend to fall back on the term "middle-class"*:* e.g., how could anyone so *middle-class* commit such terrible crimes? (See also: Jeffrey Dahmer, Paul Bernardo, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, to name just a very few.) What we're often really saying, I think, is *white:* how could a *white* man do these things, when our culture teaches us that white men are not needlessly violent, and that white women cannot expect to be the victims of violence unless they have done something wrong?

Ted Bundy was so fascinating to us because he broke this social contract. He enacted his violence on "grievable" victims who had done nothing "wrong" (e.g. had not been demonstrably independent, rebellious, flirty, aimless, "promiscuous," or poor). He also showed us that white patriarchal masculinity contains a tremendous potential for violence: he grew up in a society that taught men to see women as possessions. He was a sick man whose mental illness led him to take the logic of a sick society to its extreme. By insisting that he was a "psychopath"—a breed apart, a brilliant killing machine, intrinsically separate not just from American society but from the human race—we allow ourselves to ignore how much his crimes can tell us about ourselves.

—Sarah

• • •

To: Sarah Marshall
From: Meghan O'Hara
Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Interview questions

You mention the "fantasies" which often work to sustain our blissful ignorance towards the world around us, and I'd like to close our interview by discussing the impact of these fantasies. One of the things that troubles me about viewers' participation in the wake of *Making a Murderer* is the amount of fantasy involved: the viral nature of the documentary series calls spectators to share and discuss with friends, to post about it on social media, both of which perform one's identity as a critically thinking, socially-minded, and generally aware member of society. While I agree with your earlier point that public awareness about the injustices of the criminal system is generally a good thing, I'm a bit skeptical about the value of this public response to the documentary. Yes, there was a widely supported petition to the White House (which garnered enough signatures to earn an official response from the government), but this attempt at activism was largely

misguided considering the White House is neither responsible for nor capable of pardoning Stephen Avery or Brendan Dassey. Further, while it's true that the show's popularity has resulted in Avery finding a new lawyer for his case, who plans to begin the appeal process, this development is more related to the content of the documentary, rather than the strength of fan response. I offer this largescale, popularized fan participation in comparison to Black Lives Matter, whose activism and calls for justice have not achieved the level of acceptance or support that Avery's case has (for instance, here in Canada, Black Lives Matter's choice to protest at the recent Toronto Pride Parade [a protest which successfully instigated a conversation between Pride organizers and Black Lives Matter activists] was subject to a barrage of popular criticism). Is there some form of fantasy at work here which allows spectators participating through largely passive means to imagine themselves effecting material change? What is behind the resistance to in-person forms of activism, such as protests? (I recognize here that there were several public protests re: *Making a Murderer*, but these were relatively small in comparison to the online response).

Best,
Meghan

To: Meghan O'Hara
From: Sarah Marshall
Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Interview questions

I've been thinking about these questions a great deal lately, as I've been interning with the Georgia Innocence Project (GIP), and one of our clients, Joey Watkins, has become the subject of the *Undisclosed* podcast's second season. The podcast has already inspired a healthy fan following, and a healthy amount of outrage on Joey's behalf: like Adnan Syed, he was convicted of a murder he denied and still denies having anything to do with, on the basis not of any physical evidence but of an unreliable witness' incentivized testimony[1]. A great many of the show's fans believe he is innocent. The GIP believes he is innocent. I believe he is innocent. And right now, the best case scenario is that this podcast will garner enough public support—and put enough pressure on Floyd County, Georgia, where Joey was convicted—to help exonerate him.

Of course it's impossible to overstate how wonderful this would be. But even this best-case scenario would, for the most part, lead to a false sense of catharsis, of accomplishment, of rebalancing the scales of justice: if we see Joey's case as an anomaly, the exception that proves the rule that the criminal justice system generally works, then we can comfortably

move on from his story if it reaches a positive conclusion. If it doesn't, then supporters can continue to labour on his behalf, even if their labour takes the forms you've described, which usually benefit the consumers of a narrative far more than they benefit the people it concerns: the petitions, the postings on social media, the general sense of outrage.

I'm interested, generally, in what "outrage" does, or feels like it does. This has been a terrible, bloody summer. We open Facebook and witness homicide. "Streaming video" has new connotations: you scroll down your feed and see footage, perhaps surging into motion without your pressing play, of Philando Castile bleeding to death. So blood streams out of our screens and into our lives; images we may never have encountered just a few years ago now stream into our consciousness, and we must decide what to do with them.

All of this makes me think of the medieval practice of bloodletting—of loosing blood from the body to balance the humors, to correct what doctors of the time deemed to be a malady stemming from blood overwhelming black bile or phlegm. When tragedy strikes, we want to give blood both literally and figuratively: we want to experience pain, drain ourselves of our body's strength and give it to someone in need, or provide some less tangible outpouring of care in the form of a chant, a march, a Facebook post. In the wake of disaster, blood banks can find themselves overwhelmed with blood they simply cannot use, because the public's need to comfort themselves is greater than the use their act of altruistic self-comfort can provide: notoriously, blood banks were forced to discard the surplus blood they collected, but were unable to store, after September 11th. At the same time, those who donate in times like these are subsequently less likely to donate during annual drives, since they may be unable to donate again, or less motivated to give, as they feel they have already done their part. So blood banks cope first with an unusable surplus, and then with a deficit.

I think our outrage is vital, but it can run the risk of doing more for us than for the people on whose behalf we experience it. Sometimes the blood we give can go to someone who needs it. Sometimes our outrage is constructive. But sometimes the blood we give is less a donation than a bloodletting: we are left with a sense of fear and anger that it hurts to contain, and so we loose it on the world and hope it does some good. Maybe it does. Maybe it doesn't. But the point for us, sometimes, is that we don't have to hold onto it anymore; that our outrage may not have helped someone else find freedom, but has certainly made us feel free.

What I want to bring this back around to—what I find myself thinking about every day in terms of how I relate to tragedy and injustice, because sometimes

I'm able to do this, and sometimes I'm not—is what it means to sit with this outrage, this pain. When I think about Joey's case, I am outraged. When I think about the fact that Joey may someday be out of prison, I am hopeful. But this is just one story among countless stories—countless because we simply don't know how many wrongful convictions take place in America, because we don't have the resources to gain access to that kind of information, let alone to exonerate the innocent.

What we do know is that Joey Watkins was convicted because of issues that plague the legal system not just in Floyd County, and not just in Georgia, but throughout America. Prosecutors in every part of our country make use of incentivized testimony if it supports a theory they believe. Defendants in every part of this country are represented by poorly prepared and, at times, incompetent counsel. Juries in every part of this country are all too likely to convict on the basis not of evidence that demonstrates a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, but because the defendant *just seems like* they did it. Trials in every part of this country pay lip service to the presumption of innocence, but most citizens and all too many members of the legal community treat it as nothing more than words, no more valuable than the breath it takes to say them.

Joey's story points to a much bigger set of problems than his conviction alone, and the discomfort it engenders in us—the discomfort any story engenders in us—discomfort we must sit with and try to understand. We have move beyond the question of *how did this happen?* and ask *how often does this happen?* And then, perhaps the most difficult question of all, because it deprives us of easy answers not just about the world but about ourselves: *what can I do that will help the world more than it helps me?*

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[1] Please see: http://www.innocenceproject.org/causes/incentivized-informants/.

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Gutless

Bridget Canning*

The church has one of those billboards with the changeable letters for posting platitudes. I read it out to Jerry as we pass.

"You know that little voice inside, that gut feeling? Listen to it. God finds ways to speak."

Jerry stares straight ahead in the passenger seat.

"Interesting thought," I say. "Kind of misguided, though."

I turn down the volume a touch so I can focus on what I mean.

"The stomach is a bag of nerves," I say. "More so than the brain. I read an article about it. Gut feelings are caused by microbes. They give emotional cues that structure the brain. These scientists did MRI scans comparing gut bacteria to brain behaviour. When they switched the gut bacteria of anxious mice and fearless mice, their behaviour changed. Pretty cool."

I hit the indicator. Across town to the overpass to the Trans Canada Highway, the bypass road is the first exit. The turn signal sounds like a thumb popping a lid.

"The ancient Egyptians were in touch with that. When they mummified a body, they would take out the internal organs and put them in clay jars, for the dead person to have in the next life. But the brain, they hooked that out through the nose. They thought the brain was just for balance. Understanding and thinking, that happened in the belly."

Jerry inspects the weather. It will be dark soon. We've had three straight days of monochrome, overcast sky. At the end of each day, it fades straight from grey to black.

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"Might rain soon."

We've been driving all day. I can drive for five hours without stopping, but today I take a break every two hours. Too much to do; I need to have my wits about me.

"I used to get nervous about driving in the rain," I say. "Especially when it was foggy. The fog blankets slick surfaces; you can't see how slippery the road is. When it rained, every hydroplaning story I knew would come to mind. I'd check the forecast; if I saw that grey cloud icon, my tummy would curdle."

We cross the overpass. Not many cars on the road. Grey days mean stay inside and get things done. Or do nothing. No guilt 'cause you didn't get off the couch and make the most of nice weather.

"One time, I called in sick for work because I didn't want to drive in the freezing rain," I say. "Back when I was driving back and forth to Bull Arm. I felt guilty about that though. Using up a sick day."

The GPS tells me to take the next exit to the bypass road. It will be a half-hour drive from there. Things are on schedule.

"But that job was stressful," I say. "And Max made everything worse." Jerry's lips jut out, parallel to the brim of his cap. His profile like the edge of a cliff, a place to ponder the situation with his own tumultuous innards.

"Max. What a little brute. Short guy, but built like a bucket. You have to watch the short guys; they have the most to prove."

Jerry's face is blank, but tender.

"No offense, Jer. And Max was one of those guys who love to make you uncomfortable. Like, he would fart just to gross you out. You'd be in an elevator with him and see his face screw up, like he was concentrating. That was him, trying to fart. People made excuses for him, said he was trying to be funny. But I think he got off on causing discomfort."

I shift in my seat at the thought of Max. The seatbelt against my scar makes it itch. I work my hand under my sweater and rub the puckered flesh. I don't like to scratch it directly. The skin feels too new.

"He gave me a bad vibe from the start. On my first shift with him, I had on a t-shirt from a concert: The Shins. He had never heard of them. 'What's that?' he said. 'Besides a good place to hit you.' He mimed cracking me in the shin. He did the same thing every time I walked passed him;

he'd swing at my legs with his welding gun: 'Here comes the shins.' I joked that it was a good thing I didn't wear a Hole t-shirt. He didn't get that. Guess he never heard of that band.

If the boss wasn't around, Max told stories. He wore camouflage gear a lot; he said it was so he could sneak up on pussy. He joked that when he lived in the trade school residence, he threw a woman out in the hallway after he was done with her. He didn't even give her time to dress: tossed her clothes out after her and locked the door."

The Department of Highways has been busy, judging by the state of the by-pass road. The foliage is cut back along the sides of the pavement. Ravaged dirt and tree stumps pepper the arch of the ditch leading to the trees. Makes me think of my scar, the torn up strip. Mostly healed, but I still get tingles from time to time, the invisible openings and closings, settling cellular connections.

"Max bragged about nights downtown with his buddies. The time they got thrown out of this bar. The time they ran out of that bar without paying the tab. The times they found a solitary guy and chased him. 'Herding faggots,' he called it.

First, I thought it was him bullshitting, but I heard stories over time. Someone said, when he was younger, he got kicked out of residence 'cause he shaved a cat and fed it LSD. And later, he stalked an ex-girlfriend and she had to get a restraining order. He messed up the car of a guy she was friends with by burning thermite through the hood of his car. Used a magnesium ribbon and a blow torch from the site."

A car approaches in the opposite lane; its headlights flashes, once, twice, three times. Warning signals. Maybe cops or a moose. I tap the brake lightly. It's nice that other drivers give you a heads-up. But there's the awareness of being seen.

"Then he brought Julia to the staff Christmas party. I remember feeling sorry for her. She had this hair hung in these long thin wisps down her shoulders. Just the ghost of hair, really. And she had a bug-eyed look about her, like she was on the alert. When Max was talking, she stood still, like a statue. Like any movement from her meant taking attention from him.

That summer, she almost burned their house down because of Max's hockey card collection. He was drinking outside with his buddies, beers out of a cooler. He dragged out his collection to show off: his signed Guy Lafleur, Brett Hull. The next morning, Julia went out to clean up and

the hockey cards were at the bottom of the cooler, soaked in the melted ice water.

Even though it was his fault, she knew he'd find a way to get angry at her. So she took the cards into the house and lay them out, trying to dry them. They were starting to curl on the edges. She took heavy books off the shelf and put the cards inside, so they would stay flat. Then, she turned on the oven and put the books on the racks. In her mind, this would dry them out."

Something large and dark in the ditch. I pump the brake; Jerry sways forward and back, slow and silent. We inch along. The large bulbous head of a cow moose lifts and stares at us. She stands in the ditch about three feet from the road. Cutting the underbrush back was a good idea on the Department of Highways' part.

We glide by. A brown flicker on the left. The calf bounds onto the road, heading for Mom. I watch him in the rear view mirror; he stops at the yellow line, the mother clamours up to meet him. They nuzzle each other, brown silhouettes against grey.

"Max complained about Julia afterwards. 'That bitch is a real dummy,' he said. But I understand why she did it. That's what happens when you're scared. You can't think straight. You'll do anything to not feel scared. I started feeling that way about Max. It got to a point that if I knew he was on my shift that day, I could hardly eat my breakfast. Belly seized up at the thought of him; I'd choke trying to get cereal down. He drove a silver Dodge Ram with oversized tires. The bumper stick read *let's play carpenter. First we get hammered, then I nail you*. Seeing it in the parking lot gave me instant gut rot.

But this is what I mean. These physical triggers, their purpose is to reinforce the reality of fear and shame. Love pangs and anxiety flutters, nervous diarrhea even, we've evolved so that they serve a purpose. You might wonder what happens when they go away."

The light is fading. I press the gas. The brown shapes shrink behind us. Ten minutes, the GPS says. Lots of time.

"And then it started. Twinges of discomfort while swallowing. At first I blamed it on stress. But Dad had the cancer. Uncle Rob had the cancer. The endoscope was hell; doctor had to knock me out with drugs to get it down my throat. The whole stomach has to come out, he said. Full gastrectomy. And when they took my stomach out and studied it, they found sixty-one precancerous lesions. Waiting to pounce.

It was hard to eat for months. Nowhere for the food to go. Tiny bites. If I

swallowed too fast, it came up. A bite of cake hit the bloodstream immediately. Instant queasiness all over." My hands clench the wheel at the thought.

"And disability paid shit. When I went back to work, they had to find something for me to do. They got me to do presentations: Occupational Health and Safety for new hires. I told myself public speaking would be scary. But it didn't happen. When my stomach was present, I would have hid in the bathroom, taking deep breaths and releasing everything that bubbles up with nerves. But no stomach, so I felt nothing. First time I ever spoke in public with dry hands."

A car approaches: a red hatchback. I glance at Jerry. The frayed edges of his hair are starting to curl up, like shiny black spider legs. Looks itchy.

"When I accidentally shoplifted the first time, I realized the possibilities. A pack of gum at the bottom of the basket; I forgot to put it on the counter. I shoved it in my back pocket and left. The gutful version of myself would have gone back and paid, apologized."

It's dark enough now for headlights. Best to keep them on until the turnoff. Where there are two moose, there are many.

"It started gradually. I was on a budget; it was hard to go from a solid paycheque to the sixty percent disability threw at me. And no stomach meant a new approach to eating. Big meals became a waste of time; I'd eat three bites and be full. I'd reheat the plate over and over, eating the same supper all night. Drinking plain water made me feel raw and chafed inside. The nutritionist said it wasn't a good idea anyway: filling up on no calories. And I had to maintain my weight. Thirty-five pounds gone in the first four months. I needed new clothes. I needed to find ways to eat more. I stood in an aisle at Sobey's with a different protein drink in each hand, trying to decide which one to buy and I just slipped them into my pockets. I paid for my other things at the cash: deodorant, raw almonds, yogurt. No one noticed. I waited for those fingers of worry to poke me from inside, but nothing. A couple of ghostly sensations. Nerve endings had turned to cobwebs. I thanked the cashier. She put the change right into my hand."

The first raindrops hit the windshield. We'll be there in five minutes. If it rains all night, it may prove complicated. But I have enough supplies.

"At first, the stealing happened in pairs like that. I'd be trying to decide between two products: rechargeable batteries, light bulbs, vitamin pills. The thought

of returning one—remembering to keep the receipt, driving back to the store, finding a parking spot—what a pain. I just took them both. Then I always had extra stuff, so I gave it away. Dean caught on pretty fast to what I was doing. He usually came by once a week to play cards, so I'd offer things to him. I'd try to trade it for weed.

Dean knew a guy who bought stolen stuff; he ran one of those 'outlet' markets. He showed me how to make those bags with the foil lining that could fool the scanner. It was great for razor refills. Those things are marked up at least 200%. I'd go to a drug store and fill the bag when the aisle was empty. I would never consider doing that before; I'd be too nervous."

We're getting close. I won't be able to stretch or piss once we turn off the road. Best to pull over for a minute. The grey of the sky deepens in its last attempts at light. Rain spits on the pavement. I relieve myself in the woods and do a few lunges. Jerry's stillness rings with anticipation. I get back in the car.

"Where was I?" I say. "Oh yes. The stealing. It went on for months before I got caught. I was real cocky that day; I left the store and went to another part of the mall to go to the bathroom. Julia was there when I came out of the toilet. I had no idea she was store manager. Waiting with her arms folded: she wasn't a rigid ghost anymore, she was this fierce little woman with a crew cut and a Wal-Mart jersey.

But I was lucky with her. She pulled out her cell phone to call the cops. And I asked her to let me have a cup of coffee first. That's another thing; I wouldn't be that bold if my stomach was full of fear. We sat in the Tim Horton's and I sipped my double-double slow. Figured I'd talk to her until I got an idea." I smile at Jerry. "It's amazing when you just meet someone and you realize you have so much in common. And she manages the whole store. Access to all the supplies. And more."

The turnoff is hard to see in the dark. Good thing the GPS gives us lots of notice. I mute it and turn off the headlights as we creep up the drive. The silver Dodge Ram is parked in front, just like Julia said it would be. Nasal twangs of new country music reverberate from the house. I let the car glide past and park by some trees.

"Julia knew where to get the ingredients for thermite. We googled how it worked. There are videos for everything now. Julia also knew how to be creative. 'Why not?' I said to her. Why not indeed?"

The rain ends quickly. When the music stops and the lights go out, I get Jerry out of the car. Dealing with Jerry is pretty

awkward. With everything inside him, he's top-heavy while his legs swing like a ragdoll's. But I get him over the fence. The wet grass softens my footsteps. I lay Jerry on the hood of the Dodge Ram and prop up his back on the windshield. I arrange his nylon legs straight out from his torso. He's weighted at the feet and knees so he won't slip. I apply the lighter fluid in strategic places: the front of his shirt, the top of his camouflage pants. It's important that he doesn't flame up, but that everything simmers enough to get to his innards.

I lay one finger on the tip of Jerry's plastic chin. His synthetic eyes stare back into mine. I light his shirttail and cross the lawn in loping steps. I start the car. Jerry is smoking up. Julia said with Jerry's bum right over the centre of the hood, the thermite will heat up and become molten iron. She said it will pour into the engine block. His head and chest will melt gradually. I don't put on the headlights until I am past the house and speed up on my way to the pavement.

It's quiet back on the bypass road. I don't pass anyone else. It occurs to me that I should feel bad. I didn't flash my headlights at that red hatchback after seeing the moose. I really should have done that.

The Word Hoard
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The Trouble with Jerry

Philip Glennie*

In "Gutless" by Bridget Canning, an unnamed narrator undergoes a full gastrectomy and, in losing their[1] stomach, loses the nervous inhibition associated with self-doubt and with a general submissiveness toward the laws of capitalist patriarchy. To put it another way, the narrator's loss of fear does not lead them to harm those who are vulnerable or marginalized; rather, it leads the narrator to resist certain power relations stemming from an exploitative economic system and a hypermasculine antagonist, relations to which they have previously submitted because they have internalized them in the sensations of the gut.

The narrator's primary response to the loss of the gut and its inhibiting sensations is to ignore the laws of private property. The narrator has lived much of their life as a disenfranchised employee, but they soon seek out new forms of resistance to capitalist exploitation. When they find it too difficult to survive on post-surgery disability payments, they become a serial shoplifter and cannot help but marvel at their lack of embodied submission to the normal laws of the marketplace. (No more butterflies in the stomach.) The narrator's post-gut resistance also targets misogynistic, heteronormative violence, as embodied in the character of the co-worker Max.

Max's behaviour in this story covers a spectrum of menace running from jocular intimidation to domestic abuse. The most substantial explanation ever given for his aggression is the narrator's suggestion that Max has a Napoleon complex. Further, we learn that Max's violence targets women, marginalized men, and animals alike: the latter two figure into the stories of Max's past, which highlight the pride he takes in "herding faggots" (72) and his history of shaving a cat and feeding it LSD. Being the object of Max's patriarchal violence, therefore, does not require the narrator to be female.[2]

Max is not an admirable figure, nor is he likely ever to become one. While texts like Ursula Leguin's *Left Hand of Darkness*, Angela Carter's *Nights at the*

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Circus, and Octavia Butler's *Kindred* engage the question of whether subjects of hegemonic patriarchy can be reeducated or reformed, these possibilities appear to be off the table for Max. The starkness of this limitation[3] makes one wonder how a narrative should deal with a figure like him, and this question is one that the story grapples with from beginning to end.

The narrator ultimately seeks revenge on Max by stealing a mannequin from their place of employment, naming it Jerry, dressing it up in camouflage pants to resemble Max, and burning it in effigy on the hood of Max's prized pickup truck. On the surface, we are witnessing a castration revenge fantasy, both in the sense that the narrator is burning an effigy of Max while ruining his phallic pickup truck and in the sense that the mannequin standing in as Max's double presumably does not have clearly defined genitalia.

Rather than explain why they chose Jerry as their tool of revenge, the narrator equivocates: "Why not? … Why not indeed?" The narrator in this moment is either unable or unwilling to explain why they find the mannequin such a fitting tool of revenge. Thus, on a surface level, this is a story about a narrator who simply loses their sense of fear and uses the opportunity to take revenge on a disempowering economic system and a masculine antagonist. But does the story travel beyond the thematic boundaries of a revenge fantasy? The answer to this question circles back to the role of a mannequin named Jerry. To understand this role, we too must circle to the beginning, back to a time before we readers realize that Jerry is a mannequin and not a flesh-and-blood subject. A narrator is speaking inside a car with an utterly passive passenger: Jerry is a captive audience, a figure who, staring blankly through the windshield, listens to the narrator's story in silence. We are presented with a version of masculinity distinct from that of the antagonist Max, who occupies as much space as possible and asserts agency by invoking the constant threat of violence.

At this point, I feel compelled to pause and reflect on my role in writing a response to this story. It is a role I have agreed to take on in co-operation with the editors of this journal, and I have conformed to the journal's responsive, dialogical format in doing so. But to what extent would I better serve this story if I were to emulate Jerry, to become a captive listener and cede the space of these pages entirely to author Bridget Canning? I cannot give any definitive answer to this question, but I do believe in the importance of asking it. And yet I continue on, taking up space in these pages and thereby implying that I, a PhD-educated, cisgendered, white male, should be heard. But should I?

I return to the question of what the narrator achieves by burning the effigy of Jerry on Max's truck. What does it

accomplish beyond a symbolic castration? Does the narrator believe that destroying the truck in such dramatic fashion will alter the way Max acts? If anything, one might expect the act of vandalism to fan the flames of Max's masculine rage, a rage that he is likely to direct at his girlfriend Julia, who helps the narrator destroy his property. After burning Max's truck, the narrator returns to their car and drives away on a dark road, where the path forward is shrouded in uncertainty. One could say the same for the prospect of continuing to live in a world filled with the patriarchal rage that Max embodies.

Why, then, burn a mannequin? I think the story offers a more satisfying answer than the narrator's "Why not?" Jerry is the embodiment of a masculinity rendered fully captive. His only tasks are to bear witness to the narrator's acts of self-expression and self-determination and then to serve as a burning effigy to an apparently irredeemable or irreformable mode of masculinity. To put it another way, Jerry's passivity might offer the best brand of masculinity we can hope for in a world filled with men like Max. For the narrator's part, a continued resistance to capitalist exploitation and patriarchal menace appears to be the only viable way forward, even if that way is only as discernible as the dimly lit road ahead.

I have inserted a break here because this point marked the end of my initial version for this response piece. When I reached this point, I felt that my reading of Jerry and "Gutless" was inadequate, as it lacked any substantial connection to other writers or communities who had reflected on the privilege of the male subject position and the possibility of reconceiving or reforming it. When I sent the initial draft to an editor of this journal, he quickly confirmed this suspicion by asking me to give a better sense of how my reading drew on and was informed by existing work on masculinity, male power, and privilege and how these things might be reconfigured in more ethical ways. As I no longer have any formal connection to the academy and lack many of the resources such a connection would afford, I asked for guidance from my partner, a scholar much more familiar with feminist criticism than myself. She directed me to Alice Jardine and Paul Smith's influential 1984 collection, *Men in Feminism*. It seemed fitting that, when she first opened the book, my partner turned to this passage by Jardine:

> Finally, in thinking about this irritation with men's interventions into feminism thus far . . . are we not irritated simply by their professional when not professorial tone so often sandwiched between sharp

> critiques of one woman writer after another? By their tendency to descend into pathos and apology as soon as they're threatened? . . . By their general discursive strategies which indicate that they've heard our *demands* but haven't adequately read our work? (58; emphasis in original)

Jardine's last question gives what I think is an accurate description of my response to "Gutless" prior to soliciting additional input. My response offered a general reflection on "the male position" (as though there were only one) and a limited number of ethical considerations attached to it. Further, it was enabled largely by an informal smattering of ideas and phrases I'd picked up from conversations I'd had over the years with people much more informed about feminist writings. My first inclination was to revise my initial draft and incorporate into it the insights gleaned from this further reading; but upon reflection, I've decided to leave the original draft intact to better demonstrate how this further reading expanded on the ideas presented in my initial response.

In my initial response to "Gutless," I suggested that Jerry's silence and stillness showed a total passivity in listening to the narrator's story and in becoming a tool of revenge against Max. I also suggested that this passivity marked what was potentially "the best brand of masculinity one could hope for" in the world of the story. This statement bears a general, yet possibly helpful relation to what Stephen Heath argues in the opening essay of *Men in Feminism*: "maybe the task of male critics is just to read… and learn silence" when encountering feminist writings (29).

To help describe what this silence might entail, Heath looks to Luce Irigaray's concept of admiration. In her 1984 text, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray speaks of admiration as "what has never existed between the sexes. Admiration keeping the two sexes unsubstitutable in the fact of their difference. Maintaining a free and engaging space between them, a possibility of separation and alliance" (qtd. in Heath 20). But is Jerry's position toward the narrator of "Gutless" one of silent admiration, carrying in it the hope for a "better," more ethical male position? Heath sees a problem not with Irigaray's use of this concept but with his own act of appropriating it, writing,

> What Irigaray says is true, yet when I quote it, use it, produce it in conclusion, I finish up with a false unity, a fetishizing elision—look, here! For difference and contradiction, I substitute silence, admiration as that; hence that last paragraph, nothing more to say. (31)

Heath even describes this problem of silent admiration in mannequin-like terms, associating it with "what Descartes describes as the body 'motionless as a statue,' stopped rigid in single perception" (30). In other words, Heath understands that a stunned, acquiescing silence is not an adequate position to prescribe to any subject looking to become a "good man," for it offers much too conclusive a solution, an ethical unburdening that might allow the male subject to feel that sheer silence might fulfill his ethical obligation and free him of the need to reflect on the privilege attached to his position, a privilege that in fact contains the very ability to *choose* silence when so many others have silence forced upon them.

In "Men in Feminism: Odor di Uomo or Compagnons de Route?", Alice Jardine directly addresses an audience of male subjects who wish to contribute to feminist thought and political action. To help frame their efforts, she asks, "what do feminists want?" She answers,

> If you will forgive me my directness, we do not want you to *mimic* us, to become the same as us; we don't want your pathos or your guilt; and we don't want your admiration (even if it's nice to get it once in a while). What we want, I would even say we need, is your *work*. We need you to get down to serious work. And like all serious work, that involves struggle and pain." (60; emphasis in original)

Here, Jardine moves away from Heath's attempt to appropriate Irigarayan admiration to establish a more ethical male subject position. Instead she asks for the "struggle and pain" (60) that comes with serious work. She ends on a relatively hopeful note when she tells her male readers that "you have all your work before you, not behind you. We, as feminists, need your work. … We need you as travelling *compagnons* into the twenty-first century" (61; emphasis in original). Jardine's concept of a travelling companion relates directly to Bridget Canning's depiction of Jerry as a passenger alongside the narrator. Yet like Heath, Jardine suggests that taking on this position entails a profound willingness on the part of the male subject. It is difficult to argue that such willingness can be found in Jerry.

While Jerry's emotions are projected onto him by the narrator, they are important for demonstrating the ways in which the narrator imagines him. The dominant affect attributed to Jerry is passivity with an implied touchiness, the latter of which we find in the narrator's attempts to reassure Jerry with comments like "no offense" (71). Indeed, the narrator imagines a male subject whose position of passivity hints toward Heath's reading of Irigaray's admiration. Yet "Gutless" diverges from this line of thought, as it never assumes the male

subject's *willingness* to adopt a subject position in which its agency and privilege is undermined.

It seems fair to say that in "Gutless," the narrator does not (and maybe cannot) imagine a male subject becoming a passive witness to their story in a fully willing way. It is through Jerry's utter blankness that "Gutless" helps convey the ambivalence and even the impossibility of imagining a male subject who is fully reconciled to losing any shred of the agency and privilege usually afforded to it. In a response to Stephen Heath's exhortation to men to exhibit silent admiration for women, Elizabeth Weed notes that

> The impossibility of men's (and I would add, women's) relationship to feminism does not imply that we can do nothing, but rather that the contradictions cannot be resolved. Accepting that, the challenge, it seems to me, is to develop political, theoretical strategies, all the while keeping in mind to what extent our radical project is a *utopian* one. (75; emphasis in original)

In other words, Jerry marks an attempt to conceive a different kind of male subject with the knowledge that this attempt will never resolve the contradictions involved in thinking through the privilege attached to male positions. Jerry's passivity and potential touchiness also raise questions about whether a male subject can ever give up its privilege in a willing way, or whether it needs to have this privilege resisted and subverted by another, more marginalized subject.

In "Gutless," what we never see is a male subject that willingly gives up its hegemonic position. We have only the unwilling or utterly passive loss of this position, initiated through the actions of the narrator. It's important not to forget that, even after he has listened to the narrator's acts of self-expression and self-determination, Jerry's only remaining job is to ruin Max's pickup truck while burning to ashes. What are we to make of his passive sacrifice? Does it suggest that only a total destruction of the male subject can open the possibility of a different future? Is Jerry's burning an acknowledgment of the impossibility of his becoming a participatory travelling companion in the way Jardine suggests?

At this point, I'd like to return to a problem that I didn't properly address in my initial response to "Gutless": the fact that while Jerry might represent Max by wearing camouflage pants, he is not Max's double. Yes, Jerry is burned as an effigy of Max's hegemonic masculinity, but if the two existed in a one-to-one symbolic relationship, the narrator would have presumably named him Max. This lack of symmetry opens a gap between Max and Jerry, as does the ambiguous gendering of the

name Jerry. Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that Jerry is a transformed version of Max, one that is only fulfilled at the same moment that it is consumed in fire. Again, the story here seems to reject any easy notion of a reformed male subject, particularly if the transformation originates within that subject itself. Rather, transformation is proposed as something that can only be imposed on the male subject from without.

Before ending, I'd like to point out at least one more problem with the observations I've made so far: my entire line of inquiry has been premised on the idea that "Gutless" is looking for a *single* "more ethical" position that a male subject might adopt. In her 1998 essay, "Can Men Be Subjects of Feminist Thought?", Sandra Harding argues that imagining a male feminist is not a process of working toward a single ideal but a process of "exploring the many diverse kinds of subject positions envisioned in existing feminist (and queer) public agenda theories and their epistemologies from which men can make important contributions to feminist philosophy and social theory" (192). In other words, one should seek to iterate different male subjective positions based on a careful consideration of the historical moments and intersections of power in which they might emerge. This means that my conversation about male subject positions should be informed by the questions being asked within distinct sites of historically situated struggle.

Within the context of this discussion, I feel that any conclusion must be a non-conclusion, a call for further questioning that resists prescribing a limiting field of action but that still commits to the ongoing goal of seeking out better forms of allying oneself with feminist thought and practice. That said, I believe that Alice Jardine's call for "hard work" might provide a compass for further thought, and so I repeat it here by way of non-conclusion:

> What we want, I would even say we need, is your *work*. We need you to get down to serious work. And like all serious work, that involves struggle and pain. (60; emphasis in original)

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[1] I use "they" when referring to the narrator, primarily to avoid inscribing the male/female binary that is implicit in alternatives such as "he/she" or "s/he."

[2] To observe this is not to say the narrator's identity does not matter, that all subjects are affected by patriarchal violence equally and in the same ways. Rather, it is important to note that a host of different power relations and historical considerations would come into play if we were ever to find out more about the narrator's life and identity.

[3] I see this limitation as applying not only

to the character Max, but to the story itself, as the narrative does not offer us any other, let alone "better," version of a masculine subject position.

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The *Word* Hoard
/wərd/hôrd/ n. 1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.

Vegas, Stripped
On Returning for a National Teacher's Conference

Stripp'd of their gaudy hues by Truth,
We view the glitt'ring toys of youth.
—Charlotte Smith, *"Thirty Eight"* (1783)

Elizabeth Johnston*

At twenty-two, a paradise.
Cocktail in hand and pair of dice,
I reveled in youth's glass-eyed chase,
bedazzled by the city's glow,
besotted with its champagne flow.
How differently I view its face

returning now at thirty-eight.
The swell of youth in time deflates.
A scene obscene my eyes survey
foul smoke-soaked halls, dark carpet stains,
crack-plastered walls, bloated remains
of bodies losing life at play.

Casino's rule: no light let in.
Outside by throngs, worn, bent-kneed men
in sweat-drenched tees sleep on the streets
or press in palms tickets for shows,
coupons for girls from Mexico
delivered quick and fast-food cheap.

I blush and wish to render more
than incensed scowl or glare of scorn
before the shuttle picks me up
and whisks me to the Stratosphere,
where book reps buy my food and beer,
and high above I richly sup

**Elizabeth Johnston's work has been nominated for the Pushcart and "Best of the Net" prizes. You can read her most recent poems in* New Verse News, Mom Egg Review, Non-Binary Review, The Luminary, Rose Red Review, Carbon Culture*, and* Teaching English at the Two Year College. *She lives in western New York with her partner and daughters, and is a founding member of the award-winning writer's group, Straw Mat Writers.*

with wits, who from a distance pan
the trappings of this shiny land
and glut our pity on the weak—
sagging strippers, alley dwellers,
homeless migrants, wanton gamblers.
They take their hits, we turn our cheek

then gorge on lofty discontent
and wonder where the waiter went,
return to rooms, our bellies full,
to scented soaps, to laundered sheets
and drift into a blameless sleep,
no thought that we're responsible

for evils we can leave behind
when we check out from sight and mind,
exchange our guilt—that weary weight—
for gaudy trinkets, souvenirs,
relieved that we live nowhere near
Las Vegas when we're—Thirty-eight.

The *Word* Hoard
/wərd/hôrd/ *n.* 1. A journal open to all Arts and Humanities scholars.

The AdjunctPod

Ross Bullen*

I felt the neural note buzz in my forehead, but I didn't mindscan the message right away. I was too exhausted to deal with any new notifications from my EduClients. I was at the tail end of a 72-hour Positive Reinforcement Retreat. My skull was throbbing after mindscanning 500 EduClient Satisfaction Reports on corporate leadership strategies in *Moby-Dick*. I'd given out nothing but A-plusses—*The EduClient is always right!*—and I needed to risk taking an unscheduled break. I curled up on my bunk on the far side of the AdjunctPod and tried to trick myself into sleep.

Lying on my mattress I could hear Randy the Medievalist dragging his replica Viking battle axe out from under his bed. This was followed by the unmistakable sound of the axe's blade pressed against a spinning whetstone. There was something comforting about the stone's whir and the gritty friction of the grinding. Randy must have been called up to teach a class. He used the axe as a teaching aid, showing his EduClients how to authentically dismember an Anglo Saxon peasant. I was happy for him. He had been stuck in the AdjunctPod for the past five months, and the isolation was starting to get to him. I was worried that the AdjunctSect's Productivity Dean had placed him on the premature retirement list. Randy had been acting weird, even for a Medievalist. Talking to himself, reformatting his C.V. in Old Norse syllabic. I told myself that if I found him scrawling runes on the bathroom wall again I'd put in for a transfer to a different AdjunctSect.

I was in a deep sleep when I felt the Time Management Pulse. It was like someone slammed my face against the AdjunctPod's concrete wall. The Productivity Dean must have noticed that I had stopped mindscanning my ESRs. I rubbed my eyes to help shake the sting of the wake-up call. On the far side of the AdjunctPod I could see that Randy was doing deep leg lunges and

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chanting something about Odin. I rolled over and tugged my right earlobe to activate my mindscanner. The earlier message scrolled through my retinal reader.

To: undisclosed recipients
From: MLA Executive Committee
Subject: Believe it or not, there will be a TENURE-TRACK JOB!!! at this year's MLA Convention in Las Vegas!

It had been years since I'd received a neural note from the Modern League of Adjuncts. It was hard to know what to make of the subject. The last of the tenured professors had been retired over fifty years ago. It was an obsolete job, like being a chimney sweep. I sat up in my bunk and kept reading.

Greetings Loyal MLA Members!

We know it has been a while since you have heard from us, and for that we are truly sorry. We also know that it was disappointing to many—dare we say all!—of you that the last few MLA Conventions have been cancelled. We know all about the rumors and, without getting too specific, we'd like to tell you to put your minds at ease! As long as there are hard-working Adjuncts out there, the MLA will be just fine. In fact, we think we can safely say that, since the warlord raids on federal grant servers seem to have subsided, we are doing better than ever. And to show you just how great the MLA is doing, we want to invite you to our Convention in the warlord-extirpated Las Vegas Free State!

But enough about us. We are quite sure that the subject line of this message caught your attention! Many of you are probably thinking that we are joking around. Well, heretics, you are wrong, wrong, wrong! The job is very real, and best of all—are you ready for this!—it's at HARVARD! Okay, to be clear, it is at Harvard's new satellite satellite campus on the Moon, but a job is a job, and if there aren't any jobs left on Earth, where else do you expect to find one? The Moon is not so bad. The Moon is actually pretty swanky compared to some of the AdjunctPods you are living in. In a couple of years people will be moaning about the lack of jobs on the Moon as they pack up and move to Mars. So this is a great opportunity to be a cutting-edge early adopter!

I didn't really know how bad things were on Earth. At 38, I was the youngest person in my AdjunctPod by a couple of decades. The UniPod was the only kind of school I had ever known. When I was getting my degree in the Literature of Innovation, my professors were all Adjuncts, uploaded into our LearningPods for a few hours at a time and then downloaded to their AdjunctPods for storage, grading, and professional development through hard labor. We didn't

really know them, but they seemed happy enough—probably, we reasoned, because they knew how innovative they were being.

When I was 22 I wanted to be chosen for Corporate Leadership Stream. When I received the neural note informing me that I'd be in EduClient Satisfaction instead, I was crushed. My father had been a Corporate Leader all his life, but he still was willing to comfort me. He showed me a videoscan of the Last Tenured Professor reading his confession before the Great Efficiency Committee, just a few hours before his retirement. I could see the Professor sweating as he denounced the decadence of his former profession. Cushy salaries, office spaces, pensions—he admitted all of these selfish indulgences were holding the UniPod back from being as efficient as it should be. Before he was dragged out of the room for his retirement party, he spoke about the future. How an endless supply of Adjuncts would bring the UniPod into a new century. How AdjunctPods, AdjunctSects, and Productivity Deans would make the most out of the bad situation he had helped to create. How all of this would be in the best interests of EduClients and Corporate Leaders. How the Great Efficiency Committee was wise and interdisciplinary in its judgments.

My father paused the videoscan just as the Professor was being hauled away by the Punishment Provosts.

"You know, son," he said, "That man was evil. He was not a team player. But he was also right about the future. The world he described is the one we live in now."

"I know," I said.

"Now look, I understand that you were hoping to be a Corporate Leader. But it's not for everybody, and that's a hard pill to swallow. There's nothing wrong with EduClient Satisfaction, though! Being an Adjunct, living in an AdjunctPod…. That's the bright future the Great Efficiency Committee wanted to innovate all those years ago. And now it's happened!"

I could recall the look on my father's face as he spoke to me. A slight wince, like he'd just found a splinter under his thumbnail. Sitting on my mattress in the AdjunctPod, I tried, unsuccessfully, to remember the last time I received a neural note from him.

I turned my attention back to the MLA's message and scanned my way through the job ad.

Harvard University is seeking a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in the Literature of Innovation to lead Corporate Leadership Hangouts at our new Lunar City satellite campus. The successful applicant will organize Hangouts in Business Literature, Synergy Studies, American Literature from

1990 to Dissolution, Basic Moon Rover Repair, and Digital Cyberhumanities. The successful applicant will also need to arrange his or her own transportation to the Moon. Accommodation in Lunar City's trendy Innovation/Mineral Extraction district and a daily ration of NutritionPellets+ will be provided in lieu of pension, benefits, sabbatical, professional development funds, and salary. The successful applicant will be permitted to leave out a tip jar at the end of each semester. To apply, please mindscan a cover letter, C.V., statement of Corporate Hangout philosophy, statement of commitment to innovation, statement of unyielding fealty and obedience to Harvard and the Great Efficiency Committee, evidence of zero gravity training, and two dozen letters of recommendation to the following neural notification box…

What luck! I was the only person in my AdjunctPod with a Ph.D. in the Literature of Innovation. Everybody else, like Randy, held old-fashioned degrees in "comparative literature" or "cultural studies" or "post-Derridean semiotics" or some other ancient field. Not me. I was in the teaching game for all the right reasons. I loved innovation, flexibility, and the creative economy. I loved scanning my way through old books like *Moby-Dick* or *The Great Gatsby* to discover their real, business-positive meanings, the practical and timeless lessons that they could impart to our next generation of Corporate Leaders. And so what if my EduClients didn't bother to read any of this stuff? They paid for their A-plusses and it was my job to make sure they got what they wanted. I was making a productive contribution to the global economy, without costing it a dime.

I wondered how many other applicants there would be. The numbers were fuzzy, but I knew there were hundreds of thousands of Adjuncts in my AdjunctSect's larger Learning Network, and I assumed there were other networks out there somewhere, possibly even on the surface in some of the Free States. But I figured I had a real shot. By the time I got my Ph.D. from StudyWell Services University, most people had abandoned EduClient Satisfaction. Tenure was long gone, rumors about life in the AdjunctPods were starting to spread. When people were selected for EduClient Satisfaction Stream, like I was, they usually chose to do hard labor instead. I was probably one of the only 38-year-olds in the world with a Ph.D. in *anything*, let alone the very thing called for in the first tenure track job ad in half a century. But everybody in my AdjunctPod would apply anyway. Every passed-over septuagenarian with a stale Ph.D. in Shakespeare or Joyce or Beowulf would see this as their last, best opportunity for something better.

I heard the door to the AdjunctPod slam shut. I looked up and saw Randy the Medievalist leaning against it, holding his sharp-

ened battle axe and the first draft of a cover letter. He was a sixty-six-year-old man with a degree in a dead language. There was nothing innovative about him. I saw the axe blade glimmer as it caught the low fluorescent light of the AdjunctPod's bulb.

The job flickered like a battered jewel, and vanished.

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The Dialectic of Fantasy Displacement and Uncanny Allegory in the *Star Wars* Prequel Trilogy

David Christopher*

The science-fiction fantasy of George Lucas's now infamous *Star Wars* prequel trilogy has been largely overlooked as cinema that might merit critical scrutiny. The surprisingly scant scholarship that is concerned with the prequel trilogy has not adequately addressed it as much more than an example of digital hyperrealism or as a critical fiasco. Much like horror film prior to the 1970s, the ostensible low-calibre of the prequel trilogy's films has eclipsed any critical inquiry into their ideological underpinnings. This paper seeks to offer a preliminary corrective to this critical oversight by examining the prequel trilogy for its allegorical content and its uncanny reflection of American social, economic, and governmental politics in a process of fantasy that attempts to alleviate anxieties regarding America's self-recognition as a militaristic empire. This critical trajectory began with Carl Silvio's "The *Star Wars* Trilogies and Global Capitalism," in which he explores "how the two trilogies that comprise this saga both express and diffuse latent cultural anxieties about the emergence of late capitalism while neutralizing the fundamental logic and assumptions that underpin this system" (53). Silvio is explicit in his design to "adopt a cultural studies model that analyzes [*Star Wars*] as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon" (Silvio and Vinci 3). However, in exploring the trilogy "as a site of ideological investment that both reflects and shapes late twentieth and early twenty-first century global culture" (Silvio and Vinci 3), he misses an opportunity to address the prequel films as a *specific* cultural allegory. He generalizes capitalism as a *global* advent and avoids the direct implication of American cultural politics in the trilogy's ideology. Silvio's reliance on the term "Global capitalism" glosses over the obvious allegory that references the Bush-

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Cheney administration and their apparently corrupt mismanagement of the Iraq war. The micro-allegories of racism and class stratification introduced in *Episode I* that code the social politics at play in the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy as an American cultural landscape are, in turn, mapped onto the larger allegory that references the Iraq War in *Episode II* and particularly in *Episode II*.

In order to pursue this analysis, this paper pairs relevant understandings of the apparently contradictory ideological functions of *fantasy* (as theorized by Slavoj Žižek, Joshua Bellin, and Eric Greene) and *contemporary allegory* (as elucidated via Richard Porton's interpretations of Walter Benjamin's texts). By placing them in a dialectical relationship, this paper demonstrates how they respectively negotiate the masking and exposure of socio-political contradictions that generate anxiety.[1] Thus, as a point of departure, Annette Kuhn's analytical approach regarding the socio-political significance of science fiction is instructive as a governing framework. In the process of defining science fiction, she states that: "more interesting, and probably more important, than what a film genre *is* is the question of what, in cultural terms, it *does*—its 'cultural instrumentality'" (1).[2] I contend that the "cultural instrumentality" of the prequel trilogy is twofold. George Lucas valiantly attempts to represent America as the "good republic" that is threatened by the emergence of an evil empire by displacing social anxiety surrounding contemporary American imperialism onto a fantasy scenario in which viewers are invited to identify with Jedi war heroes and a young, altruistic queen/senator. Allegorically, however, the "good republic" is exposed as a landscape of class and race-based inequalities, while the "evil empire" discovers no material equivalent but America itself. As such, America is already both the Republic and the Empire, and the third film in the trilogy observes America's lamentable recognition of its slide from one to the other. An ideological agenda to valorize America is superseded by the political reality that the movie cannot mask, but in fact reveals.

In this sense, Slavoj Žižek's psychoanalytic descriptions of the ideological mechanics of fantasy are particularly useful for understanding the prequel trilogy. Žižek's description of "*Fantasy as a support of reality*" (*Sublime* 47) finds its most comprehensive articulation in his *The Plague of Fantasies*, a neo-Lacanian extension of psychoanalytic theory which provides a particularly useful framework for the examination of how cinematic fantasy works to displace both repressed and explicit social anxieties. Žižek defines the psychological working of fantasy as a mechanism that maintains a distance between our perception of reality and the Real, while creating that which is desired, namely the elusive *objet a* of fantasy itself, in a process of

negotiating subjectivity (*Plague* 5-7). That is, fantasy works to provide comfort by way of obfuscating the horrors of a reality in which desires are in constant flux based on social intersubjectivity (*Plague* 9-11).

Inherent in Žižek's notions of the mechanics of fantasy are Sigmund Freud's concepts of the *unheimlich* (uncanny) and the *unbehagen* (cultural discontent/unease). Freud explains: "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes" (946). Moreover, the psychological experience of the uncanny as one in which "there is ... the repetition of ... the same crimes" (940). More importantly, Freud is emphatic that "The subject of the 'uncanny' is ... undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" (930). It does not seem a stretch, then, to imagine the horror experienced by an American populace in the face of an uncanny reflection "of the same [war] crimes" committed by Palpatine and the Bush-Cheney administration (940). Indeed, "Freud wrote about *Unbehagen in der Kultur*, the discontent/unease in culture; today, twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we experience a kind of *Unbehagen* in liberal capitalism" (Žižek, *End Times* ix). According to Žižek, "When faced with such a paranoid construction, we must not forget Freud's warning and mistake it for the 'illness' itself: the paranoid construction is, on the contrary, an attempt to heal ourselves, to pull ourselves out of the real 'illness,' the 'end of the world,' the breakdown of the symbolic universe, by means of this substitute formation" ("Reality to Real" 345). In the prequel trilogy, the paranoid example of the uncanny allegories within its extended narrative presents as an ideological attempt to afford the American populace an opportunity to both heal and pull itself out of the reality of its socio-political nightmare.

Joshua Bellin agrees that, aside from its injurious reproduction of alienating social politics under the guise of innocence, the work of fantasy allows solace in the face of otherwise exposed social contradictions. "[T]o unmoor fantasy films from their social contexts—to dismiss (or laud) them as pure, innocent diversions—is fundamental to these films' social power; any social production that can so readily be denied *as* a social production can perform (or in the denial *has* performed) injurious social work" (Bellin 5). Similarly, in a language that seems almost poached from the *Star Wars* movies themselves, Eric Green expounds that

> One of the characteristics of fiction is the ability to extract controversial problems from their social circumstances and re-in-

> scribe them onto fictional, even outlandish, contexts. The acceptability of introducing new worlds and even new forms of life in science fiction and fantasy may make these genres especially flexible in this regard. Difficult issues can be located safely distant, even light years away, from the real ground of conflict and thereby rendered less obvious and less psychologically or politically threatening. Science fiction as distance provides deniability for both the filmmakers and the audience. (Greene qtd. in Bellin 8)

The prequel trilogy embeds micro-allegories within its fantasy narratives, which appear to attempt the realization of just such audience deniability as a result.

However, the prequel films' allegorical characteristics betray this ideological function of fantasy. One might be inclined to view the uncanny socio-political reflections within Lucas's prequel films as mere coincidence (the very work Bellin and Žižek claim fantasy accomplishes). However, Greene convincingly argues that

> Even if artists do not consciously attempt to make "political statements," artists exist in a world of political and social relations. … We can reasonably expect therefore that, consciously or not, political realities, events, and themes will register in an artist's work. In fact we should be shocked if a country's political conflicts and social biases do not find their way into its cultural productions (Greene qtd. in Bellin 11).

In this light, the otherwise banal advent of allegory takes on a progressive ideological function.

According to anarchist cultural theorist Richard Porton, "[Walter] Benjamin acknowledged that allegory was usually denigrated as a product of periods of decay" (99). It is unclear in Porton's text from whom such denigration came, but more importantly, "Benjamin labeled allegory a 'natural history' of the past ravages, or what one commentator has called 'shards of memory that frustrate the oscillations of organic closure.' In other words, allegory resists narrative closure but does not, unlike the more rarefied examples of modernism, operate within an ahistorical void" (99). As I will demonstrate in the next section of this paper, which focuses on the films themselves, the fantasy within the prequel trilogy attempts to separate the Imperial tendencies of contemporary American foreign policy from its democratic populace, while the allegory works to resist such narrative closure, and implicates the democracy in the very vilification it so desperately attempts to evade.

The first of the prequel films might most readily be dismissed as allegorically coincidental considering its pre-9/11 production date. *Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, released May 19, 1999, however, highlights the films' allegorical natures even before the narrative proper begins. The opening crawl alludes to ongoing trade disputes experienced by a recessive American economy. It informs the viewer:

> Turmoil has engulfed the Galactic Republic. The taxation of trade routes to outlying star systems is in dispute. Hoping to resolve the matter with a blockade of deadly battleships, the greedy trade federation has stopped all shipping to the small planet of Naboo. (*Episode I*)

If read allegorically, this introduction might allude to America's long-term Softwood Lumber trade dispute with Canada—indeed, it is tempting to read the impeachment of Chancellor Valorum in the film as a metonymic reference to the 1991 reduction and demise of the softwood lumber *ad valorem* tariff. Similarly, as either an unintentional, prescient reference to the attempts by Republicans at impeachment following the Clinton sexual scandal or Clinton's troubled trade relations with the Japanese, the impeachment of Chancellor Valorum in *Episode I* is certainly part of the film's allegorical project.

However, the trade embargo referenced in the opening crawl of *Episode I* is more plausibly a reference to the long-term trade competition and rising economic conflict between Japan and America that preceded the film's release.[3] Certainly the alien species that populate the Trade Federation—the Nemoidians—is a thinly veiled reproduction of Japanese economic and ethnic stereotyping, complete with the incongruous voice-dubbing that American audiences have come to expect of mid-twentieth century Japanese film imports. *U.S. News* film critic John Leo claimed that the Nemoidians "are stock Asian villains out of black-and-white B movies of the 1930s and 1940s, complete with Hollywood oriental accents, sinister speech patterns, and a space-age version of stock Fu Manchu clothing" (Leo n.p.). An anonymous blogger on the popular communal weblog *Everything2* using the moniker "Inyo" agrees that "the Trade Federation of episode 1 obviously represents pre-WWII Japan and to a lesser extent, the merchandizing aspects of Japan today. According to the stereotype, the Japanese want to hoard trade rights unfairly and take monetary advantage of everyone" ("Star Wars Ethnic Stereotype," n.p.). Although Inyo's description is non-scholarly in nature, it is at least indicative of the popular understanding of Japanese stereotypes that are

congruent with the representations in the film. Moreover, in the film's narrative, Darth Sidious, a political puppet-master, and his apprentice Darth Maul, who is an unambiguous visual stereotype of the Christian demon Satan, are working closely with the evil Trade Federation.

The "Japanese" Trade Federation is not the only example of racial stereotyping in *Episode I*. "[T]o cite only the most obvious case, the vilification of the Middle East endures in such films as *The Phantom Menace* [1999], with its rapacious Sandpeople, despotic Hut overlords, and hook-nosed slave traders opposing the pure-white heroes of the civilized republic" (Bellin 108). In the same vein, much has been written about the racism inherent in the character of Jar Jar Binks (almost universally panned by franchise fans old enough to be invested in the mythology of the original trilogy)—particularly, critics pointed out his resonance with minstrelsy and as a Stepin Fetchit character.[4] However, little has been written regarding the ideological function of this media criticism to displace such a deeply entrenched marker of American social politics as racist towards African-Americans, or the more contemporary allegorical fear of the deadly exoticism of the Middle East, onto poor old George Lucas. Lucas is certainly guilty of these blatant and egregious representational oversights, but to pillory Lucas alone is a particularly extreme example of the displacement of racism more universally endemic to American culture. Such vehement disdain against the Jar Jar Binks character can only plausibly arise, in psychoanalytic terms, from either the frustrated targets of the character's racist stereotyping at yet another offensive cliché cloaked in a patina of fantasy and comedy, or from white, privileged members of a liberal media and audiences' uncanny recognition of racial stereotyping so as to jettison it as not their own—one of Žižek's plague fantasies. When the experience of reality falls short of the ideal promised by ideology, fantasy steps in as a mediating psychological device of catharsis, a release valve in the order of repressive tolerance-based criticism. In this example, the fantasy is not diegetic; it is a social fantasy that an endemic ideology of racism exclusively belongs to Lucas (a fantasy that overlooks the otherwise complicit participation of African-American actor Ahmed Best) and that intimates the diegetic ideological project of the trilogy in which Bush becomes the scapegoat for widespread guilt experienced over contemporary American foreign policy.

While these visual stereotypes and micro-allegories explicitly encode deep-seated and pervasive American cultural beliefs immediately preceding the events of 9/11, they can hardly be deemed more than coincidental with any reading of the films as allegorical with the politics of the Iraq War in their otherwise specious

association to a conflict that had not yet begun. There is, however, at least one example of a fantasy attempt to code American military technology as benevolent and benign. Queen Amidala's royal yacht is almost inarguably based on the American Lockheed SR71 "Blackbird" which served with the U.S. Air Force from 1964 to 1998.

Fig. 1: Amidala's royal yacht

Fig. 2: Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird

Although not identical, the structural and visual similarity between the two is uncanny. As Greene contends, "We can reasonably expect ... that, consciously or not, political realities, events, and themes will register in an artist's work" (qtd. in Bellin 11). Evidently, the rising military zeitgeist that was as much a cause of the events of 9/11 as their effect informed Lucas's aesthetic choices for the film's spacecraft.

Amidala's yacht is a silvery postmodern reflection of the black original—a specific difference that is significant when read through the lens of the ideas in Fredric Jameson's "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1988). Referring to the postmodern architecture of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, Jameson observes "the way in which the glass skin repels the city outside: a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and thereby achieve a certain aggressivity towards and power over the Other" (200). The spectacular skin of Amidala's ship, viewed in the glaring sunlight of midday Tattooine, might thus be read as a blinding, silvery "repulsion" of a material reality in which the machine is an instrument of war. Amidala is an ostensibly sympathetic protagonist who propagates peace and democracy. The narrative relevance of Amidala's ship is one of the most visually

obvious attempts in the films to re-signify the American military in a melodramatically positive light and to colour American war machines as vehicles for peace.

As visually apparent as these vehicular allegories and racial stereotypes are in *Episode I*, they were not the only social politics at play in these films. For example, *Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) represents stratified economic social class relations with another visual metaphor. One of the film's earliest scenes depicts two highly decorated graduates of the Jedi Academy, Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, in an elevator shooting upwards to the ivory towers of the elite. At its height is Senator Padmé Amidala's luxury apartment, from which she overlooks an urban vista (with her black servant). In *Plague*, Žižek is clear that ideology is readily carried in architectural constructs (1-2), but, moreover, the fantasy identification with the narrative's protagonists on an emotional, melodramatic level distracts from audiences' complicity with the ideological project of normative racial and class stratification.

The heroic Jedi Knights proceed to pursue a rogue assassin into the seamy streets of Coruscant's urban heart, effecting a dramatic plunge into a working class industrial landscape. Piloting a hover car with Obi Wan Kenobi as his passenger, Anakin Skywalker executes a manoeuvre whereby he ascends nose down with blinding speed, prompting the horrified Obi wan to plead, "Pull up, Anakin. Pull up!" His fearful reaction to an increased proximity to the lower class landscape is obscured by its conflation with his fear of the potentially tragic results of the dangerous manoeuvre. During the chase, the two heroes navigate a landscape replete with the fires of industry and monolithic industrial factories. They proceed to force the would-be assassin from the skies in an explosive crash landing that coincides with the transition of the mise-en-scene to a working class landscape, which spectacularizes "the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions" (Žižek, *End Times* x). On ground level, the ethnic and economic landscape is predominantly "alien." A racially diverse population crowds the city streets, which are adorned with electronic billboard advertisements featuring alien minorities. Obi-Wan and Anakin eventually end up in an explicitly "blue-collar" sports bar where they are depicted as awkwardly out of place. This sports bar is certainly a far cry from the cantina in *Episode IV* and the first time such a specifically American urban landscape has been portrayed in any of the films.

These introductory visual metaphors for class stratification find more thorough articulation in the social politics endured by the characters themselves. Already introduced in *Episode I* is the fact that slavery is a part of the socio-economic landscape. Shmi Skywalker and her prodi-

gal son are held in servitude at the threat of an explosive implant, an injustice against which even the "noble" Jedi have no explicit intention of intervening. In a moment of domestic idyll, Jedi Qui-Gon Jinn informs them that he is not actually there to free slaves. The use of slavery to code certain characters as victims and others as villains is an almost garish narrative device that reproduces class stratification as a normal side-effect of (intragalactic) commerce—one of the few conventions picked up by J.J. Abrams' newest instalment, *The Force Awakens* (2016), in which the nomadic Rey must scavenge a harsh environment of derelict star destroyers to satisfy brutal wage-slavery.

Even the internal mechanics of the Jedi order valorize a social hierarchy of guild apprenticeship: young Anakin Skywalker apprentices with Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi as part of the Jedi's rigid system of order promotion. The allegorical similarity to military hierarchy is made explicit as the members of the Jedi order are forced into military ranks to campaign on behalf of the Republic against evil separatists. The conflation of religious and military hierarchies, rendering the ancient order of Jedi Knights modern soldiers, is part of the larger allegory of the imminent contemporary Iraq War intimated in *Episode II*, and explicitly taken up by *Episode III*. Furthermore, Obi-Wan's failing in *Episode III* as a patriarchal authority in a hierarchical position above Anakin exposes the ways in which class relations are imbricated with patriarchal authority, and how the failing of either/both cause widespread social anxiety.

However, it is in the more bodily-psychoanalytic aspects of the narrative of *Episode II* in which the uncanny allegory finds its strongest articulation. Just as with the second film of the original trilogy (*Empire*), a young Skywalker suffers a severed hand/limb at the hands of a sabre-wielding patriarchal villain. One could hardly imagine a more Oedipal representation, but it is just as uncanny according to Freud's almost identical example in his explication: "[T]he story of the severed hand in Hauff's fairy tale certainly has an uncanny effect, and we can trace that effect back to the castration complex" (947). Similarly, it is just as uncanny on an extra-diegetic level. The unabashed repetition of a nearly identical narrative development from the original trilogy literalizes "the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations" (Freud 940). These uncanny effects work in concert to reveal an allegory of the castrating effects of an evil empire that will only explicitly affirm itself to be America in the third film.

However, *Episode II* begins the process of allegorizing the American military as part of an evil empire. The film

depicts an industrial-military factory in the hands of the ostensibly evil separatists. Silvio argues that in the original trilogy "we see little evidence of how these fascinating technologies could actually be produced by this fictional universe" (61). As such, the original trilogy features a Marxist understanding of commodity fetishism by parading such technological goods but effacing any evidence of the methods of their production. The prequel trilogy does just the opposite. *Episode II* features a lengthy sequence in which a wholly automated industrial-military production factory becomes the backdrop against which the heroes Anakin and Padmé must fight to survive. The factory lacks any evidence of human intervention. C-3PO astutely observes the Marxist *grundrisse* of "dead" labour when he exclaims, "Machines making machines? How perverse!" Here, the ideology of the film separates its *benevolent* humans from a mechanized evil with which they do not participate. Moreover, according to Silvio the original trilogy made technology look realistic and familiar (60). In the prequel trilogy, much of the technology is so digitally artificial that it eschews any plausible realism. The result is not a comforting familiarity but rather an alienating lack of realism that generates a shocking feeling of the uncanny, and further works to create a polarity between the alienating technology of the nascent empire and the benevolent human population within the film, with which the audience is encouraged to identify/sympathize.

The vilification of industrialization represents part of the prequel trilogy's substantial ideological project to generate a fantasy in which members of the American populace—the ostensible body politic—can distance themselves from the machinations of a corrupt administration. Nevertheless, the allegorical aspects of the narrative are far more cynical.[5] *Episode II*, released 16 May, 2002, concludes with arguably one of the most prescient allegorical scenes in movie history, depicting a dramatic prelude to war. In the closing flourish, legions of armoured clone soldiers blanket the tarmac of a seemingly endless landing strip from which multiple, massive, industrial, and monolithic war ships, reminiscent of the Imperial Star Destroyers of the original trilogy, are launched into space. Less than a year after the release of *Episode II*—20 March, 2003—the war in Iraq would begin.

The political allegory of the failings and deceptions of the Bush-Cheney administration and of the Iraq War find their most compelling articulation in *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, released 15 May, 2005 at the International Cannes Film Festival and under conventional wide release on 19 May, 2005. *Episode III* was released two years after the weapons of mass destruction scandal became public. On 21 June, 2003, *The World Socialist Website* published an article entitled "Weapons of mass destruc-

tion in Iraq: Bush's 'big lie' and the crisis of American imperialism" ("Weapons"). The article states: "the Bush administration has been unable to produce any evidence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. It is increasingly obvious that the entire basis on which the White House and the American media 'sold' the war was a lie" ("Weapons"). The article goes on to report that "Bush warned repeatedly that unless the United States invaded Iraq and "disarmed Saddam Hussein," the Iraqi leader would supply terrorists with chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons to use against the American people" ("Weapons"). Similarly, in the war that begins at the end of *Epsiode II* and that is well underway at the beginning of *Episode III*, Palpatine uses the Separatist threat as his excuse for maintaining a standing clone army, and for retaining his power. It is clear that Chancellor Palpatine/Darth Sidious is manipulating both opposing factions of the war with lies. His latest apprentice, Darth Tyrranus/Count Dooku is charged with commanding the Separatist Army while Sidious as Palpatine presides over the Republican faction.

In the film the Emperor's deception is obviated by Obi-Wan Kenobi. In another melodramatically compelling moment he informs Amidala that, "Anakin has turned to the dark side … He was deceived by a lie. We all were. It appears that the Chancellor was behind everything, including the war." Obi-Wan highlights the corruption of the system he finds himself within with statements that uncannily echo media headlines accusing the Bush-Cheney administration of such lies.[6] Allegorically, his statement might reference either the awakening of the American public to a false consciousness imposed upon the working class in a Marxist analysis of capitalism, or to the governmental manipulations of the Bush-Cheney administration that lied about weapons of mass destruction to justify an oil war. In either case, Obi-Wan betrays the ideological mandate to keep patriarchal corruption concealed, just as the "'*Unheimlich*' *is the name for everything that ought to have remained … secret and hidden but has come to light*" (Freud 933). In the process, Obi-Wan admits that he, too, was deceived, and seems to experience anxiety in the recognition, given his Jedi powers of intuition, that he, in fact, knew all along.

From weapons of mass destruction to commodity fetishism, the film laments a crumbling system and the global recognition of its increasingly untenable imperial agenda. In *Episode III*, all of this is coded as a fantasy of tragedy. Obi-Wan Kenobi, one of the highest graduates of the only recognizable educational system in the films, the Jedi academy, exposes the truth about the war and tries to remain loyal to a paradigm of democracy. He insists to Anakin: "I'm loyal to the republic, to democracy." The films, however, demonstrate slippage

in the definition of "democracy" and "republic" as the ailing republic shifts into imperialism. Silvio argues that "Coruscant is after all the center of a benevolent (if somewhat ineffectual) Galactic Republic, the very thing that Palpatine eventually supplants with his evil Empire" (69). However, this ostensibly benevolent republic is already the empire it becomes. In *Episode I*, Palpatine admits that the then democratic republic was already "mired in … corruption." In Gore Vidal's 1986 article "Requiem for an American Empire," he had already observed this characteristic of America: "[f]rom the beginnings of our republic, we have had imperial tendencies … But the Empire has always had more supporters than opponents" (19). He goes on to observe that the American "republic [has begun] to crack under the vast expense of maintaining a mindless imperial force" (24), and sardonically opines that "[t]oday, of course, we are … a nation armed to the teeth and hostile to everyone" (20). Similarly, in the films, the change in the narrative from republic to empire is mere semantic re-signification; ultimately it is the same body politic that maintains the same standing army. Amidala notes that as the Republic is declared an Empire by acclamation, the decision is met with thunderous applause, but nothing much else changes. It seems that the republic was already an empire, and the film depicts a fantasy of celebratory acceptance by all but a few of the major protagonists.

It is not hard to see Bush as the emperor: working both sides of a war to satisfy the machinations of his own political design. In one of his most infamous quotes during an interview with congressional leaders on 19 December, 2000, he attempts a tongue-in-cheek trivialization of this nature of his political career. "If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator" (Bush, Jr.). The Bush-Emperor allegory only breaks down in the fact that Palpatine is an intellectually superior character within the narrative, while Bush was almost universally hailed as lacking in that regard—intellectually castrated by his own presidential father, as it were. The films can thus be read as an American fantasy of the revered intellect of their fearless leader projected onto the only one who needs such a projection.
In the films, Sidious/Palpatine manipulates Anakin into committing the most heinous war crimes. In *Episode III* Anakin, as a fledgling Sith apprentice, murders all of the Separatist leaders, and, in a particularly troubling scene, a population of Jedi children. American war crimes were similarly egregious. In *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, Stephen Eisenman concludes that the torture exercised against Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison was the inevitable result of a severely repressed patriarchal

system supported by the highest ranking officials of the American military and the federal government. One of the most conservative estimates of the civilian death toll in Iraq places the number at over 65, 000 (Leigh), and the iraqbodycount.org website reports that "[o]f the 4,040 civilian victims of US-led coalition forces for whom age data was available, 1,201 (29%) were children" ("Iraqi deaths"). Also in *Episode III*, the Emperor attempts the genocide of an ostensibly oppositional religious faction. He executes what he refers to as "Order 66" and the clone armies turn on their Jedi leaders. In the film it is the Jedi who are nearly eradicated by the Sith. In American politics, an ostensibly Christian president attempts to eradicate, or at least wholly vilify Muslims and Islam; in this allegory, American Christianity is coded as a force of genocide, and participates with a battery of post-9/11 films that conflate Christianity with war and evil, such as *Religulous* (2008), *Legion* (2010), and *The Book of Eli* (2010), amongst others.

As the Republic in the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy faced its inevitable dissolution into an empire of evil, it is depicted as rife with the militant and corrupt machinations of its governmental leadership and guilty of the most egregious war crimes, and it is exposed as an economic empire, still fully constructed as a racist and exclusionary patriarchy. One can only imagine how this unforgiving, uncanny reflection of American political culture must have felt to the average American. In this respect, Silvio notes "the dissonance that many Americans feel between the supposedly benevolent and progressive nature of our new global economy" (67), whereby American dissonance from the Iraq War is referenced via the euphemism of a global economy, though it is undoubted that the American cultural landscape "does not always appear to benefit the middle or working classes of the country" (67). As early as 1986, Gore Vidal criticized Cold War economic policy for this reason.

> We shall have an arms race, said … John Foster Dulles, and we shall win it because the Russians will go broke first. We were then put on a permanent wartime economy, which is why a third or so of the government's revenues is constantly being siphoned off to pay for what is euphemistically called defense. (18)

In a more specific reference to the Iraq War, in his 2007 article entitled "Bush Has Destroyed Iraq and America," Paul Craig Roberts discusses the Bush administration in terms that could just as readily be applied to Palpatine's double identity and his manipulation of both sides of the war in the films. Roberts highlights the malaise of

responsibility felt by the American public, stating: "Every American who voted Republican shares responsibility for the great evil America has brought to the Middle East" (Roberts). Anakin/Vader, the hapless and romantic dupe who was manipulated by the Emperor all along, expresses his emotion in an oft-ridiculed cinematic moment when he releases a lamenting howl: "Noooooooo!" Scathing indictments such as Eisenman's *The Abu Ghraib Effect* or the myriad headlines that criticized America's role in the war must have caused substantial anxiety regarding the Iraq War and its consequences.

Episode III attempts to alleviate American social anxieties regarding responsibility for these war crimes by displacing them with fantasies of redemption. All of the responsibility for the war and its fallout is displaced onto Emperor Palpatine and the anonymous, corrupt bureaucrats of the senate, which can easily be read as an allegory, if not an analogy, of President Bush and the senate of the Bush-Cheney administration, respectively. The film invites the audience to identify most closely with the war heroes Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, both of whom are redeemed from the Emperor's evil design. Anakin's transformation into Vader is coded as a form of tragedy, which already inherently carries the redemption achieved in the post-history presented in *Return of the Jedi* in 1983. In the prequel trilogy, Vader acts as a fantasy that already indicates we can and will be delivered of the evils of the military-industrial complex—that in the hands of the next generation (in the original trilogy), all will be well. Obi-Wan Kenobi represents the dignity of an academic hierarchy in his efforts to remain loyal to the tenets of democracy and freedom. In doing so, he finds himself tragically alone and facing exile. In this narrative progression, the war heroes must either become complicit with the evil designs of a corrupt administration, or face banishment.

Such an attempt to dislocate the body politic from a corrupt administration only allegorizes the failings of presidential authority, thereby causing a schism in the patriarchal order, and rejuvenating the very anxieties it attempts to displace. Such ruptures in the mythology of the patriarchal-presidential authority have always been concomitant with deep social anxiety, perhaps best exemplified during the Carter administration. Indeed, the original *Star Wars* emerged as a feel-good valorization of anti-imperial forces in the wake of Watergate and the fall of the Nixon administration. Richard Porton's words regarding Benjamin's description of allegory are instructive in this regard:

> Benjamin's preoccupation with the 'transience of human history' and

> the instability of meaning ... might seem irrevocably melancholy, but his superficially pessimistic emphasis on 'the brokenness' of the world is always tempered by radical optimism – 'a visionary glance' granted to the historian who, armed with the capabilities of a 'prophet turned backwards,' can 'perceive his own time through the medium of past fatalities. (99)

However, the allegories in the prequel trilogy provide only a pyrrhic "visionary" perception of our "own time." By coding America's redemptive heroes as the tragic dupes of an evil administration, the films betray a malaise experienced by an American populace increasingly aware of and disillusioned by a corrupt leadership that continued to maintain an increasingly untenable military-industrial complex.

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[1] In this context, and throughout the paper, "ideology" refers to culturally constructed notions of what is true and natural.

[2] Also quoted in Bellin (18).

[3] In 1995, The New York Times reported that "[t]he United States and Japan brought their bitter trade dispute to the European Continent today, with senior representatives from both sides accusing each other of using misleading figures on Japanese imports of American autos" (Nash n.p.).

[4] David Pilgrim observes that:
[c]ritics claimed that Jar Jar, a bumbling dimwitted amphibian-like character, spoke Caribbean-accented pidgin English, and had ears that suggested dreadlocks. Wearing bellbottom pants and vest, Jar Jar looked like the latest in black cinematic stereotypes. Newspaper editorials and internet chat room discussions repeatedly invoked Stepin Fetchit's name (n.p.).

Stepin Fetchit was the stage name of African American actor Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry. Perry's iconic and controversial Fetchit character reproduced stereotypes established by the 19th century minstrel tradition well into the twentieth century (Pilgrim n.p.). Pilgrim goes on, "This incident suggests that Fetchit's legacy is to be remembered as a coon caricature: lazy, bewildered, stammering, shuffling, and good-for-little except buffoonery" (Pilgrim n.p.). Parodic assaults against Lucas' ethnic profiling abound. In an October 1999 *MADtv* sketch, an ersatz George Lucas, played by Will Sasso, proudly introduces a new character to the *Star Wars* universe, a long-lost relative of Jar Jar Binks named "Aunt Jar-Jar-Mimah" ("Episode #503").

[5] Episodes II and III were both released following 9/11 and are substantially more cynical than *Episode I*, or any of the films of the original trilogy.

[6] In addition to the "Weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: Bush's 'big lie' and the

crisis of American imperialism" article listed above, media journalism reporting on the "lies" (and even quantifying them at exactly 935 as in CNN's "Study: Bush, aides made 935 false statements in run-up to war"), have abounded since the end of the war, culminating in Donald Trump's accusation during the 2016 Republican presidential debate in South Carolina.

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Our Villains, Ourselves:
On SF, Villainy, and... Margaret Atwood?

Greg Bechtel*

As a writer, scholar, reader, and fan of SF—that's pronounced *ess-eff*, but more on that in a bit—I tend to dislike psychoanalytic approaches to the speculative genres. In particular, I sometimes find myself bridling at how psychoanalytic uses of the word "fantasy" can reduce the complex aesthetic and political mechanisms of the entire fantasy genre (a subset of *ess-eff*, in my usage) to mere projections of repressed anxieties (on the one hand) or expressions of romantic and "irrational" escapism (on the other).[1] What can I say? We folks who take SF seriously on (and in) its own terms can get a bit testy about that sort of thing. And yet, David Christopher's examination of the Star Wars prequels—and their villains—does provoke me to think about just how much we love to hate our favourite villains and what a closer examination of those love/hate relationships may reveal. Take me, for example. I take great pleasure in hating a long list of real-world villains and villainous enterprises: the Big Banks, climate-change deniers, Stephen Harper, Neo-conservatives, Neo-liberalism, Fox News, Sun Media, and the list goes on. I also love my favourite SF villains, and I am not entirely immune to projecting these SF villains onto the real world. Senator Palpatine as George W. Bush? Sure, why not. Though as a Canadian having lived through ten years of Conservative government, I'd be more prone to projecting him onto Stephen Harper. As Christopher points out, such projections can even be weirdly comforting, allowing me to imagine George Dubyah or Stephen Harper as far more intelligent than reality would seem to bear out, brilliant Dark Lords manipulating and

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magnifying the flaws of an "essentially" good system (that is, liberal democracy) to achieve their own desired ends. But I digress.

My long list of favourite SF villains includes everyone from Darth Vader (of course) to Wilson Fisk (*Daredevil*), from Severian (*The Book of the New Sun*) to Number One (*Battlestar Galactica*), from Magneto (*X-Men*) to Kilgrave (*Jessica Jones*), and from Mrs. Coulter (*His Dark Materials*) to… Margaret Atwood. Margaret Atwood? Oh yes, most definitely. In fact, Margaret Atwood may be my favourite SF villain of them all. I like my villains complex, conflicted, and clearly "evil" in their actions but never purely, entirely, or irredeemably so. I like the way that certain moments of (potential) identification—when I find myself *almost* agreeing with the villain's perspective—can heighten the underlying shiver of evil. And Atwood's clearly got the evil-actions part down pat. The way she used her power and ubiquity as a literary icon to march King-Kong-like[2] into the SF sandbox, gleefully kicking sand in the face of the ninety-eight-pound nerdlings there who had the audacity to claim her as one of their own while she insisted that her own work was "speculative fiction" about near-future *possible* worlds, which could *obviously* be framed in clear contradistinction to the *impossible* bug-eyed-monsters-zap-guns-and-spaceships tropes of escapist, anti-realistic "science fiction."

But wait. Slow down. *Deep breath.* Some context.

I don't mean to say that Margaret Atwood is a *science fictional* villain. However, she has at times—and, I would argue, with some justification—come off as a villain *of* (and within, and towards) the science fiction genre. A few years back, Margaret Atwood created a serious kerfuffle in SF circles. It may have started when *The Handmaid's Tale* won the inaugural Arthur C. Clarke award for science fiction in 1987. Atwood, however, claimed that the novel wasn't *science fiction* but *speculative fiction*, since she "define[d] science fiction as fiction in which things happen that are not possible today – that depend, for instance, on advanced space travel, time travel, the discovery of green monsters on other planets or galaxies, or which contain various technologies that we have not yet developed" ("Writing" 102). Speculative fiction, by contrast, was about *possible* worlds rather than *impossible* ones. But things really heated up in 2003, when Atwood repeatedly insisted that her new novel, *Oryx and Crake*, was "a speculative fiction, not a science fiction proper," because "[i] t contain[ed] no intergalactic space travel, no teleportation, no Martians," and most certainly no "talking squids in outer space" (qtd. in Langford).

Suffice it to say, reactions from the SF community were less than positive. Many believed that Atwood was merely

protecting her brand as a "literary" writer, not wanting to scare off those of her readers who wouldn't be caught dead reading something so lowbrow as SF. As Gary K. Wolfe put it (more charitably than many), "She's not demeaning the SF market so much as protecting the Atwood market" (qtd. in Clute, "Croaked" 72). From an SF perspective, Atwood's strategy seemed to play into the colloquially sharp distinction between "genre" and "literary" fiction, whereby genre fiction is lowbrow, fluffy, escapist entertainment, while literary fiction is more serious, realistic, and sophisticated. Such speculation seemed entirely plausible to many SF readers and critics, especially given SF's long history of perceiving itself as a ghettoized and disrespected corner of the literary universe—as witnessed by Ursula K. Le Guin's various essays lamenting this fact[3] or, in a different vein, Samuel Delaney's reimagining of SF's role as a "paraliterary" form with the power to accomplish what more stereotypically "literary" forms could not. Others, like John Clute, argued that Atwood was entirely correct, in that *Oryx and Crake*'s clear ignorance of contemporary SF made it either very bad SF (e.g., outdated, clichéd, overdone, etc.) or not SF at all. Rather, as Clute puts it, "[b]alked by some seemingly unaddressable refusal to do her homework in the ways the 21st century is actually being made storyable by writers who have gone to school, Atwood is of course not writing contemporary SF about the near future ... [W]hat Atwood is in fact writing is sci-fi about the near future as envisioned by Hollywood" ("Croaked" 74).[4]

Meanwhile and for decades, significant portions of the international SF community—including and especially the Canadian SF community—had been not only avoiding precisely such restrictive definitions as Atwood had single-handedly imposed upon "science fiction" but also using "speculative fiction" as an umbrella term to encompass a much broader range of speculative genres (including science fiction, fantasy, horror, magical realism, surrealism, the new weird, and many more).[5] Furthermore, within the SF community, "science fiction" was generally understood to require some basis in plausible science (e.g. *Star Wars* would not qualify), with the sub-genre of "hard science fiction" having the highest threshold of scientific rigour. Granted, these definitions were (and are) continually debated within the SF community; however, whether out of ignorance or malice, Atwood managed not only to get these terms' existing usages wrong but to virtually reverse them. Thus, Atwood's unilateral redefinition of these terms seemed not only dismissive of SF as a whole but ignorant of how SF had been defining (and re-defining) itself in its creative and critical conversations for several decades.

The controversy came to a head with Le Guin's 2009 review of *The Year*

of the Flood, in which she lamented that Atwood's disavowal of the term "science fiction" had forced her, out of respect for that disavowal, to "restrict [her]self to the vocabulary and expectations suitable to a realistic novel, even if forced by those limitations into a less favourable stance" ("The Year" n.p.). This in turn led to a public discussion between the two authors in 2010, with each author explaining (among other things) her own usage of the term "science fiction."[6] By Atwood's later account, this seems to be the first time she discovered that the two of them espoused entirely differing definitions, such that "what [Le Guin] means by 'science fiction' is speculative fiction about things that really could happen, whereas things that really could not happen [Le Guin] classifies under 'fantasy'" ("If it is" n.p.). As seen in Atwood's judicious use of quotation marks here, she did not then—nor at any later time—back down from her own idiosyncratic definitions. However, since that time, she has also acknowledged that other people—such as Le Guin, who by all accounts is a longtime friend of hers—may have differing definitions from her own. And thus ended the long-standing feud between Margaret Atwood and the SF community. Sort of.

And yet, like John Clute,[7] I find myself unable to entirely undo my annoyance with Atwood's sustained recalcitrance on this particular point. And each time a precocious English major in one of my SF-centered first-year literature classes—it's almost always an English major who has read Atwood's *In Other Worlds*—cites Atwood's definition of "speculative fiction" as an established fact rather than a disputed term, a little part of me laughs silently (if a little bitterly) at the need to sidestep that term if I want to avoid what is (in the end) a rather silly debate. Certainly, I could give the critical context, and the history of each term, and so on.[8] In some of my classes (those focussed specifically on histories of SF and SF criticism), I do. But most of the time, that's not the main thing I'm trying to teach, and it's not something I care about all *that* much. Certainly not enough to take on an imaginary proxy-debate with Margaret Atwood, whose star in the Canadian literary firmament—and therefore her ongoing power to dictate terms—certainly isn't going anywhere. But each time I make that accommodation, I give an ironic internal salute to the incorrigible villain that Atwood has become for me: my personal SF nemesis.

Of course, like any villain, my SF-inflected version of "Margaret Atwood" is largely imaginary. Indeed—and I realize I am here at risk of slipping into psychoanalysis—I suspect Atwood's villainy may stand in for certain recurring anxieties and/or fracture points within SF itself. Certainly, SF writers, critics, readers, and fans have been debating the question of precisely what science fiction *is* for decades—

but I don't think that's the main issue here. Rather, more recently, I've noticed a persistent and possibly growing annoyance with "mainstream" (i.e., non-SF) writers who seem to be more and more commonly poaching on SF territory. At the 2016 International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, this frustration surfaced in a panel discussion called "The Problem of Science Fiction Exceptionalism."[9] Having arrived late to the panel, I don't know precisely how that title related to the intended topic. However, I do know that the conversation quite quickly came around to questions of genre-policing—whether it was in some ways necessary or useful and, if so, why.

Ted Chiang (a consistently award-winning writer of virtuoso-level SF)[10] suggested that if SF is an ongoing conversation among its many readers, writers, critics, and editors, the question becomes not so much one of policing genre as one of gauging each participant's level of genuine engagement in that conversation (qtd. in Clarke). For example, it's easy to imagine old friends conversing at a party being annoyed by a random stranger shoehorning himself into the conversation (I imagine this stranger as a man, for some reason) and proceeding to mansplain a garbled version of their own conversation back to them. Likewise, SF readers and writers may be annoyed by "outsiders" who simply insert themselves into the SF conversation without having "done their homework" and educated themselves on the preceding history, conventions, central stories, and debates within the genre. Another panellist cited Junot Diaz's *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* as a good example of an "outsider" (i.e., a "literary" writer) who clearly knows what he's talking about when it comes to SF culture and contexts while just as clearly respecting those cultures and contexts.[11] And all of this makes sense to me, especially the part about respect for that existing SF conversation. Recall, for example, Clute's frustration with Atwood's "refusal to do her homework," and how Atwood's implied (or perceived) disrespect for "science fiction" was precisely what got all those SF noses out of joint in the first place.

However, both panellists and audience members were quick to point out that the need for those entering the SF conversation to sufficiently educate themselves before doing so raises several important questions: How much education in the genre is sufficient? Is there a magical number (or list) of titles that any aspiring SF writer needs to be familiar with? If there is such a list, what works should be on it? And crucially, who gets to make that decision?[12] Alyssa Wong (like Chiang, a prize-winning SF writer in her own right[13] and by far the youngest person on the panel), acknowledged that she had not had as much time—in the simple, mathematical sense of age—to read the same number of canonical SF works as her co-panellists. Certain-

ly, she did her best to do her research and avoid reproducing tired SF tropes and story ideas, but as a writer she also needed to write *her own* stories, emerging from her own particular (sub)cultural background and influences, whether SF or otherwise. Interestingly, Wong—who has since become the first Filipina writer not only to win a Nebula Award but also to win that award with, in her own words, "a queer horror story" ("Hungry Daughters")—was not the one to raise the next corollary question, which came from an audience member: What about those who have been historically kept out of, erased from, or underrepresented within the genre? Do "we" (the SF community) have any responsibility to welcome, accept, and actively invite diverse perspectives (and writers) into the SF conversation? Could there be a danger in over-policing SF genre borders with arbitrary entrance requirements?

It was probably just chance that the panel ran out of time before this last question could be discussed in more depth. Probably. But the spectre of another much fresher (and rawer) aspect of the ongoing SF conversation had already entered the room. News of the preceding year's Hugo Award debacle had even spilled over into mainstream press,[14] a sort of airing of SF's dirty laundry. Depending who one asks, the 2015 Hugo Award controversy may be seen as resulting from an organized protest against the recent predominance of overly liberal, "literary," and social-justice-oriented writers (and writing) in the fan-based Hugo Awards.[15] Or it could be seen as two allied groups of "rabid chauvinists… [and] raging white guys" manipulating flaws in the Hugo Award nomination process to subvert the system to their own ends (Schneiderman).

But any way you slice it, none would dispute the basic facts, which are that two groups, the "Sad Puppies" and "Rabid Puppies," were unhappy with what they saw as the recent predominance of social-justice fiction at the Hugo Awards—written by so-called "Social Justice Warriors," or SJWs for short[16]—and had mobilized a membership-drive to ensure that their preference of works would dominate the ballot in 2015. Of these, the Sad Puppies were more moderate, while the leader of the Rabid Puppies (Theodore Beale, a.k.a. Vox Day) had—and has—an unfortunate tendency to call himself the "Supreme Dark Lord of the Evil Legion of Evil." He has also famously called award-winning SF author N. K. Jemisin an "ignorant half-savage" as part of a blog post where he argued that "Jemisin clearly does not understand that her dishonest call for 'reconciliation' and even more diversity within SF/F is tantamount to a call for its decline into irrelevance" (Day n.p.).[17] These two groups' purported mission—to paraphrase a certain right-leaning demagogue—was to Make Science Fiction Great Again. And for a brief moment,

they seemed to have achieved their goals, with Puppy-recommended works dominating the majority of the Hugo Awards finalist ballot. However, when the ballots were counted and the winners declared, all of the Puppy-backed works (except one) were defeated by "No Award."[18] And a collective sigh of relief was heard throughout (much of) the SF community.

So with all of this in mind, it seems easy to understand why a relatively good-natured panel discussion of "policing" the SF genre might be derailed when questions of diversity (or social justice) come up. Like a longstanding family dispute between ideologically irreconcilable positions, one might choose to avoid the topic in polite (or uncertain) company. Certainly, it's important to those involved—and important to talk about—but one doesn't exactly want to have that discussion in the company of "outsiders." That shit's just embarrassing for everyone. But okay, so what? Other than the embarrassment factor, why does that avoidance matter? Here, I find myself returning to the question of what our favourite villains may reveal about us. And I can't help recalling Christopher's suggestion that our villains may simultaneously expose and externalize aspects of ourselves that we might prefer not to acknowledge (or even consciously recognize), thus allowing us to imagine them as originating somewhere *other* than ourselves. If such were the case, what might my choice of villains—or those of my fellow SF-reading-and-writing tribe—reveal about *us* that we might rather not acknowledge?

As you have no doubt gathered by now, SF and its various fans and fandoms—including and perhaps especially myself—have a long history of carrying Great Big Chips on their (by which I mean *our*) shoulders. There's the lowbrow-highbrow Chip, which clearly plays into the SF community's (and my) frustrations with Margaret Atwood's disavowal of "science fiction." But there's also the whole nerdy-geeky-outcast Chip, the outsider-ness that many of us associate (whether positively or negatively) with SF and SF fandoms. We are the ones who often embrace the status of the outsider, the fringe, the weird, the scum at the bottom (or is it the top?) of the literary pond. We are the ones who have been known on occasion to refer to non-fans as *mundanes*. We are the ones who often define our preferred literature and media in direct contradistinction to what we commonly call "mainstream" writers, markets, and audiences. (Recall, for example, Clute's disdain for mainstream Hollywood "sci-fi," as opposed to the genre of science fiction proper.) Some of us, including our very own Chip (Delaney), have even been known to argue that we are not "literary" but "paraliterary" and that such a designation may not be so much a problem as a Damn Good Thing. We like to see ourselves as the few, the elect, the ones who

get it, while outsiders most certainly *don't*. "They" may think we are scum, but *we* know better. And this community of self-declared and self-selected outsiders can get defensive about (perhaps even possessive of) our status as beleaguered, besieged, or disrespected outcasts. This in turn might help to explain why we are prone to getting a bit defensive when an "outsider" infringes or poaches on "our" territory, so much so that we might even have a panel on that topic at an international conference.

The problem is, the Sad and Rabid Puppies remind us (the SF community) just how easily that sense of oneself as a marginalized, disrespected, yet nobly self-selected outsider can turn ugly. And looking too hard at those overlaps can be deeply uncomfortable. I think it should be clear by now that I don't (want to) empathize with the Sad and Rabid Puppies, groups whose politics, aesthetics, and arguments I would rather *not* associate with SF at all. These subsets of SF fandom identify so strongly with their own self-positioning as victims of "political correctness" in contemporary SF—as the "scum" rejected and disdained by a snooty liberal (and "literary") SF elite—that they feel the need to stage a guerrilla revolt against the people they perceive as their oppressors, hoping to bring back the (largely imaginary) good old days when science fiction meant bug-eyed monsters, spaceships, and (predominantly cis-white-hetero) manly rock'em-sock'em adventure stories. And yet, how different is this from me and my SF compatriots who feel we've been done wrong by Margaret Atwood, who we also feel has somehow oppressed us by disrespecting a genre (and ongoing genre conversation) that we are deeply invested in? We too find it easy to villainize Atwood's power as a self-consciously (read: snootily) "literary" icon, to see her as knocking us down a rung Just Because She Can. For that matter, how different is this from me getting grumpy about psychoanalytic readings of SF, not because of any carefully thought out logical objections but because I perceive them as misunderstanding (or distorting, or somehow disrespecting) the fantasy genre, my chosen area of study and expertise?

I suppose it's a good thing I'm not a fan of psychoanalytic approaches, or else I might feel like I had to answer those questions. I do think, though, that it's important to ask them. And to recognize that an *unexamined* sense of aggrieved self-righteousness can (sometimes) be a Very Dangerous Thing. So does that mean I must hereby forego or disavow my reading of Margaret Atwood as my personal favourite SF villain? Not a chance. Or at least, that's not what I'm going to do. But it does mean, perhaps, that I should take a closer look and question where that might be coming from. For example, I need to at least consider the possibility that Atwood's disavowal of "science fiction" and single-handed

redefinition of "speculative fiction" may bother me on a far more personal, less rational level. Perhaps it bothers me as a writer who, like Atwood, prefers to describe his own work as "speculative fiction" but who (unlike her) means something completely different than she does by that term.[19] Perhaps it bothers me even more that she, as a "literary" writer, has actively disavowed precisely the sort of connection to SF that I deeply identify with and would prefer to embrace. Thanks to the whole Atwood/SF kerfuffle, "speculative fiction"—although this isn't how Atwood defines it—is now often thought of as a more respectable, more literary cousin of "science fiction," which means I can no longer comfortably use the term "speculative fiction" to describe my own work. Rather, as a writer whose work is (sometimes) read as more "literary" than "SF"—and to be clear, the idea that those categories are mutually exclusive has always struck me as ridiculous—I find myself being especially careful when using that term in American SF communities for fear of sounding like an anti-SF snob. Could it be that it offends me *personally* that Atwood so cavalierly rejects *precisely* the sort of recognition from the SF community that I would take as an honour?

Of course it could. And this is why I need to remind myself that the "Margaret Atwood" I call my favourite SF villain *is not a real person*. She—the villain—is nothing more than a collection of villainous tendencies and actions (and yes, written statements) that I have shaped into a particular character, a handy foil that may help me to externalize (and thereby deal with) certain persistent cultural, sub-cultural, and personal conflicts. Not as a mere *symptom* or *neurosis*—which would of course be the true danger and consequence of denying that role qua role—but as a tool for starting to think through these conflicts. As for the *real* Margaret Atwood—the complex, fully realized, fully human individual? I have never met her in person, and I probably never will. I know very little about her, beyond her essays, books, awards, accolades, and the occasional Massey Lecture. And I know there is far more to her—and her thinking—than the tiny sliver I have chosen to focus on here. But the *villain*…

Ah, the villain. Her I know well. And I have polished her to a high gloss.

The villain is the one who once had a story published in *Tesseracts²: Canadian Science Fiction* and then later disavowed the term "science fiction" itself in sharp contradistinction to her own (idiosyncratic) definition of "speculative fiction." The villain published an entire book based (at least partially) on her own definition (*In Other Worlds*), thereby establishing her terminology so solidly in the CanLit consciousness that I now find myself having to either avoid the term "speculative fiction" in my own teaching or engage in a lengthy discussion and careful critical contextualization

in order to do so. The villain, my imaginary nemesis, is also the author of an enthusiastic introduction to *Imaginarium 4: The Best Canadian Speculative Writing* ("Introduction: Don't Be Alarmed")—an anthology of Canadian SF encompassing "speculative short fiction and poetry (science fiction, fantasy, horror, magic realism, etc.)" ("Imaginarium 4")—which also contains a reprint of one of my stories. And the villain is the one who wrote that entire introduction without ever once backing down from her own definition of "speculative fiction" (even while acknowledging that the editors use an entirely different one), placing that term in scare-quotes whenever she used it to refer to the contents of the anthology. As she puts it, "What you're holding in your hand is 'speculative,' then, whatever may be meant by the term. Let's call these stories and poems 'wonder tales'" ("Introduction" 15). That clever, incorrigible, glorious villain is so thoroughly infuriating that she even managed to write her refusing-to-budge-on-her-definition-of-speculative-fiction introduction *to an anthology of speculative fiction* (and poetry) without disrespecting a single story in the book. In fact, she seems to like it quite a bit and expounds at some length upon the rewards of reading such a volume.

Oh that rogue, that devious silver-tongued trickster, that… that… *Margaret Atwood*.

What can I say? Yes, Margaret Atwood is still and shall continue to be my favourite SF villain for the foreseeable future. I can think of none better. My honoured—and almost entirely imaginary—adversary. Touché, Ms. Atwood. An honour indeed.

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[1] In the latter case in particular, I find it hard to resist bringing up Tolkien's discussion of the profound difference between the Flight of the Deserter and the Escape of the Prisoner. But don't mind me. I can be a little hair-trigger defensive when it comes to my favourite genre(s). Though if you're at all curious, you can find that discussion in Tolkien's essay "On Fairy Stories." It's about two thirds of the way through.

[2] As Mark Anthony Jarman once (satirically) put it, in a surreal story about (among other things) Atwood's ubiquity in the Canadian psyche, "I look out the window. Margaret Atwood is climbing the outside of the [CN] tower like King Kong, like Spiderwoman." (See "Love is All Around Us.")

[3] See, for example, Le Guin's "Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" (1974) and "Spike the Canon" (1989).

[4] It should be noted that Clute here does not intend "sci-fi" as a synonym for "science fiction" but as a judgement of quality, since within (some parts of) the SF community, "sci-fi" has long been a pejorative term reserved specifically for poorly conceived and executed works that exhibit the flashiest external trappings of SF (e.g. lasers, rockets,

etc.) without the extrapolative rigour and substance that might more properly be identified as "science fiction."

[5] In a specifically Canadian context, Judith Merrill's introduction to the first *Tesseracts: Canadian Science Fiction* anthology (1984) notes "speculation" as an essential central element of the SF genre. *Tesseracts²: Canadian Science Fiction* (Gottleib and Barbour, 1987)—which, as it turns out, includes a story by Margaret Atwood—explicitly expands its definition of "science fiction" to include fantasy. *Tesseracts³* (Dorsey and Truscott, 1990) abandons the science fiction subtitle entirely, asserting in its introduction that "The S in SF means speculative" (3). Finally, *Tesseracts⁵: The Anthology of New Canadian Speculative Fiction* (Runté and Meynard, 1996), however, explicitly adds the term "speculative fiction" in the title, and this term has since been included in one way or another in the subtitle of all subsequent *Tesseracts* volumes of Canadian SF.

[6] The archived full podcast of this conversation can be found online at "Ursula Le Guin & Margaret Atwood" (http://www.literary-arts.org/archive/ursula-le-guin-margaret-atwood).

[7] See "Margaret Atwood and the S and F Words" (2011).

[8] For a concise summary of the term "speculative fiction" and how it has been used in various SF communities and contexts, for example, see its entry in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Nicholls and Langford).

[9] The panellists were James Patrick Kelly, Ted Chiang, Jacob Weisman, John Kessel, Siobhan Carroll, and Alyssa Wong. However, my summaries of each panellist's positions are reconstructed entirely from memory and should therefore be taken with a grain of salt.

[10] See Taylor Clarke's "The Perfectionist."

[11] My apologies: I don't recall who said this, only that it was said.

[12] The English lit scholar in me can't help noticing how this panel conversation reproduces, from first principles, longstanding questions in that field, where the idea of the SF conversation overlaps with the broader concept of intertextuality, and the question of what constitutes a "proper" or "sufficient" education in SF is at heart a question of canon-building, with all the corollaries that entails. But of course, this is precisely how SF does what it does. It constructs a thought-experiment from a given set of first principles, then pursues that thought-experiment's implications (whether logical, ethical, moral, or otherwise) to see where they may lead.

[13] See "Spotlight on: Alyssa Wong, author."

[14] Coverage included articles in *The Guardian* (Walter), *Slate* (Waldman), *The Atlantic* (Hurley), and New Republic (Heer), among others.

[15] See Brad Torgersen's "Announcing SAD PUPPIES 3" and "SAD PUPPIES 3: The unraveling of an unreliable field".

[16] The pejorative use of "social justice warriors" was popularized as part of Gamergate—a similar movement emerging from the videogame community, and with strong ties to the Rabid Puppies—and I will leave it up to you to decide whether you want to read up on that (rather long) side-story at "What Is Gamergate, and Why? An Explainer for Non-Geeks" (Hathaway).

[17] To be clear, in its original context, Day's phrase "ignorant half-savage" is even more explicitly couched in racist discourse than it sounds on its own. Day's full blog-post is easily Google-able, but I would highly recommend a quick reading of the following summary before deciding if you want to read the original post: "Vox Day says his totally-not-racist comments have been taken out of context. In context they're even worse" (Futrelle).

[18] See "'No award' sweeps the Hugo Awards following controversy" (Dean).

[19] As is probably already apparent, when I use the term speculative fiction, I mean the umbrella-term usage most common in my own community of (Canadian) SF writers, the one encompassing all of the speculative genres, including science fiction, fantasy, horror, magical realism, the weird, the new weird, slipstream, and all of the hard-to-classify works that (like my own) fall into the cracks between the various genres and sub-genres of the fantastic.

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Book Reviews

STEPHEN HARPER. By John Ibbitson. Toronto: Signal, 2015. 436 pp. $35 CAD.

Nathan TeBokkel*

Scum, Villainy, and Biography

Scum—whether the green algae on a pond, the white lime polymer of soap in a bath tub, or the myolipid film on a meat stew—is something that rises to the top naturally, not as the result of any sort of motivated plan or labour. Villainy, on the other hand, is machination, calculation toward a goal. While scum selfishly rises, villainy coldly plots.

The divisions between the two run along fairly clear etymological lines. From the Battle of Hastings until the 15th century, French was the language of the English courts, and "villainy" comes to us from Latin through French. Commoners primarily spoke dialects derived from Germanic roots, and it is from Middle Low German we get "scum." Villains, therefore, are intelligent and deceptive, well-connected, probably dressed better than us. Scum are dull and brutishly passionate, short on resources, rough around the edges.

But both words also connote a sense of the outside or ostracized. Villain's etymological forebears meant farmhand or peasant, someone outside urban centers of power, whereas scum has nearly always meant foam or froth, that filth which is outside a main body but no less a part of it. Do scum and villainy depend on this liminality? And could this externality not make one empathetic to others on the outside?

Biography and criticism, in connecting gritty details with grand ideals, may offer a metaxis between scum and villainy, but politics, in the sense of the neoliberal institution, may just be the nexus where scum and villainy converge. Its contingencies and inanities afford scum opportunity after opportunity to rise witlessly and hoard wealth and power; its complexity and

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spectacle afford villains the variables and people to manipulate, and the goals to motivate them to do so. Villains, it seems, will tell us their motives, but we'll doubt them and guess that their *real* motives are bad. Scum won't tell us their motives because they aren't aware of them or have none, and so we'll guess that their motives are also bad.

Far be it from us to determine whether John Ibbitson, Stephen Harper's biographer, is either scum or villain. Far be it from us to determine whether Stephen Harper himself is either scum or villain. But for both men, these determinations may be made along the same lines: How do their motives align with their apparent motives? How do these suits fit them, if at all?

Ibbitson's goal is to "understand the man himself" (*x*)—to introduce us to "Harper the Man," not "Harper the Politician"—because, as he rightly concludes, many biographers have already introduced us to Harper the Politician. However, either through art or artlessness, he devotes nearly his entire tome to tracking Harper the Politician, first from a lukewarm high-school Liberal to a disenchanted and conservatively inclined freshman, then from a young Reformer to a powerful Conservative. The information Ibbitson discloses about Harper the Man, though derived from a formidable list of sources, is anecdotal, second-hand, and often presented as asides to this general narrative.

The book culminates in what Ibbitson calls Harper's Six Big Things (the words and capitalization are his). These are:

1. his redistribution of federal-provincial relations and termination of the Quebec sovereignty movement (267);
2. his management of the economy, especially through the 2008 crisis (306);
3. his reorientation of foreign policy to be more inward-looking, blunt, unilateral, and results-oriented (322);
4. his complete overhaul of immigration and refugee policy (348);
5. his tough new law-and-order agenda (382);
6. his many trade agreements (388).

A detractor would argue that Harper barely spoke with the provinces, that Quebec sovereignty was either good or was terminated by the NDP, that Harper was in denial about the market crash of 2008, that his immigration policy viewed refugees as queue-jumpers, that crime rates were the lowest in history when Harper overpopulated the jails with laws that have since been deemed unconstitutional, that trade agreements are trashing Canadian industry. A detractor would also point to Harper's environmental negligence, his throttling of research and science, and his abuse of Canadian democracy through bloated omnibus bills, sly prorogations, and stonewalling the press and the opposition.

But Ibbitson mentions most of this. And his point is not that they're Six Big Uncontroversial Things, merely that they're paradigm-shifting no matter our political stripe. He lists successes and mistakes over and over, and so his book reads a little bit like a giant list. When Ibbitson praises Harper's successes, he lists them for pages; we almost can't make out what it is Harper succeeded at over the heavenly chorus Ibbitson conducts in his honour. When Ibbitson denounces Harper's mistakes, he lists them drily, less with elaboration than with excuse: he downplays the mistakes' seriousness, attributes them to an uncharacteristic outburst of Harper's characteristic temper, and resorts to that old political standby, "The Liberals did some bad stuff, too."

This politicking may point to motives on Ibbitson's part, and we may be tempted to guess they're bad or assume Ibbitson is unaware of them, but they could be charitable. So, maybe it's the person looking at the so-called scum or villain, the person critiquing his motives, who should be critiqued. In any case, politicking is to be expected in a book about politics. However, Ibbitson promised us the story of the life of Harper the Man, not the Politician, even if the Man had a life that happened to be very political.

We can comb through Ibbitson's prose to glimpse Harper the Man. We can find our own list of six little things, based not on Capital Letters, but on repetition. While Ibbitson's declared structure is a grand, idealistic List, his writing produces a littler, grittier list; his scrupulous sculpting of Harper's life leaves as its dross a scree of bothersome pebbles.[1] These liminal, contingent details of the Man may just displace the Ozymandiac Politician.

Ibbitson repeats—meticulously or unconsciously, or both—these same six items, over and over. The number of repetitions is important, but so is their location and their emphasis. These six little things often begin and end sections and chapters; they often appear as excuses for Harper's mistakes and causes for his actions. Therefore, Harper the Man is made by the following:

1. his father, an accountant for Imperial Oil with an overweening pro-Israel ideology (9);
2. his smarts. Educated at Richview, University of Toronto, and Calgary, Stephen becomes "Straight-A Steve," until "Smart" becomes his almost Homeric epithet (48);
3. his anti-elitism and victim complex: growing up as a suburbanite with asthma and weak ankles, unable to play the sports he loves and so resorting to memorizing their statistics (13), Harper crafts an exquisitely elitist anti-elitism, able no matter what to see himself as the outsider, victim, insurgent (103). He detests the "political class," which

he defines as scientists, researchers, educators, bureaucrats, activists, journalists, and communicators who draw their income not from the market but from the public sector (80). He detests the Left, which he defines as "tax recipients" in opposition to the Right's taxpayers (80). And he detests the "Laurentian elite," the wealthy east-Ontario-and-west-Quebeckers who'd controlled Canada since 1867 (13). He sees himself, ironically, as outside urban centers of power, and this view doesn't do much for his empathy;

4. his hatred of being told what to do: from his time at Northlea Public School, when he is chastised for telling a teacher that Jupiter had one more moon than the teacher said (because Harper had read a science paper and learned this new fact), to his time working for Preston Manning and the Reform Party, to his 6-year Master's Degree, Harper is completely unable to take orders from anyone;
5. his idealistic nationalism: a Leafs fan, an avid student of the Canadian economy, a transplant from Leaside to the West, Harper loves what he thinks Canada is—hockey, economy, and oil. He seeks to make his idea of the nation into a reality, despite detesting those, like Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin, whom he accuses of being "able to turn their theories into laws" (384);
6. his need to control and order his world: raised in the sheltered suburbs, in the failed first "planned community" in Canada, Leaside (3), Harper punctiliously organizes the world around him—even through recreation, which is simply "switching from analyzing finance department statistics to analyzing hockey statistics" (235).

If we set these six little things beside the Six Big Things, we may move from seeing Harper as a brilliant statesman who united his country, weathered its financial crisis, redefined its international presence, cracked down on crime, and attracted countless businesses, to seeing Harper as a crafty, (self-)ostracized power-monger who received his ideological passion with his pablum, who saw himself always as an underdog punching up against all odds to turn his dreams into realities and so order his world. Are these fault lines unique to Harper, or are they symptomatic of spectacular societies and neoliberalism more generally? Biographically for Ibbitson, politically for Harper, and critically for us, could these discrepancies be the work of scum, villain, more, or less?[2]

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[1] The word "scrupulous" is from *scrupus*, Latin for "rough pebble."

[2] These questions must be answered more scrupulously by Ibbitson, by us, and by bi-

ographers, politicians, and critics, perhaps, in general. To answer them, we must reflect not only on our subject's motives and circumstances, but on our own, which is something we may sometimes neglect to do as we write a biography, read an article, post online, or speak aloud. If the difference between scum and villainy—or the decision to apply these labels in the first place—really is in the eye of the beholder, then we must be more charitable, more empathetic beholders, meticulously and unconsciously.

VALERIE SOLANAS: THE DEFIANT LIFE OF THE WOMAN WHO WROTE SCUM (And Shot Andy Warhol). By Breanne Fahs. New York, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 2014. 352pp. $18.36 CAD.

THE INSPIRATIONAL SCUM MANIFESTO: CALENDAR 2016-2017. By Kenton deAengeli, Jordan Piantedosi, Meredith Kleiber, Ryan Humphrey, Kristen Felicetti, Andrés Toro, Tracy Feldman, Janet Lackey, Grace Lin. scumcalendar.com

Jacob Evoy*

Breanne Fahs's *Valerie Solanas: The Defiant Life of the Woman Who Wrote SCUM (And Shot Andy Warhol)* provides readers with a long-awaited in-depth biography of Valerie Solanas almost three decades after her death in 1988. Fahs's biography laboriously tracks the life of one of the most notorious radical feminists of the 1960s and 1970s—a task which previously had seemed "a sheer impossibility (Valerie was homeless! She had twenty different names! Her mother burned all her

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belongings! She was *dangerous*!)" (Fahs 5-6). Most famously known for her satirical and political *SCUM Manifesto* (self-published in 1967 and commercially published in 1968), Solanas' life had been shrouded in mystery. While many shortened biographies have been published, none compare to the depth and balance provided by Fahs; previous biographies published with reprintings of the *SCUM Manifesto* frame the story of Solanas's life around her interactions with Andy Warhol, but Fahs skilfully (and justly) centres the biography around Solanas herself and her manifesto. As Fahs asserts, "The story of Valerie's life, more than anything, is a story of her relationship to the manifesto" (5).

Writing the history of women can already be a difficult exercise due to the lack of surviving sources, but Fahs' task is further complicated by the following facts: Solanas was homeless for a large portion of her life, was in and out of prison and mental health institutions, and her mother destroyed all of her possessions following her death. To uncover the details of Solanas' life, then, Fahs utilizes a range of historical tools: she slogs through museum, public, and private archives, she tracks down Solanas' personal correspondence and communication (with figures ranging from famed radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson to former actress and model Ultra Violet, who was one of the last people to speak with Solanas before her death [Fahs 325]), she diligently collects Solanas' many anonymous and misattributed publications (publishers often misspelled her name as "Solanis" [Fahs 156]), and she conducts dozens of interviews with those who worked with, knew, met, or even saw Solanas (ranging from Solanas' sister to Margo Feiden, with whom Solanas visited and spoke just prior to shooting Warhol [Fahs 134]). Solanas was, and is, an infamous figure in many circles, and Fahs constructs a nuanced view of her being and her work, addressing the complexities of Solanas' life and politics and making possible the "impossibility" of Solanas' experiences as a queer, disabled, and homeless woman. Such nuance is accomplished by Fahs' seamless traversing of multiple complex discourses, including pop culture, anarchism, feminism, queerness, classism (homelessness), and critical disability studies (mental health). By situating Solanas' life in relation to these discourses, Fahs demonstrates how Solanas and SCUM challenged them. Fahs's academic diligence is a welcome change from biographers' affinity to focus solely on Solanas' mental disability and violent tendencies—and it is a diligence that produces a well-rounded image of Solanas as a human being living in a world not made for her.

Fahs' second chapter, "Shooting: SCUM, Shots, and Stupidstars, 1967–

1968," will captivate those wishing to better understand Solanas' shooting of Andy Warhol. Fahs directly confronts the idea that Solanas's shooting of Warhol was an act inspired by *SCUM*; by doing so, Fahs avoids the pitfalls of the sane-ism conventionally used to criminalize the mentally disabled more broadly. Following the shooting, for example, many of Solanas' contemporaries (and readers of *SCUM Manifesto*) tended to view both the shooting and *SCUM* as products of her mental disability. Even now, "[w]hen the shooting of 1968 is given as Valerie's fifteen minutes of fame, *SCUM Manifesto* serves as its footnote" (Fahs 59). While by no means justifying the shooting of Warhol, Fahs delicately reframes the event to show that

> [Solanas'] relationship with Andy merely formed a center point for many forces moving through Valerie's life at the time: her growing anger towards men, particularly men with power, prestige, and wealth; her interest in self-promotion and fame, particularly as a writer; her emerging connection with the avant-garde, queer, and drag scene in New York; her wobbly mental health and the intensifying deterioration in her rational thinking; and the classic contradiction between her desire for acceptance and her outright rejection of all organized groups or movements. (60)

Fahs masterfully analyzes each of these forces, and their interactions, to reconstruct the events leading to Solanas shooting Warhol.

Cutting through the sensationalism surrounding Warhol's shooting, Fahs devotes the rest of the book to the remainder of Solanas's life, which other biographers have tended to avoid. The third chapter, "Provocation: The Contentious Birth of Radical Feminism, 1968–1973," has much to offer historians, feminists, and contemporary activists: incorporating interviews with notable feminists and activists, such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Florynce Kennedy, Fahs examines the emergence of the rift between liberal and radical feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. The central theme of this chapter is anger: a question that has followed feminists for decades is how one might mobilize and utilize anger in a productive way, with liberal feminists arguing that anger and violence have no place in feminism and radical feminists disagreeing. The debate over the utility and place of anger continues to this day but is now most often discussed within the framework of "respectability politics," a shift encapsulated well by Roxane Gay in *Bad Feminist* (2014). Fahs examines how Solanas'

shooting of Warhol spurred a debate within the National Organization for Women (NOW): those in the camp of Ti-Grace Atkinson went head-to-head with those in the camp of celebrity feminist Betty Friedan in the debate over what place (if any) anger and violence had in their feminist movement. This debate eventually lead to Atkinson and others splitting from NOW to form the October 17th Movement, "a group of radical women aligned around the idea of upending institutionalized sexism" (Fahs 186). By examining these debates through the framework of the shooting, *SCUM Manifesto*, and Solanas' life during and after her incarceration, Fahs provides insight into the history of feminism in the United States and the split between liberal and radical feminists.

The 2016 release of *The Inspirational Scum Manifesto Calendar* highlights the continued relevance of *SCUM* as an ideological framework for social justice, even as the calendar itself remains attentive to the histories of *SCUM Manifesto*, of artistic disruption, and of the emotional debates surrounding the life and work of Solanas. The calendar is a work of collaboration by artists Kenton deAngeli, Jordan Piantedosi, Meredith Kleiber, Ryan Humphrey, Kristen Felicetti, Andrés Toro, Tracy Feldman, Janet Lackey, and Grace Lin—and, one could say, by Solanas, as the artists each draw passages from the *Manifesto* to accompany their artwork. While Fahs' biography pieces together the full continuum of Solanas' life around the *Manifesto*, this calendar demonstrates that *SCUM* is also an artistic revolution meant to inspire, and make SCUM of, us all.

If "SCUM" is a politics of the mind (a reorientation of our thinking) as well as an embodied practice, then it is best summarized by this passage from the *Manifesto*, selected by Piantedosi for the month of February: "Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there exists to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females" (n.p.)—that is, there exists to SCUM, followers of *SCUM*—"only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex" (n.p.). The calendar is direct and confrontational in its artistic interpretations of these SCUMmy politics and practices. Consider the tip of a forefinger covered in shit, which is captioned with this quotation from the *Manifesto*: "The males has a Negative Midas Touch – Everything he touches turns to shit" (Lackey, "November"). Or consider the summery collection of dolphin, cake, beach, unicorn, and gumball machine emojis surrounding this quotation: "Women, in other words, don't have penis envy; Men have pussy envy" (Felicetti, "June"). This calendar transforms a quotidian household item into an in-your-face political statement: it is certain to draw eyes, to provoke

laughter and questions, and to instigate SCUMmy conversations.

One of the most fascinating months of the calendar also exhibits one of the most simplistic designs. Printed in white capital letters, over an astronaut's-eye view of Earth's horizon and the Northern Lights, is this passage from the *SCUM Manifesto*:

> But SCUM is impatient; SCUM is not consoled by the thought that future generations will thrive; SCUM wants to grab some thrilling living for itself. If a large majority of women were SCUM, they could acquire complete control of this country within a few weeks simply by withdrawing from the labor force, declaring themselves off the money system, ceasing buying; just looting and refusing to obey all laws they don't care to obey. The police force, national guard, army, navy and marines combined couldn't squelch a rebellion of over half the population. (deAngeli, "January")

The weight of the passage collapses normative understandings of space and time. Just as the first views from orbit radically refigured how we thought of our planet, so too does this image demand such a reorientation, exhibiting the power and significance of the anti-capitalist, anti-military, and anti-sexist politics of Solanas and *SCUM*, themselves so well highlighted in Fahs' biography. *SCUM*'s impatience challenges the notion that we must wait for a better future. Rather than accepting clichés like "think of the children" and "children are the future," *SCUM* and Solanas are unwilling to sacrifice their present desires for a promise that unborn future generations will thrive. It was decades prior to Lee Edelman's critical intervention in queer theorizations of temporality with *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) that Solanas presented this alternative to what Edelman would term "reproductive futurism." However, Solanas' vision of the future, unlike Edelman's, does not rely on the death drive or a conception of futurity based solely on negativity. Through her perpetual call for disruption of business-as-usual, Solanas instead provides a somewhat utopian queer envisioning of the future.

While Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* disposes of normative views of envisioning the future (and, by proxy, the present), it also challenges our understandings of space. Solanas' call for women to abandon the labour force and money system demands that women re-create spaces devoid of patriarchal and capitalistic framings of women's roles. While challenging the imperative to sacrifice now so future generations can thrive, the *Manifesto* asks for a reorientation of how we view and interact with the world. deAngeli's pairing of this anti-futurist quotation with a view of

the Earth's Aurora Borealis-lit horizon situates *SCUM*, and its glorious global-scale destruction, both within and out of this world—and the pairing of text and image with the month of January is sure to inspire some SCUMmy New Year's resolutions. What better way to honour Solanas' vision, what better way to become and embrace SCUM, than by tearing down all the things men have touched and turned to shit, by making men even more envious of the power of the pussy, and by giving the middle finger to normative conceptions of space, time, and the future?

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ECOSICKNESS IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. FICTION: ENVIRONMENT AND AFFECT. By Heather Houser. New York, N.Y.: Columbia UP, 2014. 309pp. $65 CAD/$30 USD.

Riley McDonald*

The final words of Heather Houser's 2014 academic monograph *Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect* are "today's diseased now" (228). This phrase (borrowed from American literary titan David Foster Wallace, the subject of one of this book's chapters) characterizes our time by way of its contamination and, through its emphasis on immediate temporality ("today," "now"), highlights the urgency of confronting the many environmental catastrophes that appear to increase daily in scale and visibility. In spite of the seeming urgency of these words (voiced by a disaffected Republican lawyer in Wallace's early short story "Girl with Curious Hair"), Houser appears less interested in tracing the sources of ecological problems than in recognizing the ways bodies and ecologies intermingle with one another—and in recognizing how this intersection of subjectivity and place is narrated. Through examining recent at-

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tempts by American authors to narrate the "medicalization of space" (17), Houser's volume maps the variety of connections through which ill bodies and environments discursively inform one another. Thinking through environmental disaster is undoubtedly urgent, Houser contends, but rather than issue a generalized call to environmental action (whatever that means), she explores the affective connections between bodies and environments in order to reveal the complex and shifting relations that people form with the wider world.

Ecosickness is a deft and thoughtful contribution to the fields of American literary studies, ecocriticism, medical humanities, and affect theory. Divided into an introduction of concepts, four case study chapters looking at novels and nonfiction memoirs, and a brief conclusion, Houser's study skilfully juggles these fields' interweaving discourses to develop exciting readings of canonical authors and reinvigorate well-trodden theoretical grounds. Houser makes a clear break from environmental and ecocritical writers of the past (whose massive archive she diligently researches and engages with in her introduction) through her rejection of "etiological" (2) narratives of cause-and-effect that clearly express how environmental damage negatively impacts bodies. Houser's interest is not focused on rigorously plotting effects, but rather on a more ephemeral subject: how bodily affects undergo continual changes within environments of illness. Houser opts to avoid canonical texts like Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) precisely for this reason: the "airborne toxic event" (qtd. in Houser 6) of that novel is too clearly linked to protagonist Jack Gladney's fear of bodily pollution and death. Instead, Houser selects books without obvious bodily-environmental linkages; the rural AIDS memoirs of Jan Zita Grover's *North Enough* (1997) and David Wojnarowicz's *Close to the Knives* (1991) that make up Chapter 1, for instance, are not *about* AIDS outbreaks in these non-urban areas, but rather about how these writers' experiences with HIV/AIDS colour their readings of landscapes that have been subject to deforestation and massive housing developments—how, in Houser's words, "figuring sick bodies in literature necessarily changes figurations of space" (59). Familiarity with disease and injury provides a powerful lens through which to consider the "natural" world, Houser contends, and the lexicons used to discuss these ecological and embodied discourses become increasingly fraught and entangled.

The affective and somatic affinities in sickness form the first prong of Houser's analysis. The second is her focus on affect, specifically the affective intensity that exists between bodies and their surroundings. Houser's project in *Ecosickness* is subtle and complex: she notes that we often feel crushed into paraly-

sis by the macro-structural forces that contribute to climate change, loss of biodiversity, toxic spillage, etc. But rather than retreat from these feelings toward ones with a more "positive" charge, Houser suggests that understanding these negative feelings are vital to developing a perspective that links the body to a wider environment and registers their coterminous relationship. The four main chapters—discord in Grover's and Wojnarowicz's HIV/AIDS narratives, wonder (and its obverse, paranoia) in Richard Powers' works, disgust as a trope of David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), and anxiety's prevalence in the novels of Marge Piercy and Leslie Marmon Silko—return continually to negative registers of affect, what Sianne Ngai would call "ugly feelings." Only Chapter 2, looking at Richard Powers' use of wonder to describe the natural world of sandhill cranes in *The Echo Maker* (2006), suggests that such negativity can be an impediment to environmental consciousness. As Houser notes, "wonder is an affect commonly associated with the American environmental movement of the twentieth century, and eco-writers from Rachel Carson to Mitchell Thomashow all invoke wonder as crucial to environmental care" (83). In Powers' fiction, however, wonder can become overdetermined, sliding into a kind of paranoia in which everything is perilously linked together in a way that "blocks attachment" (108). Even within *Ecosickness*' reading of wonder exists the possibility of relationships—among people—collapsing into hostile connections. Yet these negative experiences do not foreclose an experience of the natural world: they can still be embarkation points for environmental engagement. Houser clearly remarks that these affects are not impediments to action; rather, their dispositions can "energiz[e] people to act on environmental, biomedical, and social injustices" (17).

Indeed, Houser frequently links negative and seemingly paralyzing affective responses to powerful calls of politics. Chapter 3, for example, looks at Wallace's famously gargantuan novel *Infinite Jest* and how an affect of disgust animates the novel's huge cast of characters. In Houser's reading of the novel's hazy, unfocused plot, its multi-page tangents, and its infamous footnote structure, she sees Wallace as critiquing a disposition of "anhedonic solipsism" (160), of too much distance between things. For Houser, Wallace's antidote to such a passive existence is the feeling of disgust—whether through the presentation of grotesque bodies affected by indiscriminate waste dumping or the long passages detailing the physical pangs during a drug user's withdrawal. "[D]isgust slaps us in the face and forces us to confront what we would rather ignore" (120), writes Houser, thereby breaking the reader out of the passivity of postmodernity. Engaging with what is dirty and disgusting, instead of recoiling from it, becomes a decidedly political action.

Houser's conscious decision to situate her study in post-1970s examples may strike some as curious: after all, environmentalist critiques of America have been almost concomitant with its inception, from Thoreau's and Emerson's pastoralist writings to Theodore Roosevelt's development of the National Parks Service, to Rachel Carson's pathbreaking 1962 study *Silent Spring*, which exposed the universal presence and effects of industrial pollutants. Houser's defense of her subjects points to an increasing focus, in the aftermath of the Second World War, on the concept of "life itself" (5) as a code to be tinkered with and manipulated by biotechnological regimes. In particular, her fourth chapter explores how books like Piercy's *The Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) expose the eugenic impulse behind the notion of improving upon life, and thus how it becomes a weapon inflicted upon women, non-white subjects, and the impoverished. "Life itself" possesses an ideological overtone here, and the affect of anxiety utilized by writers like Piercy and Silko resists utopian narratives of universal betterment—particularly because they set their novels amid dystopian futures wherein nature and oppressed bodies are fodder for the experiments of an aloof and corrupt elite.

Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S. Fiction: Environment and Affect is an ambitious, gorgeously written, and thought-provoking book. Houser's resolute disinterest in developing causal connections between environmental and bodily illnesses may irk some readers, but her dedication to tracing the ambient connections between sick bodies and ill environments—as a means of cultivating ecological thinking through narrative—is immediately persuasive. If, as sociologist Mary Douglas suggested in her famous text *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), dirt and pollution offend against notions of order (2), then Houser's project aligns different qualities of contaminants to think about new ways of ordering the world.

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