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Editor

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Submission Procedure

Articles typically range from 4000-6000 words. Submissions longer than 10,000 words will not be considered. Please double-space manuscripts throughout, using Times New Roman 12pt. font with one-inch margins, a Works Cited Page, and, if applicable, endnotes. Submissions should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments via email to sjuhumanities@gmail.com

Front cover: *Millennialized* (2016) by Benny Lajet.

“Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways;
the point is to change it.”

Karl Marx

“In the twentieth century, we maybe tried to change the world too quickly.
The time is to interpret it again, to start thinking.”

Slavoj Žižek

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Preface

Slavoj Žižek has suggested that, after the spectacular failure of party-states in the twentieth century, it is no longer time for the Left to change the world, but again to interpret it. This reversal of Marx's famous edict from the Theses on Feuerbach comes in the wake of popular anti-capitalist and anti-racist revolts around the world: from New York to Cairo, Kobanî to Ferguson. There are, evidently, no easy divisions to be made between interpretation and change, between theory and practice, even in the absence of any major world power designating itself as Communist. And yet, Žižek's plea is a tempting one for those scholars and militants working in and outside of the current, increasingly globalized university system. How do we as Marxists, as post-colonialists, as feminists, as queer theorists, and/or as unaffiliated anti-capitalists think about the world today? How do we read texts, consume media, and interact with the cultural forms of late capitalism? Moreover, how do artistic mediums like literature, painting, and film respond to popular grievances, confront capital, or reinforce the power of the state?

This issue of *The Humanities Review* has asked its contributors to respond to Žižek's challenge and to consider the political relevance of interpretation today. Appropriately, the articles contained herein cover a wide range of material: from the intensified efforts under neoliberalism to remove indigenous peoples from the forests of India to the ideological function of Batman films in an era of mass-surveillance and extrajudicial torture. As these articles will demonstrate, the terrain, both ideological and physical, that capital has colonized is sweeping and the institutions it has given rise to to defend its interests are accumulating force and expanding their influence every day. As such, global and multidisciplinary interpretive strategies are necessary in understanding and ultimately combatting the systems of power and domination that capitalism has conjured. As Luis Omar Cenicerros remarks in the magazine's concluding article, it is "our

obligation to historicize and re-contextualize the world as it is and not how it is fabricated to be—to expose the material realities of global capitalist exploitation.” As each of the magazine’s contributors has shown, this radical act of unveiling is the political work of interpretation today.

Also included is a brief interview with French philosopher Alain Badiou, which, I hope, will prove insightful to those readers wondering, after all the biting critique is over and the inegalitarian social relations of capitalism remain, “What is to be done?” Referring to the stark limitations of our social reality as taking place within “the time of the state,” Badiou elaborates on the necessity of conceptualizing infinity and moving beyond the parameters set by contemporary capitalist social formations, including closed forms of identity. “In order to create the new time,” he says, “we must affirm that the horizon of the [revolutionary] political organization is without any limit.” In a characteristically orphic and labyrinthine way, Badiou argues that infinity and universality are intimately bound up together, each activating and feeding into the other. Only by thinking and creating both “a new time” and “a new universality” can a politics of emancipation for the twenty-first century begin to emerge.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Mentz and Dr. Sicari for their patience and probably misplaced confidence in my ability to put together a magazine. It took a while, but here it is! I would also like to thank Prof. Lee Ann Brown for introducing me to Alain Badiou and for allowing me to take part in an interview with him for Tender Buttons Press. Obviously, I also extend my gratitude to Alain for giving so generously of his time and for bearing one technological mishap after another with humor and with grace. It was more than an honor to speak with him and to plot the downfall of the state late into the night. Finally, I would like to thank all of this year’s contributors for their brilliant work, without which there could be no magazine.

My capacity for time management what it is, their punctuality and professionalism are models for us all.

Editing *The Humanities Review* has been an experience unlike any other. Despite the missed deadlines, the mysteriously deleted computer programs, and the countless white nights, I am truly proud of all the work that went into this little magazine. I hope that its readers will enjoy the articles as much as I have and come away with a renewed vigor to think, to act, and to interpret.

P.S. To whoever the next editor may be, do yourself a favor and start learning Adobe InDesign yesterday!

The Ideological Knight: Žižek and the Batfan in the Consequence of Transmedia

By Gregory Bray, PhD (SUNY New Paltz)

Introduction: Žižek's Bat-suit and Transmedia

In his article, "The Politics of Batman,"w Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek declares, "The Dark Knight Rises shows that Hollywood blockbusters are precise indicators of the ideological predicaments of our societies." Recent national and international civic upheaval has been syphoned in such a way to disconnect the actual political and social strife from the entertainment value that viewing and virtually participating in the strife provides blockbuster fandom. Brian Longhurst, Gaynor Bagnall, and Mike Savage add that the

...changing nature of social and cultural life requires a new understanding of interconnections among types of audience experience, simple, mass, and defused... (125)

They further assert, "performance, imagination, and spectacle are embroiled in practices of attachment and identity in everyday life of media-drenched societies at many levels" (137). Guy Debord's earlier manifesto, *Society of the Spectacle*, finds an ever-expanding foothold not only through Hollywood cinema, but also through the viral marketing outreach that attempts to place the audience in the film's world of story.

While Žižek's stance on Hollywood blockbusters as "precise indicators" has merit, in the case of Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight Trilogy, the messaging is not entirely a top-down prescription of ideological leanings. For the better part of the last decade, the major studios, in this case, Warner Brothers, have been mining from fragments of the fan voice, and even treating fans to virtual and real world participation in their transmedia campaigns. To fully understand the ideological interplay, what needs to be taken into account is not only how to read the cinematic text, but also

where to locate the space between the material onscreen, the marketing, and the audience the work seeks to capture.

In this paper, I will bridge elements of fandom studies, mean world syndrome, and Žižek's critiques to investigate how transmedia campaigns for major blockbusters have played a role in normalizing real world ideological pushes for handling the war on terror and class warfare. Woven into this are theories surrounding gaming and other forms of online interactions that dislocate the real. I will then make the case that the left has to consider the complex web of interactive messaging woven into Hollywood blockbusters as a means of fully understanding their ideological push—which is deeply entrenched, multi-faceted and reflexive.

The Fan Signal: Locating the Batfan

When fans are invited to participate in the world of story through transmedia campaigns, they are also treated to a world that should seem familiar. The Dark Knight Trilogy and later *Batman V Superman* mine from the fan voice in two modes. The first is through a form of augmented reality in their transmedia campaigns, and the second is by ensuring the films reference pre-existing popular texts, mostly from the mid-1980s and the early 1990s—material that is old enough to connect with a broad comic reading demographic, but current enough to be widely available in trade paperbacks and e-readers.

At present time, more so than any other era, fans (who exist in a broader “Geek Culture”) are in constant negotiation with the producers. In John Patrick Bray's essay, “There's Too Many of Them! Off-Off Broadway's Performance of Geek Culture,” he locates the notion of ‘fan’ through an intercession between Ken Gelder, and Henry Jenkins, whose work on fan culture helped establish fandom studies as an area of academic inquiry and exploration. He considers Gelder's notion of fans as subcultures “in which participants' ‘conformity or non-normativity must always be understood’ as a “structured refusal of one...of alienation” (123).

Bray further explores these concepts through Matt Hill, who “uses

the kinder term ‘enthusiast.’” He ultimately weaves together these notions by adding,

Taking these thoughts into account, an agreeable definition of a fan may be one who enthusiastically participates in the construction of a subculture dedicated to an aspect of cultural or pop-culture mythology. In other words, being a “fan” is not an isolated occurrence, but rather relies on the participants’ dedication to a group under a similar identity branding (124).

John Fiske asserts the polysemic (or many signed) readings of a text allow for variables of meaning from one fan to another, which permits a party to have an intense liking of an idea, a work of art, or even a person (“Television”). For producers, getting the fans on the same page can be challenging as each fan has their own notion of what Batman is. This has led to a kind of dialogue between fans and producers. The dialogue, of course, is not real—but providing a fan with the perception of having a voice has become a useful marketing tool.

Before the influence of electronic media, a fan’s relationship with a text began and ended with the primary interaction (text) and then a secondary interaction (dialogue with others). In popular culture, an early example of fans’ direct influence over fictitious characters’ stories is Sherlock Holmes—readers brought Holmes back from Reichenbach when Doyle believed him finished (Ue). In the post-electronic mediated world fan influence is almost always present. In 1988 DC Comics created a telephone voting system that gave Batman readers an option to either kill off Jason Todd (the second Robin) or allow him to live (Vaz). If the readers called one number, it was a vote to do him in. Calling another number would spare him. By a thin margin, readers voted to kill him off during the 1989 Death in the Family storyline—though it was later discovered that the vote was augmented due to one fan’s use of the speed-dial (Vaz). The fan’s voice was heard once again in 1988 when Tim Burton cast Michael Keaton as the grim avenger. There was a notable backlash. Editorials were published

that fought the casting decision, while petitions began to circulate around the country to appeal to Warner Brothers to change their minds (Daniels). Warner Brothers placed hastily assembled trailers into theaters ahead of schedule to allay fan concerns. The film opened to great fanfare, and fiscal success, and overall strong reviews from critics and the general public. The fans, with some exception, were ready to embrace this 1980s-style Dark Knight. The second outing, *Batman Returns* went into even darker territory. While the film was, for the most part, favorably reviewed, there was an undeniably splintered reaction in fan circles. There were defenders and critics, with loud dissonance in the discourse. McDonald's famously distanced their company from the film after incorporating merchandise into Happy Meals. This was not a film for children (Daniels). The next film pushed back against the darker nature of the first two films to bring fans back into theaters, and to expand merchandising without alienating the public. In other words, the fan's voice was recognized. During this period, the fan voice was relegated to the comic book shops, specialty magazines, and in box office dollars—the amount of times the fan would see the film, and purchase the merchandise, would be a testament to the film's quality one way or another.

By the time *Batman and Robin* arrived, the Internet was quickly growing to be the dominant form of electronic communication in the country. Even before it was released, in the summer of 1997, *Batman and Robin* was already facing a fan base that was entirely disinterested in the film's camp sensibilities. It went on to be perhaps the most maligned comic book property of all time (with an asterisk—at least one that had a larger release and a budget above 70 million dollars). The film could easily have been titled, 'Some days you just can't get rid of a bomb.' Director Joel Schumacher once blamed the failure of *Batman and Robin* on an "un-policed internet" (Burke). He alleged the dire word of mouth that circulated prior to the film's release did enough maltreatment to harm the film's critical and financial reception, no matter the film's actual quality. While this last point is certainly debatable, Hollywood slowly caught on and began

seeing the World Wide Web as an opportunity to create an illusion of dialogue with their audience.

By 2005 the Internet had situated itself as the major medium of communication between fan entities. No longer relegated to the byways of Comic Cons, letters to the editor, and comic book stores, fans now had sites where they could not only assert their views, but at times lobby for a particular style of film, actor, or filmmaker to work on a film. These sites, such as *Batman on Film* and *Corona's Coming Attractions*, were teaser or spoiler sites—keeping fan communities in the know regarding the next film in development, while offering forums for virtual fan connections. *Ain't it Cool News* cornered the market for a bit with Webmaster and editor Harry Knowles acting as “Father Geek” and guru to early web community adopters. The role of these sites augmented over time. *Batman on Film*, by its own description, grew into a lobbying site for “quality Batman films” (*Batman on Film*). Webmasters and Site Administrators act as the fan's voice to advocate for the films to adhere to particular style or convention, while inviting forum members to join in for the echo chamber. When *Batman Begins* went into production, screenwriter David S. Goyer remarked “we became familiar with a site called *Batman-on-film*” (*Batman on Film*). Goyer indicated that he, and the film executives, began checking into the site regularly to take the fan's pulse, and see how to best create a product that would ensure a positive fan response. This strategy paid off and the studio took this idea a step further through their transmedia Dark Knight viral marketing campaign. Their idea was to hire a firm to create viral sites, release information to the fan sites, and then engage directly with the fans in the transmedia terrain. From a moneymaking standpoint, this made sense—it not only gave the fans what they wanted, but also taught the fans how to want what the film studio was creating. As Žižek states, “Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire” (Sterrit).

Žižek and the Mean Gotham City

In their chapter “Growing Up with Television,” Michael Morgan, James Shanahan, and Nancy Signorielli reference a number of empirical studies that further support the notion that the interaction between audience and media mainstreams views through media cultivation (Morgan et. al 2002). Their study goes on to connect with mean world syndrome, or media’s cultivation of views that darken the world, increase the us verses them paradigm, and further cement a feeling of paranoia about the world and its systems. For example, the current post-9/11 fears in the west have been exacerbated by the endless news cycles, and representations of terror on the big screen. It is worth noting that escapist entertainment, once a vehicle to distract an audience from their fears and peril, now realizes the audience’s fear, packaged as entertainment. Films ranging from *The Transformers* to *Man of Steel* end with towers plummeting from majestic heights, as villains (now envisioned as terrorists) destroy hapless denizens, with only one man or a small team of idealized (read: traditional American capitalist values) heroes to stop them.

Mean world syndrome also makes the case that a fan may become desensitized to violence, or accept violence as normal behavior in their actual lives. Hollywood reflects, ups the ante, and then mainstreams a troubling worldview. One where power relations between us and them are the bottom line and the only answer to large-scale violence is larger-scale violence. In Chris Nolan’s Dark Knight Trilogy, the majority of villains are either terrorists (Ras Al Ghul, Joker, Talia), or working for terrorists, either willingly (Bane) or unwittingly (Jonathan Crane/ Scarecrow). The Dark Knight is a one-man war on terror, a notion that almost seems to fit in well with the post-9/11 conservative rhetoric, which harkens back to Horatio Alger—who hoists himself up, not via his own bootstraps, but through his own legally purchased semi-automatic. The image of the class warfare in *The Dark Knight Rises* was created before Occupy Wall Street; the image of people taking to the streets predated people taking to the streets, so that the fandom, in a sense, anticipated the heroes/villains scenario. Af-

ter all, in *The Dark Knight Rises*, the heroes included the police force and Batman; while the villains were the protestors who aligned with terrorist, giving a visual to *The Dark Knight Returns*' author Frank Miller's assertion that the occupiers were "The American Taliban."

Though these elements seem to support the American conservative's vantage, Benjamin Winterhalter makes the case that Nolan's film is not conservative propaganda. In his article "The Politics of the Inner: Why *The Dark Knight Rises* is Not a Conservative Allegory," he offers that a number of critics from *The New Yorker*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Salon*, and other outlets were quick to either condemn or champion *The Dark Knight Trilogy* as films that celebrate conservative ideology (1030). While conservatives celebrated the "moral clarity" of the film, others were quick to deride the films (*Rises* in particular) as thematically fascist (1003). Žižek, on the other hand, analyses Nolan as a neo-liberal and argues that his films mainstream views with this level of ideology. In other words, though the films situate Batman in the war on terror conversation, it is not done with a specific American political party allegiance in mind, but rather continues the neo-liberal tradition of simplification of world events, and then the amplification of capital (after all, Batman is a billionaire) to save the day. Batman has an already built-in audience, as the character has existed for over 75-years, and one that is also used to seeing real world events as a mediated carnival.

The Bat Ideology as Carnival

In his *Guardian* article, "Occupy Wall Street: What is to be done next," Žižek offers that serious cultural and societal issues can be easily transformed into another level of simulation. In the case of *The Dark Knight*, the viral marketing campaign provided fans with a highly interactive simulated carnival. In 2007, 42 Entertainment, a digital marketing firm, created a series of websites that targeted the Batman fan community. These sites included WhySoSerious.com and IBelieveinHarveyDent.com, which invited fans to participate in Nolan's world of story. Fans were no longer

considered mere spectators; they were now seen as stakeholders in the film's story. While there was sound reasoning behind the company's desires, the implementation of these ideas normalized real world terror and counter-terror efforts as a kind of game. Theorists familiar with game theory can attest to this. While considering virtual reality and gaming (one can think of experiences ranging from Second Life to Halo and World of Warcraft) Alec Charles argues,

It is not just that the virtual and the non-virtual are becoming indistinguishable; what is significant is that the non-virtual is increasingly subordinated to the virtual (Charles).

In other words, reality seems to shift to match the virtual. Charles further blurs the line between participation in a game, and being a spectator to the game. In other words, if one were to view a YouTube video walkthrough of a popular videogame, Charles claims that it is similar to the sensation of playing the game oneself. By this notion, one can easily see how the line can be blurred between participating in an event and participating in a virtual version of an event. It is the very realization of Jean Baudrillard's Third Stage in *Simulacra and Simulation*. It feels like the real world, but is not.

For example, one element of *The Dark Knight's* viral marketing campaign was a real world treasure hunt. Executed in cities around the United States during Comic-Con, fans were given clues (through fan sites such as Batman on Film and Superhero Hype) to uncover secret websites, which contained trivial pursuit-style quizzes. Site visitors were then given actual map coordinates to specific locations in a number of cities. Fans would go to the predetermined spots, in our physical real world, where they found a cake box. Upon opening the box, fans would find a cake, and, after tearing the cake open, would find a walkie-talkie that would give them further directions. Once fans followed the directions, a van suddenly appeared and mock-kidnapped the fans and brought them to a dark location. These fans were then indulged to a screening of a not-yet-released

trailer, one that “the Joker” had vandalized, so characters appeared with his trademark dark eye-rings and broad red lipstick. Fans participated in a virtual kidnapping.

A second element was a secret “travel agency” site, where fans would visit and submit their phone numbers. According to the fan sites at the time, submitting your phone number to this travel agency’s website was a way of signing up to be one of the Joker’s minions. Though this was the setup, upon entering their phone number the fan’s phone would suddenly ring. When the fan picked up the phone, a pre-recorded voice of Commissioner Gordon would tell the fan that they were now working for the Gotham City Police Department as a double agent, to spy on the Joker, and if the listener refused they would be arrested on conspiracy charges. At the same time, the fan’s computer monitor, with the travel page still loaded, would augment in to a GCPD page. In other words, when a fan signed up to be a Joker’s minion, they would actually be trapped by the GCPD and forced to work for them, or face arrest. While either of these marketing tactics can be thrilling, both are equally problematic.

In the first scenario, kidnapping by a terrorist is being turned into a kind of carnival. The fan gets the thrill of being captured, taken to a secret location, and “forced” to participate in an event. In the second scenario, illegal entrapment is being normalized as part of an interactive game. As the Joker himself may suggest, “It’s all part of the plan.” In expressing his concerns for normalizing virtual interactivity, Charles further warns, If those popular texts, technologies and practices which invite audience participation (detective stories, game shows, reality television, competitions and lotteries, phone-ins, teleshopping, electronic governance, citizen journalism, Facebook and YouTube, online gambling and digital games) in fact offer only an illusion of interactivity, then - rather than promoting participation - they may in fact serve entrenched structures of power by sublimating our desires for active, participatory citizenship (Charles).

The transmedia campaigns are not truly interactive; they are staged so that the fans feel as though they are interacting in the world of sto-

ry, though the producers are always controlling the elements—it is not a dialogue or an exchange, or even real. When fans interact with *The Dark Knight* transmedia, they are being relocated to a world that mirrors elements of the real world, but remains a fiction—one that reworks existing societal tensions into a loaded commentary, so that the fan reinserts this augmented view into their real world. The transmedia mainstreams the film’s underlying ideological messaging into a feedback loop between fans and producers. With fans now experiencing a world that calls them to be kidnapped or entrapped as entertainment, is it any wonder that one of the messages in *The Dark Knight* is civilized society needs mass-surveillance as a counter-measure against terrorism?

Much of *The Dark Knight* makes the case for The Patriot Act’s domestic surveillance program, and demonstrates that it is the only option left to the public when faced against terrorism, or in this case, The Joker. And yet, as Žižek asserts, the Joker is the only honest character in the film. Žižek argues that Harvey Dent lies about being Batman in order to spare the Dark Knight, Gordon fakes his own death, and later Batman and Gordon conspire to cover up Dent’s death and put the blame on Batman (resulting in a manhunt for an innocent party). Furthermore, one of Joker’s aims is for Batman to take off his mask—remove the lie and reveal the truth (Žižek Politics). The obvious message is that in order to preserve society, the public must intentionally be misled and spied upon by agencies designed to protect public trust, or all of society will crumble.

This is cemented by maintaining the Joker as a mysterious agent. The Joker has no backstory. In the comics, the Joker has been the subject of multiple origins over the years. In Alan Moore’s *The Killing Joke*, the reader meets a Joker who once was a struggling standup comedian, and turned Joker only after losing his wife to an accident, and falling in with the wrong crowd (1988). The Joker is created due to “one bad day.” Toward the end of the book, The Joker rationalizes this origin with a previous origin that suggested he was once a gangster known as The Red Hood. He asserts that his past is “multiple choice” (Moore).

Nolan lets himself off the hook by incorporating the multiple-choice origin through the line ‘want to know how I got these scars?’ By allowing the Joker to have no finite origin, going so far as to deprive him of finger prints or any DNA in the GCPD’s system, Nolan sidesteps deeper questions about the roots of terrorism. Instead, he provides a safe idea—the terrorists are here, it does not matter how they got here, but the plan to combat them must include deception and spying. It is for the public’s own good. As Martin Fradley in *Film Quarterly* states,

Whether understood as an endorsement of the Bush administration’s war on terror or as a critique of the nihilistic militarism that drove the coalition into Iraq and Afghanistan, various scenes were viewed as either endorsing or condemning post-Patriot Act practices such as rendition, techno-surveillance, and the torture of political prisoners. (16)

As a result, the transmedia campaign simulates terrorist acts and entrapment for a fan’s amusement, and then invites the fan (one who has already played these war on terror games) to enjoy a film that realizes their newly desensitized and resituated ideology. The fans have enjoyed “the illusion of self-determination” by means of virtual participation, and it has left them numb to the intricate and real struggles in the world around them (Charles). The fans then feedback this ideology with box office dollars, and by viewing actual situations concerning foreign policy, terrorism, domestic spying, and class warfare with the campaign’s mainstreamed and cultivated perspective.

Conclusion: The First Rule of Media: Give the Audience What It Wants

During the interrogation scene in *The Dark Knight*, the Joker tells Batman that he will make Batman break his “one rule,” that Batman will not kill. He also pushes Gotham’s denizens to the breaking point—creating a scenario where Gothamites must decide between exploding a boat filled with prisoners, or risk being destroyed themselves. The Joker, in this case,

is forcing ‘the audience to confront and question the very structure of our self-constructed and self-preservatory moral system’ (Cocksworth 542). Batman must become ‘what Gotham needs him to be’ in order to defeat the Joker and preserve Harvey Dent’s legacy. Nolan’s Batman is situated in a post-911 world, one fraught with ever increasing online conspiracies revolving around the attack and the nations’ complicity or cover-up of key data. Meanwhile, the Internet does not escape the boundary trappings of the offline world. In his essay, “Hollywood Today: Report from an Ideological Frontline,” Žižek channels Alain Badiou. He offers,

In a homologous way, one should distinguish between constituted ideology – empirical manipulations and distortions at the level of content – and constituent ideology – the ideological form which provides the coordinates of the very space within which the content is located (Žižek Hollywood)

In 2015, the marketing for *Batman V Superman* became more readily visible. Through a Facebook application, fans could distort their profile picture to voice support for Batman or Superman in the battle. Us v Them. The responsibility of leftist criticism is to look well beyond the cinematic text. The fan voice must be taken into account in a negotiation with the producers, along with the transmedia campaigns that misrepresent, commodify, and mainstream social and political conflict and movements as spectacle. The simulation of reality is now the driving force of a constituent ideology. The left must continue its serious interrogation and thoughtful inquiry of the post-occupy Wall Street world, as new movements arrive and may be quickly augmented into fandom’s virtual spectacle.

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Dystopian Performance & Diasporic Pageantry: Shirley Graham Du Bois'
Tom-Tom

By Jodi Van Der Horne Gibson, Ph.D. (CUNY, Queensborough CC)

For African Americans, our postmodern condition is characterized by continued displacement, profound alienation, and despair. This hopelessness creates a yearning for insight and strategies for change that can renew spirits and reconstruct grounds for black liberation struggle.

-- bell hooks *Postmodern Blackness* (3).

Introduction: Who's Afraid of Kendrick Lamar?

The 58th Annual Grammy Awards happened this year on February 15th. According to Billboard magazine, Kendrick Lamar stole the show with his performance of "The Blacker The Berry," "Alright," and "Untitled 3." Walking in tandem, shackled to one another, and dressed like prisoners on a chain gang, Lamar and a group of dancers begin his performance with "The Blacker the Berry:"

I'm the biggest hypocrite of 2015
Once I finish this, witnesses will convey just what I mean
Been feeling this way since I was 16, came to my senses
You never liked us anyway, fuck your friendship, I meant it
I'm African-American, I'm African
I'm black as the moon, heritage of a small village
Pardon my resistance.

At one point, they break out of their chains and black lights reveal African tribal body paint on their clothing. As they dance in the shifting light the music transitions into "Alright" and he crosses the stage, as if in a daze, to stand in front of a huge bonfire and dancers dressed in African tribal clothing and paint. Behind a red hued screen drummers are seen in silhouette.

"Untitled 3" transitions into a cinematic-type presentation of close

ups and quick edits finally ending with him in silhouette against an image of the African continent over which the word “Compton” has been superimposed.

I can't think of a more recent event that better showcases bell hooks' statement on reconstructing ground for a “liberation movement” and one that also personifies the aesthetic in Shirley Graham Du Bois' historical opera *Tom-Tom*. Additionally, Lamar's entire performance was an articulation of this issue's focus on “strategies of resistance to contemporary oppressions.” The chain gang of Lamar and his dancers suggests a dystopian culture of enslavement and incarceration and displays the reality of living in the New Jim Crow Era. Once freed from bondage, Lamar seems to return to the Africa rapped about moments before. Spencer Kornhaber of *The Atlantic* observes that:

the image of a roaring African celebration is an image of joy outside of the tangle of American problems ... he's calling for a 'conversation for the entire nation,' illuminated by a fire that has been roaring for longer than America has existed.

Even though Lamar's multi-nominated sophomore album *To Pimp A Butterfly* didn't take home album of the year, Matt Miller of *Esquire* magazine wrote of the performance as one of the greatest in Grammy's history and that it “probably made some viewers uncomfortable.” Negative response came mostly from white viewers and that response, in that moment, exemplifies “combat performance.”

In 1959, during a speech to the Congress of Black African Writers, Frantz Fanon presented the idea of an emptying out of literature that reassures the occupying power, to develop the aesthetic of the native intellectual in addressing his/her own people. Here Lamar gives breath to Fanon's position and the results are stunning. There was nothing reassuring about Lamar's performance. It was raw, powerful, challenging and germane to this paper because Kendrick Lamar did in 2016, what Shirley Graham Du Bois did in 1930: used cultural and artistic productions to expose racist ideologies in redefining the narrative about living while Black in the Unit-

ed States.

Radical Theatre in the 1930s

Shirley Graham Du Bois' opera *Tom-Tom* is an early, important highlight in her career. The first opera by an African American woman to be produced, it exemplifies Audre Lorde's call to charter space where "no one has gone before," hooks' "liberation struggle," and Frantz Fanon's notion of "combat literature" (110-111; 3; "Reciprocal Bases"). It was in this, her first major work, that she created a space for retelling and recreating the narrative of African slaves but through the theatrical lens of historical pageantry. This not only put her on the map in terms of African American theatre and performance, but also in establishing her life-long focus of undoing restrictive structures of power and identification (Horne 58). The 20s and 30s were ripe with artistic expression as the Harlem Renaissance developed, and the philosophical positioning around theatre for art and theatre propaganda was raging. Graham Du Bois' perspective on art and culture is well unpacked through Audre Lorde's position regarding the deconstruction of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy:

What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? Only within [the] interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (110-111)

Lamar and Graham Du Bois' artistry highlights the tension and inherent paradox of living a history of imposed identification. His performance and her opera trouble texts, events, ideas, and dissect the idea of the problematic relationship between a coinciding past and present. Graham Du Bois shifts historical perspective in positioning *Tom-Tom* within a contextual framework relative to Fanon. Through a living, breathing panorama of the African Diaspora the opera offers audiences a "reexamined fruit" as Lorde suggests, of the African slave narrative in U.S. American History.

Most likely influenced by W.E.B. Du Bois' writings, especially his pageant *The Star of Ethiopia*, her story spans over 400 years intersecting the past, present, and future tracing the enslavement of an African community all the way through the violence of a Garvey-like revolution in 1920s Harlem. *Tom-Tom* as combat performance points to the paradox of the diasporic body traditionally held as unacknowledged, unequal, and unspoken. Here Graham Du Bois crafts performance as a site for coercive cultural practice through subversive dystopian discontent.

Developing an Aesthetic: Early Development of Shirley Graham

Before marrying W.E.B. Du Bois, she was born Lola Bell Graham in Indianapolis in 1896. Her father and mother were social activists in addition to leading the African Methodist Episcopal congregation. Her upbringing created a lens through which she saw the world and her place in it. She was a divorcee and single parent at a time when both were frowned upon greatly but she was also a pan-Africanist, musician, singer, director, writer, novelist, and eventual wife to one the most famous black intellectuals in U.S. American history.

In 1929, she taught music at Morgan State University, and produced a one-act version of *Tom-Tom*. While studying in France, she learned music and rhythms from people she met from Martinique and Senegal in addition to those her brother taught her after he visited Liberia. In 1931 she was accepted to Oberlin College, and it was there she said she discovered the power of performance. Dr. Tsitsi Jaji writes that as a composer, Graham Du Bois enriches our understanding of poetry through musical illustration. The stage, Graham Du Bois said, "whether it was through the medium of music or plays was a space where Negroes could contest through their art, the distorted perceptions and/or images of them" (McFadden 124).

The producers of the Karamu Theatre in Cleveland were impressed with her work and wanted her to expand it for the Cleveland Opera. So she took to a hotel room with a piano and in three months expanded her

one-act opera into a full-length, three-act opera – writing both libretto and music which was representative of traditional Negro spirituals, and beats and rhythms from different countries in Africa (Horne 59-60). One of the influences on this piece was Graham Du Bois’ own father who instilled her love of spirituals. Other influences, however, were the writings, theories, cultural and political positionings of her future husband W.E.B. Du Bois. His historical pageant *The Star of Ethiopia* had gained notoriety in New York City around 20 years earlier and had been produced in Los Angeles four years prior to Graham Du Bois’ one-act version of *Tom-Tom*. In “Star of Ethiopia,” Freda Scott Giles discusses Du Bois’ affinity for theatre and how he recognized its power to connect to and encourage the black community; with *The Star of Ethiopia*, Du Bois was able to do both (87-88).

Creative Influences: *Star of Ethiopia*

Pageantry of the early 20th century influenced the myopic master narrative of a nationalistic U.S. American identity. Hatch and Shine write that pageants were “too pictorial to be a parade, but not dramatic enough to be a play, pageants – with their music, costume, dance, narration and tableaux – reenacted historical events” (86). They describe America’s affection for pageants as having begun July 4th, 1876 and repeated again in 1887 with the Centennial celebrations. African Americans, however, were largely absent from the celebrations (86). Du Bois, Graham, and many other artists were voicing contributions African Americans had made to that national story and they developed narratives of historical retellings.

In *The Star of Ethiopia* Du Bois reshaped the premise of historical pageantry along a specifically Black perspective of art, history, and politics. He wanted it to spur a national black theatre and to be the catalyst in “fostering interest in racial uplift and indigenous black culture” (Krasner A Beautiful Pageant 83). *The Star of Ethiopia* could serve as site for cultural renewal and as a political instrument to foster a vision of Black cultural diversity and to develop a unified, Black community through shared identification (86).

On October 22, 1913, *Star of Ethiopia* was produced in New York City and then four times in major cities across the United States. It was produced in Los Angeles in 1925, using between 300-1200 actors in telling over 10,000-years of history of African and African American peoples. Written in five scenes and a Prologue his pageant is not a direct relative of Tom-Tom, but it should certainly have a seat at the dinner table. Rebecca Hewett writes in “Looking at One’s Self through the Eyes of Others” that the production sought to “re-create thousands of years in African and African American history” but it was met with much resistance because it challenged the racism of contemporary histories about African Americans (188-190).

The pageant begins with a Prelude set in the Court of Freedom. Four heralds enter after the blast of a trumpet and they say:

HERALDS. Hear ye, hear ye! Men of all the Americas, and listen to the tale of the eldest and strongest of the races of mankind, whose faces be Black. Hear ye, hear ye, of the gifts of Black men to this world, the Iron Gift and the Gift of Faith, the Pain of Humility and the Sorrow Song of Pain, the Gift of Freedom and of Laughter, and the undying Gift of Hope. Men of the world, keep silence and hear ye this! (Hatch and Shine 89).

Each episode details contributions to society from Black culture. They were designed to “inspire admiration for black history while by both entertaining and calling attention to the historical record” (Krasner 83). Krasner further details the impact of the pageant by highlighting its multiculturalism. Du Bois referenced commerce, science, the arts, in addition to the historical positioning of Black voices within the narrative (92-93). In doing so, Krasner writes, Du Bois created a “polyphony of black culture” (93).

In 1913 Du Bois was fighting, through artistic and cultural production, the popularized stereotype images of African Americans. Du Bois’ pageant was a place for reimagined histories; a site where African Amer-

icans in the United States could see themselves through a reflexive black consciousness which “looked toward an African past that was synonymous with the black diaspora, while simultaneously affirming the plethora of black contemporary contributions” (93). He saw his pageant as part of a “healing process for those denied cultural roots,” and one through which a national Black drama could be established (93).

Prior to *Tom-Tom*, Graham Du Bois had mainly focused on music, and the development of music from its roots in Africa to its present-day manifestations. But seeming to take up Du Bois’ call for cultural renewal and consciousness she builds upon *The Star of Ethiopia* to construct an opera that was an “ambitious effort in music, dance, and drama that sought to map the journey of Africans in North America from slavery to freedom” – a reimagining based on Du Bois’ perspective of art, history, and politics (Horne 58).

Tom-Tom: America’s First Race Opera

10,000 people were attending the 1932 Summer Opera Festival the night *Tom-Tom* made its professional debut in Cleveland, Ohio and the reviews of the performance were predominantly positive. *The Chicago Defender*, a popular newspaper read by African Americans, called it the nation’s first race opera (McFadden 162). Horne writes that with this production, Graham put herself in the front of the black American ranks and she countered the mostly dismissive consideration of Africa as a source of inspiration and creativity (58-59). She never made a lot of money as the financial crisis of the country worsened, but her work deserves attention for the manner in which she presents “African and African American life and spirit” (Hill and Hatch 322).

With the sound of a tom-tom persistent throughout the opera, the story traces the lives of five main characters that change identities over the three acts (Hamalian and Hatch 54). Graham tells the story of Voo Doo Man, The Mother, The Girl, The Boy, and many others from enslavement in an African village in the 1500s to freedom in 1920s Harlem. She creates

emblematic characters representing popular perspectives of the time as the community is split over the future of the race (Horne 60-61). VooDoo Man suggests listening to the tom-tom and returning to Africa while Real Estate Man urges people to stay in the United States. These two opinions were the popular ideas of the day as purported by Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa Movement and others who suggested assimilation. Act I is in Africa, and the Leader and the Boy gather the people together because danger is imminent:

LEADER. Listen to the distant tom-toms,
Answer quickly when they call you.
Beat more loudly on your tom-tom
Tell us if there's danger near.
Like a panther, eyes a blazing.
Guard the village. (Graham 55)

Voo-Doo Man seeks to sacrifice The Girl to the gods to free them from the slave traders but their village is descended upon and they are put in chains.

Act II opens in America where only "moving, writhing shapes may be dimly discerned in the darkness... The clanking of chains, the lash of the whip. Horror in the darkness!" (56). Voo-Doo Man rejects assimilation into this world, holding onto his own rituals and religious beliefs through his drum:

VOODOO MAN. Great god of the tom-tom
To do thy bidding
All the other gods do run...
Tom-toms beating somewhere in the vastness of the jungle,
Never ceasing, like the beating of my aching heart (56).

In Act II, the slave master wants The Girl for himself, but The Boy, The Mother, and VooDoo Man fight using the drum to bring the community together in strength:

VOODOO MAN. We gotta all go
We gotta make a drum
We gotta call all da people

We gotta tell ‘em
We must fight! (57)

Act III shows The Boy, now a Preacher in Harlem, condemning Voo-Doo Man’s plans to take people back to Africa and the characters are heavily conflicted:

1ST MAN. Big boy, I ask yo once, I ask yo twice. Is yo’s or is
you not intrusted in this here movement?

2ND MAN. I ain’t saying I is and I ain’t saying I ain’t. I don’t
know ‘nough ‘bout it.

1ST MAN. Does you or does you not read the colored pa-
pers? For two Saturdays
they’s been announcing this meeting. Well, I’ll tell you. This
Man has started a
“back to Africa” movement. They say he’s a Voodoo Man.
ww

At a meeting in Act III, scene 1, the characters argue about the best
choice:

MOTHER. Now is our time to leave this wicked place. Our
girls will be safer in the
jungles of Africa than they are right here on the streets of
New York

OLD PEOPLE. Amen! Amen! (loud applause)

MAMMY. I rises to make a statement. I ain’t no African. You
can go where you
want to, but I’m going to stay right here where I have all the
comforts of
life. (59)

Real Estate Man offers this:

REAL ESTATE MAN. I don’t quite get this back to Africa
idea, myself. Here we’ve
got paved streets and sewers and modern plumbing... Can
you buy and sell

lots in Africa? No, because there are no lots, no sewage, no improvements of

any kind. It's nonsense to talk about building up Africa. (59)

VooDoo Man expresses a passionate plea that Africa is the land of their heritage and pride and of their fathers and mothers (59). He holds up a tom-tom for them to see:

VOODOO MAN. This is our emblem. This is the only god we'll hear.

(He strikes a mighty blow upon the tom-tom. The applause is deafening.) (60)

At the end of Act III, the tension boils over into violence as a mob storms the ship waiting to leave for Africa. VooDoo Man is mortally wounded when he is stabbed through the heart with a spear. The Mother faces the mob:

MOTHER. What do you know of visions? He saw a race of people black and strong. He saw them claiming Africa for their own... And you kill him.

(The VooDoo Man has been feebly attempting to beat the tom-tom. Several now rush forward to take the stick, but the Boy steps forward.)

VOODOO MAN. Now, even my tom-tom will be silent.

THE BOY. No! Black man, No! Your tom-tom shall be heard. (He strikes a mighty blow upon the tom-tom).

Who will go with me,

Not to distant lands,

But here, beating the tom-tom

We'll find kingdoms unknown.

As he continues beating the tom-tom and calling for others to follow, others slowly forward and The Boy's song sweeps over the crowd.

THE BOY. Talk about a child that's seeking for a Kingdom,
Here is one, here is one.

Talk about a child that's seeking for a Kingdom,

Here is one, here is one.

Others step out of the crowd and two men lift the drum leading the crowd toward the sunrise. Voo-Doo Man, dying, smiles. The crowd sings together:

THE CHORUS. My Lord, what a morning,
My Lord, what a morning,
When the sun begins to shine
Seeking for a Kingdom,
Seeking for a Kingdom. (63)

Diasporic Pageantry as Combat Performance

Fanon in 1959 called upon artists to create nationalist themes that call on: “the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation. It is a literature of combat, because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons” (Reciprocal Bases). Some in the African American community criticized Tom-Tom saying it further primitivized Africa, but the majority of the negative response was from white folks, who felt the work exclusionary. Many of the criticisms actually sound like current day complaints such as statements from suffragist and civil rights activist Mary White Ovington. She responded by asking why couldn’t white people have been in the orchestra, and that “Of course it’s fine to help the race, but...it would help to have some whites” (Horne 62).

This response is exactly the point of combat performance. Much like Lamar’s Grammy moment, Graham Du Bois’ opera rejects the limited space afforded African Americans in the dominant historical narrative of the United States. She reestablishes-redefines- retells-recreates objectified histories into combat performance; it is a perspective that, according to Fanon, does not seek to reflect whiteness but rather is crafted toward self-definition (Wretched 316). He writes that for humanity “we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man” (316). Graham Du Bois once described her opera as “the voice of

Africa calling her children to a better understanding and a deeper appreciation for the gifts which she has showered upon them” (Graham Du Bois Papers via Horne). Like Kendrick Lamar, she used performance to fight the internalization of social apartheid that took root in the United States after the Civil War (“Resisting Viewer” 112). Even though she was criticized during her lifetime and after her death as merely one of the “elitists” associated with W.E.B. Du Bois, Graham’s focus on fostering a sense of African nationalist identity and consciousness cannot be mistaken in her work. This combination of art and politics as a foundation for self-chosen philosophical and ideological identification can clearly be seen in *Tom-Tom*.

Fanon once described being beaten down by “tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave ships, and above all else, above all: ‘Sho’ good eatin’” (112). He identifies the dominant culture’s erroneous primitivization of these characteristics, and rejects them as definition of self. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon iterates that he will not be slave to the Slavery that dehumanized his ancestors and in *Wretched of the Earth* writes:

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.

This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today. (230; 210)

Graham Du Bois offers a similar lens as she utilizes combat performance to reject oppressive structures of power. Her love of Africa and her dedication to fighting racism, sexism, and classicism are evident in her complete body of works. Through *Tom-Tom*, Graham Du Bois demanded different parameters be established, ones not dependent on the gaze of the oppressor, but rather defined according to an independent, self-identified diasporic nationalist perspective and performance.

Conclusion

Ending his Grammy performance with a song called “Untitled 3,” Kendrick Lamar speaks about the dystopian reality for many Black Americans. He raps:

See I’m living with anxiety
Giving up sobriety
Cussing with his sister
And playing with society
Justice ain’t free
Therefore justice ain’t me. (Untitled 3)

He echoes the voices of Graham Du Bois and Fanon from three-quarters of a century before as he reveals the psychological struggle created by oppressive external realities (Genius). But like Graham Du Bois and Fanon, Lamar “makes himself known” (Fanon *Black Skin* 115) through conceptualized combat performance. And even though he articulates overwhelming struggle and anxiety, he ends the song with hope and a challenge:

I said Hiiipower, one time you see it
Hiiipower, two times, you see it
Hiiipower, two times you see it
Conversation for the entire nation this is bigger than us. (Untitled 3)

“Hiiipower” is a song from his 2011 album *Section 8.0*. The three “i’s” represent heart, honor, and respect and is a concept that goes beyond hip hop culture; it encourages a positive way of life (Genius). Kornhauser observes that the performance “is a political message, but before that it’s a therapeutic message, one about psychology and behavior... It’s all in his head, but it’s also very clearly not” (“Deconstucting”).

Shirley Graham Du Bois did, through her work in the early part of the 20th Century, what Fanon would discuss in the 1960s, and what Kendrick Lamar would perform in 2016. Through combat performance Shirley Graham Du Bois’ *Tom-Tom* makes the diasporic body known and dystopian reality overruled as she redefined the definition of blackness in the

United States.

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A review of *Heads: A Biography of Psychedelic America*, by Jesse Jarnow
Da Capo, 2016 \$16.95 hardcover
By Granville Ganter, Ph.D. (CUNY Grad Center, fac. St. John's)

Heads: A Biography of Psychedelic America

Toward the beginning of Jesse Jarnow's excellent history, *Heads*, he tells the story of an anti-war demonstration in Berkeley in 1965 where Ken Kesey spoke. Dosed on LSD, Kesey appeared in an orange jumpsuit and military helmet and told the crowd they weren't going to stop the war by protesting. He said that the only thing that's going to do any good at all is that "everybody just look at it, look at the war, and turn your backs and say . . . fuck it." The beauty of Jarnow's book is that he takes the alternative spirit behind this apparently nihilistic phrase and shows how it captures an enduring countercultural movement in the United States that lasted long beyond 1970. The movement wasn't political in the normal sense, and still isn't, even though many of its members are political too---rather, a lot of it has to do with a music band, the Grateful Dead, and a growing legacy of people who believe in the transformative power of psychedelics. Free lance writer, WFMU radio DJ, and author of a biography of the alternative band, Yo La Tengo, Jarnow is no museum curator of the sarcophagus of the Grateful Dead---in many ways, his story is about the origins of today's psychedelic underground.

Although there is no shortage of books celebrating LSD and the 1960s, Jarnow's book focuses on the 1970s to the 20-teens. Jarnow considers every aspect of American culture you hadn't noticed was related to the psychedelic revolution---the LSD-inspired NYC tag artists coming from South Bronx and Central Park bandshell and Keith Haring; artificial intelligence labs out of Stanford, bootleg taping exchanges and the shareware insight; Rave culture from the beaches of Goa in the 1970s to Burning Man in the modern day; the Digger collective, the Rainbow Family, Hog Farm, and the Spinner commune; Drop City and the geodesic-dome builders; the Wetlands club in New York City and Peter Shapiro, Phish and

jambandism; Terrence McKenna and the gospel of tryptamine; Del Close and Second City comedy, Al Franken (now Minnesota senator) and Tom Davis of *Saturday Night Live*.

The psychedelic experience is not a trip for everyone. It's not good old political agency like registering to vote, or chaining oneself to a gate. And there are those, like Manuel Martinez, who might describe psychedelic bohemians as the opposite of countercultural resistance---rather, a gaudy epiphenomenon of decadent capitalism--a cultural demographic of economically entitled white, male liberals (and many women too) who benefit from the mainstream economy while slumming it. But Jarnow's book makes a compelling counterargument that something different is afoot here---mostly because every mainstream social category we have for describing these people, notably "drug user," really doesn't capture their alternative life world. They don't tend to buy their self images from shelves in a store and so consumer society has great difficulty describing what they are. In his short novel, *More Than Human*, Theodore Sturgeon described an unspoken mental bond between several unorthodox people---a "blesh" where separate individuals act together intuitively as one organism. In his autobiography, Phil Lesh, the bassist for the Grateful Dead, said the blesh was a cosmic Groupmind idea that influenced the band and its larger community in the early days (56, 71, 79). And this family has been growing steadily since the mid 60's.

For those already somewhat aware of the spiritual dimensions of hippy culture, perhaps the most informative part of his story centers on the production and distribution of LSD since 1965. To his great credit, Jarnow weaves the story---never centralized in one place as far as I know--of the various founding "families" of illicit LSD production and distribution worldwide: the Brotherhood of Eternal Love; Tim Scully & Nick Sand (Timothy Leary's chemist); the makers of Clear Light acid (first known as Windowpane); Alex "Sasha" Shulgin. Drawing on previous histories of the 60s, Jarnow names names, and when he can't, he tells the story as best as he can. The remarkable yield of this research is a picture of a broad and

decentered underground that does not run on profits the way almost every other market does, such as the Xstasy rings run by gangs and mobsters from the 1990s to the present day. The (many) producers and distributors of LSD do not seem to be in it for the money, and they have spent their lives living in the shadows as renegades to do so. (Consider for example, the influence of characters like Wisconsin's colorful Stephen Preisler, aka "Uncle Fester," unapologetic author of several books on LSD production, home explosives, and other illicit topics.) Jarnow suggests that long-term movers and shakers are still among us, although the base compound for professional LSD production, ergotamine tartrate, has become harder and harder to get. One of the great strengths of Jarnow's book is that he sticks to the straight sociological story and doesn't get caught up in flowery descriptions of kaleidoscope visions.

The founding father of this narrative is Owsley Stanley, or as he preferred to be known, Bear. Highly intelligent but often prickly, Bear learned how to make LSD himself by reading chemistry books in the library. By 1966 he was making very powerful acid, giving it away much of the time, and engineering a distribution system where "hits" were never to cost more than a dollar. He didn't buy cars or houses, even though he made plenty of money. Even to the present day, Bear's philosophy has lasted---hits don't cost a lot.

One area where Bear did spend money was on the Grateful Dead: Bear became the band's patron and sound engineer. He moved the band to a pink house LA in 1966, where he tabbed acid and built them a sound system. The high fidelity modern-day concert experience is due in great part to the visual theories of sound that Bear developed with the Dead. He said he once "saw" the music at the Watts acid test in 1967, and it influenced the way he built speakers and mixed sound. The all-encompassing Grateful Dead experience emerged from the fusion of Bear's sound and psychedelics. (This period is also described in even more detail in his wife's biography, *Rhoney Stanley's Owsley and Me*).

Over the following 30 years, the Dead became the nexus for people on the same wavelength to meet. A travelling carnival of sorts, the Dead relentlessly toured the nation several times a year, supplying sacramental ritual exchanges between friends on a routine basis. Federal drug enforcement caught on in the 1980s and periodically began a number of sting operations based on hunting for acid dealers on Dead tour. The draconian Reaganite drug laws put many petty tab dealers in jail for years. One of the most moving portraits Jarnow paints is of a Karen Horning, a multi-aliased mid-level dealer from the 90s who used her money to help her incarcerated associates before she herself was snitched out and briefly jailed, too. Jarnow's description of acid society is a welcome corrective to the demonization narratives that often taint LSD stories.

Another profound insight in Jarnow's book is his analysis of non-commercial tape-trading and listening as social currencies. Like most people, I was introduced to the Dead with a bootleg tape, and developed a vicarious interest in their live music experience for several years before I actually saw them. Jarnow argues that tapes were traded as free sacraments themselves, creating relations and associations between people and tying them together. Jarnow tells the story of Marty Weinberg, who started his famous collection of bootlegs in the early 70s. Jarnow also emphasizes the career of Dick Latvala, who later became the band's first archivist, and who pioneered the role of becoming a professional "listener." Latvala came to believe that many Dead recordings oblige us to meet the Dead on their turf, not ours, completely inverting the critical assumption that there are "good" and "bad" shows. A culture of free listening also powerfully shaped the Dead business model---drawing in Heads, and building a culture that would later subsidize the band.

With the death of the Grateful Dead's lead guitarist, Jerry Garcia, in 1995, one would have expected the hippy caravan to grind to a pretty quick halt---no more tours to bring fresh supplies of sacraments and disciples to town. And although it did slow for a time, it didn't stop, even despite the renewed vigor of the DEA and the spectacular bust of William

Leonard Pickard in 2001, who was making millions of hits in a repurposed underground missile silo in Kansas. (The inside story is glossed in Krystle Cole's 2004 *Lysergic*--the pixie-faced girlfriend of the man who ratted Pickard out to the feds).

New venues for psychedelic experience have emerged to replace Dead shows. Jambandism has continued to thrive, as has an explosion in psychedelic summer festivals from Bonnaroo to Gathering of the Vibes. Phish has become more popular---and better---than ever. Jarnow's description of Phish's origins is a must-read for those who think Phish is merely a Dead knock-off band. The various surviving members of the Dead itself have started to tour routinely again, even recruiting pop blues guitarist, John Mayer. On one hand, it seems that acid consumption is at an all time low. Jarnow quotes statistics saying that only 1.7 percent of high school students have used it, down from and 8.8 percent high in 1996 (394). But on the other hand, Jarnow speculates that perhaps the typical age of consumption has simply moved up to college age students and above. You can get almost any designer psychedelic in hipster Williamsburg these days, but the people you'll meet are in their 30s. As Jarnow notes, psychedelics are moving toward the mainstream too---in 2014, the bourgeois women's magazine *Elle* would proclaim the mind-expanding benefits of an ayahausca cleanse.

In Albuquerque, the annual Conference on the Grateful Dead has been meeting for almost 20 years, a caucus of the Southwest Popular Culture Association. Currently organized by Dead archivist, Nick Merriweather, and promoting a peer-reviewed journal, *Dead Studies*, the group continues to investigate Dead-related phenomena from frameworks in ethnomusicology, ritual and religion, sociology, parapsychology, linguistics, business, literature, and performance. One of the most interesting discussions recently has been the question of scholarly method itself---how should investigators be approaching the transformative interaction between band and audience?

It is difficult to say whether the past 50 years of Grateful Dead-ness

is the highwater mark of psychedelics in the United States or just the beginning. Jarnow's book makes the compelling case that this far reaching story is far from over, however, and may indeed be much closer to you than you think.

Further Reading:

The best single place to research psychedelics, and get a good sense of what to expect from different substances, for bad and for good, is the website, Erowid. Emily Witt's essay in the November 23, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker* is an excellent background on the origin of the site and its two curators, Earth and Fire.

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The enduring myth of Kesey's bus trip in Further to the 1964 World's Fair in Queens with Neal Cassady at the wheel.

The Magic Trip: Ken Kesey's Search for a Kool Place. Dir. Alison Elwood and Alex Gibney. 2011.

An interesting addition to Wolfe's book—the actual film footage of the trip takes Kesey down a few notches, and lets the ladies speak.

“Viola Lee Blues,” The Dead at Monterey Pop, June 18, 1967. If you're curious why the Dead inspired such devotion in the 60s, this is the stuff:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2Us9vtzWkg>

“China Cat Sunflower,” The Dead at Veneta, Oregon, August 27, 1972.

Sometimes called the last acid test, but certainly one for the ages:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOVIQORfFrk>

Contested Space: The Dispossession of Forests and Rights of Tribals as Depicted in Mahasweta Devi's Texts

By Jogamaya Bayer, independent scholar

This essay elaborates on how two of Mahasweta Devi's major texts, *The Book of the Hunter* and *The Right of the Forest*, in tribal settings represent the indigenous tribe's struggle to survive and sustain a close tie with nature. Drawing from documentations and oral sources, she reconstructs the history of the adivasis' revolt against the gradual dispossession of their forests. Although this representation of the tribe's resistance to the interventions of intruders who came to defile their culture for the sake of profit might sometimes appear to be a nostalgic yearning for the pure and original, the texts nevertheless display a critical stance towards ecological romanticism.

By reconceptualising the suffering 'Mother India' (a symbol to which nationalists often refer) as the crying 'mother forest' of the tribals, for whom the nation's freedom has no meaning so long as the forest – their nurturer and protector – is ravaged, Mahasweta's representation focusses, as this paper will underscore, on the immense relevance and modernity of the adivasis' ecological resistance and fight for basic human rights. Post-colonial studies often deals with the political issues of indigenous peoples (usually Native Indian, Inuit, Aboriginal, Maori, etc.). This essay will explore similar issues of the overlooked adivasis' relationship to land and forest in pre-colonial and colonial India, and focus on the intersections between colonialism, capitalism, and globalization.

Mahasweta depicts how the encroachment of non-advasis upon advasi territory compels the advasis to evacuate the land. Having their forests ravaged and searching for new ones characterise tribal life even now (*The Book of the Hunter* xi). *The Book of the Hunter*, first published in Bengali as *Byadhkhanda* in 1994, and *The Right of the Forest*, first published as a book in Bengali as *Aranyer Adhikar* in 1977, express not only the concern for the rights of the tribal population and dispossession

of their forests but also assert a critique of the destruction of the environment.¹ The placing of the texts in precolonial and colonial periods underlines the continuity of their struggle against this gradual deracination from forests that lasts even to this day. In *The Book of the Hunter*, Mahasweta made an effort to explore the tribal identity of the Shabars. The British rulers declared the Shabars to be ‘criminals’ in 1871. Even today the tribes once known as criminals are stigmatised in India. The tribal resistance has been documented in fragments and represents a particular viewpoint. It is a difficult task to restore the facts from different sources, avoid the constructions of stereotypes that already exist and recuperate the tribals’ own consciousness (*Tribal Society in India* 157). While making an effort to rehabilitate the history of the Shabars by rewriting the story of their past glory, Mahasweta’s text simultaneously cautions the reader against ecological romanticism—a subject on which Prashad focusses in her critique of Verrier Elwin’s construction of an anti-modern tribal identity: a critique of the romanticised notions of tribal life, identity and ecology. In Prashad’s consideration, the use of tradition and customs to block modernity is entangled with a belief in a golden age. The theory and practice of ecological romanticism refuses the discourse of an alternative conception of modernity. Prasad stresses the importance of introducing a sustainable modernity that is outside the capitalist system and helps to revise local customs (*Against Ecological Romanticism* 108-109). Mahasweta’s text registers this urgent need to continue a discourse of an alternative conception of modernity and demands the right of the tribals to have their due share in the wealth and development of the country.

In the preface, Mahasweta acknowledges her debt to Mukundaram Chakrabarti, the greatest mediaeval poet of Bengal, from whose work she gains inspiration to write about the neglected Shabars. She underscores that what she has written is a work of fiction. However, while writing about the life of the Shabars—a hunting tribe—she has mixed her own experience, which she has gathered through travel to their regions with infor-

1 It was first published in serialized form in 1975 in a magazine.

mation from different sources. The oral lore, songs and folk tales provide the materials of the history of the adivasis, while the more marginalised Shabars have lost their oral lore. However, they have helped remedy this by writing about themselves in a journal edited by Mahasweta herself. This is how she came to know the legend of their founding father, Kalketu, which she integrated into her novel. *The Book of the Hunter*, set in sixteenth century Bengal, draws on the life of Mukundaram Chakrabarti who was born around the year 1547 in Daminya and migrated to Ararha around 1575. Mahasweta read an account of the origin of Mukundaram's epic poem *Abhayamangal*. In this epic, the forest-dwellers' section called *Byadhkhanda* reveals his deep knowledge of the life of the hunting tribes. *Byadhkhanda* is regarded as an authentic representation of sixteenth century social, economic and cultural life of the region.²

As in the legend, the forest is the mother of the Shabars who provides them with a place of refuge, especially in times of misery. Still, this life is full of hardships. The city, on the other hand, is an abode of the king and a place of affluence, as the legend of king Megha exemplifies. Although the forest protects and nurtures the Shabars, Megha, who represents their golden age, lives in the city after he becomes a king. Later, when he loses his kingdom, their goddess turns the city back into forest in order to protect the Shabars from the other kings who would otherwise come to conquer Gujarat. The seeming forest–city duality in *The Book of the Hunter* highlights the untenability of the nature–culture dichotomy. Tejota, in whose character the nature–culture dichotomy is most obviously reconciled, knows how forests and cities are interdependent and how differently the forest is regarded, such that some call her their goddess, whereas others call her a desolate forest. “The forest itself is our mother... She gives us everything, keeps us alive – doesn't that make her our mother?” (73). However, the generational conflict over forest versus city life is clearly por-

2 “The subject matter of the poem is mythological in origin and religious in character. Nevertheless, Mukunda managed to weave into a large measure of the contemporary social life and atmosphere of West Bengal.” See Sen 118.

trayed. The younger generation grudges the hard life this mother proffers. Old Danko represents the traditional way of thinking and refuses to accept that change is inevitable. He does not permit the Shabars to till the soil and recommends that they eat roots and tubers instead. Furthermore, he also prevents the forest from being destroyed by setting rules that conform to the adivasi culture of forest conservation: a culture that strives to use natural resources sparingly. Tejota, who has to compromise the old knowledge that she has inherited from Danko with the new knowledge acquired from her experience, sees the necessity of rejuvenating their age-old practices. While Danko sticks to tradition, Tejota is conscious of the severe life a Shabar has to lead and ready to revise local customs. The juxtaposition of these two characters asserts Prasad's critique of the romanticised notions of tribal life, identity and ecology that tries to reconstruct and celebrate an anti-modern tribal identity and oversees the importance of a sustainable modernity. After Tejota's son, Kalya, is killed while hunting an elephant, his wife, Phuli, tragically takes her life, and the Shabars leave that place in search for a new pristine forest. Standing on the riverbank of Shilabati, Mukundaram asks for forgiveness in his heart: "The city spreads and the Shabars migrate. This had been going on forever, so why did it cause such restlessness in Mukunda, a city-dweller?" (150).

Mahasweta's novel portrays Mukundaram as a social critic whose melancholy stems not only from nostalgia for the innocence and simple sylvan beauty that is now gone with the tribals, but also from something more deeply rooted. He knows that the region, which once belonged to the Shabars, was later taken away by the forefathers of his king. This gives him a reason to reflect on how the tribal population are pushed more and more into the interior of the forest, how they are impoverished and how their values and knowledge are disregarded. This contemplation urges the poet to write about the forest dwellers and ask for their forgiveness as they were not treated properly. Following his reflections, Mahasweta, the narrator and activist, likewise questions: is it not inhuman that our economic growth still has to be achieved at the cost of the tribal population and nat-

ural environment?

The text conforms to the historical facts that attest to the displacement of tribals through Hindu civilisation. Historical facts confirm that conflicts were frequent, and tribes were forced to retreat to the 'remotest areas' viz. the forests and mountains ("Survival as Resistance" 250).³ While The Book of the Hunter asserts that the socio-political circumstances of the pre-colonial period compelled the tribal population to take refuge in the interior of the forest, The Right of the Forest underlines the continuity of this struggle in the colonial period against their gradual deracination from forests that lasts even to this day.

The dispossession of the tribals by the colonisers was underpinned by a taxonomy based on a nature–culture dichotomy. For the British, the distinction between the 'settled' and the 'savage', 'states of culture' and 'states of nature' played a significant role, especially in revenue settlements. In Whitehead's argumentation, Locke's dichotomies between settled agriculture on enclosed land and value-producing labour on the one hand and non-settled forms of livelihood and waste on the other, as also his definition of 'wastelands', were formative in the development of colonial land settlements and Forest Laws that provided the legal framework for adivasi dispossession. She detects traces of Lockean theory in practices of dispossession by the appropriation of landscapes of already-used territories, because Locke's labour-theory of property corroborated the tendencies of expansionary capitalist accumulation and private ownership. Locke classified common land that was not privately owned, cultivated, commodified and enclosed as 'wasteland'. In terms of productivity, any land that was 'not being tapped for its commercial potential' was now regarded as 'waste land'. Such customs as letting the land lie fallow for long periods or using it for gathering, hunting or pasturage activities, turned the tribal populace, according to this theory, into unproductive users of idle wastelands. As a consequence, restriction of the traditional practices of the hill and forest dwellers through enclosure and prohibition was now considered

3 See also Against Ecological Romanticism 12

mandatory. British administrative documents and histories of 'tribes' of the nineteenth century adopted this definition of 'state of nature' in categorising such lands in the hill areas, where revenue settlements and private property rights were not established as 'wastelands' and their populations as 'wild' tribes. The concept of wilderness, as Whitehead concludes, underscored the necessity to render these lands productive, which ultimately justified the dispossession and forced resettlement of their inhabitants and made room for better commercial use (11-19). Although the seeds of agrarian discontent had been laid long before the colonial era, the colonial system intensified it as it ended the isolation of the tribal communities and brought them within the network of the new policy and administration. It recognized the tribal chiefs as zamindars, imposed a new system of taxation including rent to be paid in cash, excise and other levies, set up a market and developed trade. A new class of middlemen between the administration and the people and between chiefs and their people came into existence. This consisted of traders and merchants, moneylenders and farmers (thikadars) who alone could meet the demand for money to pay taxes, repay debts etc., created by the new system. These newcomers called the dikus, the outsiders, were thus creatures of the colonial system. (Birsa Munda 2)

This integration into the world capitalist system made the tribals more susceptible to internal exploitation by the princely rulers, the jainindars and the moneylenders as forced labour, tax burdens and increasing indebtedness worsened their living conditions ("Survival as Resistance" 258). An important factor that most influenced tribal life was the new forest management of the colonial period, which gave the British the right to own all forests and declare them reserved. The cultivators, hunters and gatherers practising shifting cultivation or gathering forest produce now had only restricted access to the forests. As this mobility was now curtailed, their existence was undermined. The forests were essential for fulfilling their basic needs as the tribals gathered forest produce like fruits and roots for food and medicines. To obtain commodities like rice, oil and

other grains, they normally depended on a system of exchange (barter). However, with increasing monetization, they now had to work in exchange for money, and as they did not have enough money, they were even forced to accept bonded labour. This period introduced the hitherto unknown dimension of large scale migration as a means to flee immiseration. While tribals migrated also in pre-colonial India, this new wave of migration had an altogether different character, which fit into the thriving colonial capitalism and the global need for labour. Consequently, tribals were forced to seek work in mines, tea plantations and factories that developed under the aegis of colonial capitalism. The circumstances even forced them to migrate to far off countries like Fiji, Mauritius and Natal (“Introduction” 12-20). Migration was a means of protest and a survival strategy—a strategy to escape an oppressive system that included taxes and usury (“Survival as Resistance” 260).

Another form of tribal resistance against the feudal and imperial rulers was their numerous revolts for the reassertion of their customary rights and against their displacements that took place during this period. The Birsa movement was one of the most significant of these movements. In their region alienation of land prevailed for quite some time. Their dissatisfaction took the form of demands, such as the return of the soil to the Mundas, who were the true owners, and the consequent expulsion of middlemen. The recovery of their lost kingdom was Birsa’s ultimate political goal. To the Mundas, land was a part of their socio-cultural heritage, and it contained the burial ground of their ancestors and the sacrificial graves with which they had strong emotional ties. Their agrarian dissatisfaction was aggravated through the restriction of access to the forest. Birsa’s revolt ended in the surrender of the insurgents, followed by the imprisonment and death of Birsa. The reason why Birsa’s political movement has impacted different future tribal rebellions is due to its social and religious components. His ideas of revitalization of religion and the establishment of a tribal kingdom have found resonance in contemporary movements for identity and autonomy (Birsa Munda 110, 221, x).

Mahasweta acknowledges her debt to Suresh Singh's *Dust-Storm and Hanging Mist* in the writing of her novel on Birsa's movement, *The Right of the Forest*. She accedes to Singh's comment that the title of her text reflects her anxiety about the extinction of forests, while in reality, Birsa's revolt was driven more by the tribals' loss of land than of forest.⁴ However, besides reading Singh, she conducted further research with great effort and read the district gazetteers compiled by the British. These gazetteers were a source of information for Mahasweta about the tribal insurgencies during the British period. She found out that the question of land doubtlessly took the central position in causing their discontent. Moreover, the adivasis were extremely conscious about the encroachment upon their right to the forest.

In the preface, stressing the discontent over the loss of rights over the forest as the primary reason of this rebellion, Mahasweta provides a detailed explanation about how this factor highlighted the environmental consciousness of Birsa. Birsa taught his disciples to protest and urged them to protect their forests, and Mahasweta's concerns about forests, as an activist, bring her closer to him. She has always been worried about ecology, because as the developments in India show, an increasing number of waters, forests and agricultural fields have been devastated and robbed. *The Right of the Forest*, she specifies, reflects this anxiety, which is shared by many nowadays (*The Right of the Forest* 8-15).

Thus, the preface imparts that neither the selection nor the fictional translation of the historical facts concerning Birsa's uprising was contingent. To introduce a new image of this tribal rebel, with whom not only

4 "Of the various aspects in the re-study of Birsa Munda and his movement, one has been an attempt to focus on the issue concerning control over forest following the reservation of forest in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Birsa Munda had himself led the protest against demarcation of reserved forest in 1892, well before he emerged as a religious leader. Mahaweta Devi's celebrated work *Aranyer Adhikar* derives its title from the concern for the forest. However, it was not forest but land that was the main issue in the Sardar movement and Birsa's uprising." See *Birsa Munda*, x-xi.

the tribals should be able to identify, Mahasweta's novel understates the Mundas' land grievances, magnifies their concern with the forest instead, and connotes Birsa with environmental consciousness and human rights. In this narrative, Birsa is too progressive in his way of thinking, as his ideas of social reform and environmental consciousness are far ahead of his time. His involvement with human rights is made more explicit when—at the end of the novel—the idealistic English counsellor of the imprisoned rebels, Jacob, accuses the colonial administration of ignoring the legitimate rights of the exploited Mundas. He states that the British fight against the uprising jeopardises human rights and seeks to protect the interest of the pillars of the colonial system—moneylenders, zamindars and Rajas (210).

While transferring history into fiction, Mahasweta intermixes facts with materials from oral songs on Birsa in her text because he occupied a place in the Mundas' oral tradition already during his lifetime (*The Right of the Forest* 14). In this way, she tries to recuperate their viewpoints. She weaves the legends into the historical facts to mark the distinction between storytelling and journalism. Birsa's vision of the mother forest is one such legend. Birsa hears the cries of the mother forest as she is being plundered. In his visions, she appears as a young and beautiful Munda woman, appealing to Birsa to rescue her and her sons who are suffering and leaving their land. Birsa promises to protect her and her sons (73). He is aware that the labour-recruiting agents entice the naive Mundas to leave in search of work as coolies. The Mundas are caught in the nets of credit, coal-mines, jails and courts (86--87). With the arrival of the dikus⁵ who occupied the land, the Mundas are evicted from the forest, and the khuntkatti⁶ system disappears. Here, in the text, Birsa demands their rights to the forest and tries to win it back from the diku through a rhetoric that might seem, at the first glance, to help create an "originary counter-myth of radical purity" (Bhabha 5).

5 Literally 'the outsiders', exploiters of the tribe comprising moneylenders, landlords, dealers, traders, etc.

6 A system of collective land-ownership among sections of tribal people

To refute the impression of inventing this myth Mahasweta's rendition of history presents Birsa as a reformer, who wants to free the Mundas from superstition and faith in miracles. He knows the difficulties involved in bringing them from a dark period to modernity – a modernity in which there would be no colonial rule. While reminding the Mundas of their glorious past when they lived in a golden age, Birsa is, at the same time, aware of the restrictive notions of cultural identity that, as Bhabha states, can obscure visions of political change, and underlines the need to revise the present customs, which are infested with superstition. From this perspective, Birsa's idealisation of the golden age in Mahasweta's text does not reflect ecological romanticism; that is, it is not an uncritical celebration either of an anti-modern tribal identity or, to use Bhabha's terminology, of a "Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity" (18, 21). Mahasweta's text defines Birsa as a self-conscious young Munda leader who reminds his followers of their past plenitude to recuperate their self-respect. She transfers the golden age theory of the Indian renaissance that glorified the Hindu past into the tribal context and thus evokes the neglected history of the adivasis' rich past.

The work of the British orientalist and German romanticists who unravelled a high culture in the Vedic period, reconstructing the golden age of the Indian renaissance and demonstrating through research that Sanskrit belongs to a larger group of Indo-European languages, swayed the imagination of many people.⁷ In the nineteenth century this led to a glorification of India's Hindu past and an exploration of the reasons for the degeneration. The formation of the Bengali elite in the late nineteenth century and the role it was to play in the merging of Hindu cultural nationalism with regional patriotism show a new Indian nationalism.⁸ This anti-colo-

7 For Jones, one thing seemed certain: "...how degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government; wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge..." See David Kopf, *British Orientalism* 35, 38, 39.

8 "A different movement, revolutionary nationalism in colonial India, is located in the growth of a regional, vernacular intelligentsia in Bengal in the latter half of the

nialism enabled the novelist, Bankim Chandra (1838–1894), to conceptualise the country as the suffering mother appealing to the emotion of her sons, who felt an inability to mitigate her afflictions by freeing her from foreign subjugation (Bhatt 28). Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) belonged to the Bengal Renaissance and was influenced by Bankim's vision. He cultivated a form of nationalism in which the nation was perceived as the living form of the Divine Mother. Songs addressing the Divine Mother according to the tradition of worshipping Goddesses Kali and Durga and containing nationalist overtones appeared in large numbers. Abanindranath Tagore's (1871-1951) famous painted poster of Bharat Mata (Mother India) was used in political rallies (Banerji 84-85).

By defining Birsa's vision of the forest as the agonised mother, as opposed to the nationalist conception of the country as the suffering mother, sometimes in the incarnation of a Hindu Goddess, Mahasweta's text creates a completely different image which the tribals can identify themselves with. Furthermore, it underscores that, while the immediate goal of the nationalists was independence, Birsa realises that the struggle for independence is meaningless without a simultaneous fight against ecological devastation and depletion of natural resources. Thus, Mahasweta creates a new national figure for all to emulate. She enforces the claim that the history of India's freedom movement will not be complete unless the impact of these tribal revolts—similar to Birsa's—on the Independence movement is properly evaluated.

Birsa's vision of freedom has enormous relevance even today. As a matter of fact, the independence from the colonial regime has not brought the desired autonomy. Following the orientation of the neo-liberal economic programme that insists upon the loosening of state control, the government of India and donor agencies have made it easier for trans-national nineteenth century, and the subsequent spread of nationalist ideologies and networks in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal in 1905. However, after the mid-nineteenth century, especially among some key figures within the 'Bengal Renaissance' there was a confluence of Hindu cultural nationalist ideas with those of Indian nationalism". See Bhatt 23.

companies to capture Indian markets for their goods (Tribal Livelihood 55). Oppositional critics state, across the country, the common wealth of the people—like land and water—is being appropriated by big capital. While the right of the tribal populace to the forest is restricted, vast areas of forest-land have been handed over to corporations (Frontline 15, 18). In a similar vein, Padel foregrounds profit making as the drive behind the dispossession of the tribal population during the colonial period and stresses that the empowerment of international companies today, who follow the same aim, undermines India's independence:

The Government of India was first formed and put in place by the East India Company, with a view to making a profit out of India for its shareholders in London, through cutting primary forest, plantations of timber trees, indigo, opium, coffee and tea, and raising revenue through more 'efficient' and 'profitable' cultivation of land, which often involved inviting non-tribal cultivators to take over adivasi land. The behaviour of mining companies today, and the financial bodies investing in them, which are based in London, the US and other countries, is in many ways a fundamental assault on India's independence. (335-336)

In the colonial period discontent over the loss of rights to their environment and resources such as land led to continual tribal uprisings against this dispossession. Even in the post-colonial period these issues have remained unresolved. As a result, the tribal movements in middle India were mainly for political autonomy or were agrarian and forest based. Independence could not contribute much to the betterment of either the economic situation of the tribals or the restrictions of their free movement and further dispossession of forests, contrary to what Birsa wanted to achieve. The aspiration for the primeval independence remained unfulfilled (Tribal Society 269-276). Pati precisely indicates its cause when he argues that the concessions made by the ruling power in the aftermath of independence to feudalism led to a continuation of some of the main problems of the tribals ("Introduction" 26-27). Padel highlights a main issue when he maintains that as tribal people live in regions rich in natural

resources out of which enormous profits are made, they are the ones who lose most through forced resettlement. Thus, their resistance against displacement is a movement of significant dimensions (316).

This essay has demonstrated how two of Mahasweta Devi's major texts in tribal settings, *The Book of the Hunter* and *The Right of the Forest*, reconstruct the history of the adivasis' struggle against the gradual dispossession of their forests and their striving for survival. Although her depiction of the tribals' life—as one closely tied with nature—and her exploration of their resistance to the encroachment of outsiders might sometimes appear to be a nostalgic yearning for the pure and original, the texts nevertheless display a critical stance towards ecological romanticism. This essay focusses on the immense relevance of the adivasis' resistance and fight for basic human rights, and explores the intersections between colonialism, capitalism, and globalization.

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Badiou Talks Infinity

On December 15th, Alain Badiou was kind enough to sit down with me at the Page Poetry Parlor to answer a few questions regarding Object Oriented Ontology, the recent international surge in popular uprisings (from the Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements in the United States, to the victory of Syriza in Greece, to the stirrings of a Third Intifada in Palestine), and the urgent need to escape all forms of finitude in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, a series of technical failures has relegated most of that conversation to our respective memories. Suffice it to say, Badiou regards OOO (the subject of the previous *Humanities Review*) with suspicion and he is less than optimistic about the long-term potential of contemporary mass movements to fundamentally alter the conditions of capitalism (“Syriza, as you know, was a catastrophic failure.”) Nevertheless, his final response survives and I am happy to preserve it here.

DH: Recently, at the Verso Loft, where you and the poet Katy Bohinc were discussing the relationship between poetry and philosophy, you spoke of the need to conceptualize the infinite in order for there to be anything resembling a politics of emancipation. I was hoping you could develop that thought a little more here.

AB: Yes, you know, the question of the infinite is more precisely a question of time. I was saying we have the time of the state, which is a sort of stable time and a time of repetition. Conservative time: to continue, to protect the dominant order. And we have the short time of the mass movement, which, generally, if it is a good and strong mass movement, it will be against the state. I don’t know big mass movements which are only to say that the state is very good. [Laughs] “Work with the state! Congratulate the state!” But all that does not constitute the new time.

The new time, finally, is always a mediation between the time of the mass movement and the time of the state. So it is a time of the new form

of the [revolutionary] political organization. And I think that in order to create this new time we must affirm that the horizon of the political organization is without any limit. Without any limit because if there is a limit, this limit is finally the state. To seize the power, to organize power, we must have something like an infinite idea – which is the revelation of the creation of the new time. And to have that sort of idea, we must have a clear consciousness of something which is not a substitute of the infinite.

But in another sense the representation of a new future is always also the representation of something which is in a relationship to the existence of humanity as such. In some sense, politics cannot be today reduced to one nation, or one people, and so on. We are beyond all that. Globalized capitalism itself is beyond all that, in fact, and we are behind the development of globalized capitalism. And so political organizations, even at the national level, are in charge of all the destiny of humanity. Naturally all the destiny of humanity cannot be closed in the finite determination. We must have something like a larger vision of justice. We cannot completely understand what justice is without the necessity of first going beyond finitude. Within finitude, pure finitude, it is impossible to think correctly of these things. And, at the end, the emergence of this vision is a big part of the political work today: to fight against all closed identity. Closed identity is a racist form, a nationalist affirmation, a racial affirmation and so on. Opposed to this is the new form of universality, which must not be abstract, must not be imperialist. A true form of universality will include all people: all people of the world. This is thinking the infinite. And you cannot have all that within the finitude of identity.

“Let’s drink to the salt of the earth”:

Reflections on Revolution during the Period of the Post-Nation State

By Luis Omar Cenicerros, M.A. (University of Texas at El Paso)

The mighty seek to secure their position with blood (police), with cunning (fashion), with magic (pomp).

—Walter Benjamin

In 2016, President Obama made a historical visit to the Communist island Cuba. Soon after President Obama’s visit, by what is being reported as complete coincidence, a free concert was given to the Cuban people. The free concert featured none other than the globetrotting rock ‘n’ roll legends—the Rolling Stones, singing the lyrics “You can’t always get what you want.” Unfortunately, the initial promise of the Cuban Revolution articulated by Che is ironically and indirectly mocked by the lyrics “You can’t always get what you want.” Instead, postmodern globalization during late capitalism creates the post-nation state, wherein transnational capitalist power-structures always get what they want. Despite all this, it is the obligation of those identifying as the Left—the Marxists—to voice a challenge and provide a counter-narrative to the falsified utopic presentation of capitalist promise and inclusion.

It is only by understanding the material conditions and operational modes of exploitation that we can begin to challenge the capitalist power-structure. The traditional conceptualizations of imperialism and colonialism need to be re-conceptualized to reflect the post-nation state. Because neither “political nor economic structures of domination are simply co-extensive with national borders,” United States capitalism is not relegated to the physical geographic limits of delineated nationhood (Gilroy 7). As a condition of late capitalism, evolving from high capitalism/imperialism, physical landmarks are no longer adequate in determining imperial domination, whether the physical homeland of empire or colonized land under the control of empire. According to Eric Hobsbawn, the “age

of empires is dead” (13). However, this is not to suggest that imperialism is negated; rather, this phenomenon is indicative of superpower nation-states being dissolved, and superimposed over its disappearance are transnational supra-legal corporate multinationals—in effect, multi-eco-political imperialism, for “globalization by its nature produces unbalance and asymmetric growth” (Hobsbawm 45). Rather than incite the nationalistic fervor of the oppressed, corporate multinationals readily integrate a few privileged elitists from within the oppressed nation, ripened for corruption, to become the watchdogs of corporate interests, so as to ensure the continued exploitation of labor and theft of natural resources—natural resources belonging to the oppressed nations.

On July 17, 1964, Malcolm X submitted a memorandum addressed to the delegates attending the Organization of Afro-American Unity Conference in Cairo, Egypt, wherein Malcolm X states, “We intend to ‘internationalize’ [our freedom struggle] by placing it at the level of human rights” (“An Appeal” 76). Post-World War II, soon after the establishment of the Geneva Convention of 1949, internationalizing the Black freedom struggle to the level of human rights can be largely credited to Paul Robeson—a pioneer spokesman—who appropriated emerging postmodern mediums to publicly criticize and challenge the United States capitalist power-structure; a power-structure, years later, against which Malcolm X would continue to struggle. Additionally, Malcolm X worries that the African people may have ejected European colonizers only to be recolonized by “American dollarism”—warning Africa, “Don’t let American racism be ‘legalized’ by American dollarism” (75). This is more than an astute observation concerning Africa/United States political relations; what Malcolm X identifies is the historically institutionalized interdependency and co-evolution of race and capital—of slavery and capitalism. With profundity, Malcolm X unmasks the conspiratory transition from colonization and empire to what will become globalizing world markets, transitioning from the Atlantic slave-trade to outsourcing, privatization of foreign national resources, and the exploitation of labored colored bodies without and within the demar-

cated United States borders.

Almost fifty years before United States President Barack Obama will be met by protesters in South Africa, Malcolm X, in a letter from Ghana dated May 11, 1964, exposes United States hypocritical foreign and domestic policy, accusing the United States that “spits in the faces of blacks in America” (terrorizing Blacks with police dogs in order to deter Blacks away from integration) as being the very same nation of people “seen throughout Africa, bowing, grinning, and smiling in an effort to ‘integrate’ with the Africans—they want to ‘integrate’ into Africa’s wealth and beauty” (“Letters From Abroad” 62). By deregulating world markets and allowing multinational conglomerates access to any nation’s resources via privatization, neo-colonialism is hyper-realized in late capitalism; therefore, we see the “mighty” move away from overt blood towards cunning and magic in the form of spectacle and ceremony in order to aggrandize puppet-governments that pose as the leaders of independent foreign nations.

Governmentally instituted racism and violent economic determinism are not exclusive to South Africa institutions in isolation. In fact, CIA officer “Donald C. Rickard by name [...] had tipped off the Special Branch” in 1962 as to the precise vehicle Mandela would be driving, posing as the vehicle’s chauffeur (Blum 216). In 1990, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* reported that then senior CIA operative, Paul Eckel, “within hours of Mandela’s arrest,” stated that the capture of Mandela “is one of our greatest coups” (Blum 216). In addition to the United States being dependent upon South Africa for uranium reserves, in order to manufacture and produce weapons of mass destruction, the United States perceived Mandela’s African National Congress “as being part of the legendary International Communist Conspiracy” (Blum 215). Economic determinism dictates that the CIA, on behalf of the capitalist power-structure, eliminate Mandela; to the point—the US/CIA is without doubt culpable for the capture and imprisonment of Nelson Mandela, no matter the hypocritical ceremony and pomp conjured by United States officials decades later after the fact. In this cunning form of capitalism—the fox rather than the wolf—“for-

eign capital is used for exploitation” rather than the development of Third World nations, and consequently, investment “under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor counties of the world” (Nkrumah x). Western capitalist interests implant overpowering banks, privatize domestic resources originally belonging to foreign nations, and use exploitable colored bodies to cultivate and refine resources at a profit that is further quantified by corporations operating beyond legalized regulations, or simply by creating a quasi-political racket that conveniently overlooks violations, or in worst cases still, by instituting oversight committees that are ultimately on the payroll of multinational corporations.

Per the documentary film *Stealing Africa* (part of the Why Poverty? series), the African country Zambia has the largest copper reserves in Africa, and yet, even with copper prices in the world market having quadrupled from 2001 to 2008, Zambia is one of the twenty poorest countries in world. 69% of Zambia’s population lives below the poverty-line, 80% living on less than two dollars a day. Through capitalist farce, the illogical is made logical: How is it that a country that is a world leader in the production of a commodity in such high demand, a commodity with increasing value, be simultaneously one of the poorest countries in the world?—Capitalism!

As a result of predatory lending, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund forced massive debt upon Zambia and, in order to collect on inflated debt, the World Bank and IMF intimidated, coerced, and bamboozled Zambia into privatizing their own copper mines in 2000. Acting as an agent of capital, Zambia’s corrupt President Chiluba, who would later be found guilty of conspiracy to defraud for misappropriating government funds, sold the largest copper reserves in Africa for a one-time payment of \$627 Million dollars; over the next ten years, the Zambian copper mines would generate \$29 Billion dollars of revenue. The multinational Glencore International would benefit the most from stealing Africa. Through illegal price transferring, disregarding arm’s

length provisions, and manipulating tax- havens, Glencore is able to avoid significant profit-taxes by laundering monies through Glencore subsidiaries around the world, more specifically filtering monies through tax-haven Ruschlikon, Switzerland, a town that benefits from banking and sheltering the financial excesses of Glencore and its CEO Ivan Glasenberg; meanwhile in Zambia, the Mopani Copper Mines owned by Glencore generate billions of dollars, while poisoning the environment with sulfur dioxide and destroying vegetation with byproduced acid rain. However, findings from Zambia's Environmental Management Agency and the World Health Organization have been absconded by private interests and are withheld from an inquiring public demanding transparency. For the year 2006, Zambian copper mines generated \$3 Billion dollars of revenue, and yet Zambia only received \$50 Million in tax-revenue, despite the cost of electricity to operate the copper mines per year being \$150 Million dollars; therefore, what little profit-tax multinational corporations paid, it only amounted to one-third of the electric-bill expensed to Zambia to operate said copper mines.

Glencore was founded in 1974, by American businessman Marc Rich; at that time, Glencore International was Marc Rich Co. AG. In 1983, Rich would be indicted on charges pertaining to one the most serious US tax fraud cases, and during discovery, investigators found that Rich was selling arms to then designated hostile enemy nation Iran from 1979-1981. To avoid arrest and extradition, Rich would flee to Switzerland and renounce his US citizenship. In 1983, Rich would be listed among the FBI's most-wanted fugitives. While Rich avoided extradition under the protection of the Swiss government, future Glencore GEO Ivan Glasenberg was working as a trader in Johannesburg, South Africa, mainly trading oil to the controlling regime in apartheid South Africa before and during the United Nations' supposed embargo against South Africa. As a fugitive from the law on FBI's most-wanted list, Marc Rich made \$2 Billion dollars selling oil to apartheid South Africa.

Eventually, Rich would hire Jack Quinn, former White House coun-

sel to President Bill J. Clinton, in order to secure a Presidential Pardon; in that same vein, Denise Rich, the wife of Marc Rich, donated more than \$1 Million dollars to the US Democrat party and an undisclosed amount to the Clinton Presidential Library. Marc Rich, despite selling arms to US military opposition, ultimately received a Presidential Pardon in 2001, along with partner “Pinky” Green; only his corporation would not be absolved. Rich would then be forced to remove himself from Mark Rich Co. AG/Glencore International, sell its capital interests in 20th Century Fox, and pay over \$150 Million dollars—an insignificant fine that is more circus than justice. In May 2011, Glencore International would have one of the largest Initial Public Offerings (IPO), raising over \$10 Billion dollars, netting \$8.8 Billion for CEO Glesenberg; Glencore’s public offerings include shareholders in the Church of England and the Norwegian government. In 2012, former England Prime Minister Tony Blair would help facilitate the \$80 Billion dollar merger between Glencore and superpower multinational Xstrata.

This is the post-nation state, where national governments and their (highest) officials are capitalist marionettes with rosy cheeks and jagged walks, clumsily giving the appearance of autonomy—automatic autonomy—the spectacle of democracy: only capital moves these hollow headed and marble eyed happy little puppets. Marc Rich renounces his US citizenship and yet through capital investment is resurrected into a US socio-civic afterlife through rewarded citizenship; but in contrast, the United States will not even provide a legitimate pathway to citizenship for alienated refugee masses that have and are escaping deplorable material conditions throughout Latin America—conditions that were initially created by Western imperialism, accelerated by United States eco-political foreign policy, and razed by CIA intervention, destabilizing democracy in the Americas in order to preserve capitalism in the face of then emerging socialist amelioration.

Moreover, a disenfranchised and misguided US citizen sends fifty dollars to an incapable pseudo-terror-cell, and spends life in prison; Marc

Rich arms the military of Iran in exchange for cheap oil and receives a Presidential Pardon. There is the Law for the Rich, and then there is the law for the rest of us. Injustice—the trillion dollar Iraq War was established on the false pretense, false alarm of a threatened use of weapons of mass destruction, fabricated and perpetuated by the Bush administration and the conservative rightwing media machine. Trillions of dollars pocketed by corporatists and multinationals, while the United States educational system, literacy initiatives, and community resources are intentionally defunded and cut. A trillion dollar war based on government lies, costing the lives of over 12,000 US casualties and over 100,000 wounded US service men/women, as well as Iraqi casualties of war and Iraqi civilians that total near 200,000 deaths—and yet, the Bush administration has never been held criminally responsible, let alone liable for their actions in allegiance to capitalism above all else. There is the Law for the Rich, and then there is the law for the rest of us.

As we move deeper into postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism, fragmentation is devolving to the point of disintegration: individual consciousness is now trapped in an ahistorical perpetual present, a vicarious sentient being symbiotically attached to celebrity culture pseudo-emotive responsiveness. At a macro-level, postmodern late capitalism ushered in the era of the post-nation state. The United States has been reduced to a façade, a front for private capitalist interests to preserve or expropriate resources and exploitable labor throughout the world to increase profit margins to ungodly heights. The War-on-Terror could only be engaged during postmodernity or during the stage of late capitalism. The Bush administration, inbred with special interest groups and their corporate sponsorship, “has defined the parameters of the War on Terror [...] to maximize its profitability and sustainability as a market—from the definition of the enemy to the rules of engagement to the ever-expanding scale of battle” (Klein, *Shock Doctrine* 379). Naomi Klein refers to the wide-scale privatization of the United States government and infrastructure as “Bush’s New Deal” that exclusively benefits “corporate America, a straight-

up transfer of hundreds of billions of public dollars a year into private hands” (376). The post-nation state era has minimized the United States military to an auxiliary position (mall security whose primary objective has been reduced to protecting capital assets and market availability) at the behest of private for-profit corporations that monetarily influence political policy concerning war (among other monetary infringements on the democratic process), and soon thereafter, managing and operating the wars as a supra-national conglomerate (outside military legal liability or jurisdiction) and directly tied to those same corporations advocating for war from its inception. Furthermore, these “private companies put pressure on their own government to ensure that the troops stationed in these countries are assigned to protecting their interests” (Fanon, *Wretched* 60). The United States government, in reality, is merely a liaison or broker between the unwitting public and various profit-first war-mongering corporations.

Although the post-nation state is a global dominant, there still are pockets or movements of global resistance to the capitalist power-structure that exist within and against postmodernism, or late capitalism. In other words, postmodern fragmentation is a phenomenon hyper-realized through emerging global communities of resistance against late capitalism; however, this phenomenon also complicates collective revolutionary efforts when the medium silences the message. For example, Arab Spring as a revolutionary movement becomes an aside to the commercial appeal of Twitter, and this revolution is then reduced to a marketing campaign as the Twitter brand grabs the headlines, presenting an opportunity to once again commodify revolution. The revolution loses its meaning, distorted by miscontextualization: the demands of the people and what ignited revolution become trivial if not all together unknown, because what is important, is that Twitter™ is at the front, back, and center of newscasts and corporate media talking-heads can then parlay the conversation into how they themselves use Twitter in just the same fashion as idolized celebrities so too use Twitter, further fabricating a false intimacy between the ascended and the disremembered.

This phenomenon is a commonality: the iconic Korda photograph of Che Guevara becomes a mass produced image and supersedes Che Guevara the revolutionary with respect to historical materialism; not unlike the way in which anti-establishment punk rock in the 1970s and fatalistic grunge in the 1990s were commodified and packaged for runway fashion shows, or more recently, not unlike the way the Candle Building (11 Spring Street in New York), a street art cult spot, was converted into SoHo multimillion dollar luxury apartments that eventually became owned by Rupert Murdoch's son, an heir to the giant News Corporation. Jay Z, who is an unabashed capitalist that preaches elitism, muscular individualism (emphasizing misogyny), and egoism to the extent that he rechristens himself/his brand as Roc-A-Fella (Rockefeller), which also cannibalistically feeds-off and feeds-into the cult of Scarface/Tony Montana—a clearly capitalistic narrative emblematic of capitalist idolatry—he, Jay Z the capitalist, wears a Che Guevara t-shirt, coincidentally during photo-ops of course, on his tourist trip to Cuba. This is indicative to tourists that vacation is revolution, and when it is no longer profitable or attractive, or no longer frivolously entertaining, they can safely return to re-inscribing capitalist doctrine on their forehead.

Moreover, in 2013, racial profiling cases involving the luxury department store Barneys New York gained national attention. Two Black youths, Trayon Christian and Kayla Phillips, in two separate incidents were confronted and questioned by city law enforcement officers, or more precisely in the case of Christian, he was arrested by NYPD detectives and detained in a local jail. Law enforcement officers became alarmed by the two African-American youths buying high-end items: a name-brand belt and a name-brand handbag. Despite Black community outrage, and their insistence that Jay Z end his affiliation with Barneys, thereby cancelling his holiday collection where initially only some of the proceeds would fund scholarships established by Jay Z, after a private made-public self-commentated deliberation through media, Jay Z refused and continued his collaboration with Barneys.

According to Forbes, Jay Z, in 2014, had a net-worth of \$520 Million dollars. Specifically in regards to Jay Z's/Barneys's holiday collection, The Huffington Post's Julee Wilson reports that, "after tallying the profits [...] the total exceeded \$1 Million," which is therefore about 0.2% of Jay-Z's net-worth in 2014. The collection included "\$1,000 cotton shirts, \$700 python baseball caps and more absurdities" (Wilson). Rather than commandeer the national news feeds to make a definitive statement against State induced racial profiling and discrimination by the market and its State police, Jay Z, under the false pretense of charity, continued his allegiance to the market over the people in order to generate about 0% of his net-worth to fund his scholarships. Furthermore, scholarship donations are always tax deductible and thereby affect a considerable percentage of adjusted gross income, or AGI.

For Jay Z, it is worth more to remain silent and preserve his brand-identity than it is to terminate his lucrative relationship with Barneys specifically, and more generally, jeopardize his ascendancy into capitalist paradise. About three years prior, Jay Z also attempted to capitalize on the Occupy Movement by selling commodified Occupy Wall Street t-shirts; however, after it was revealed that absolutely no funds would be shared with any protester or groups of protesters, and after ensuing backlash and criticism, the Rocawear website deleted the sale-item and discontinued its sale. At best, Jay Z's 2013 tourist vacation to Cuba, complete with local dress that de-historicizes Che Guevara into a condensed and malleable silent image that is so revolutionary-chic, is class-diving in the same vein as the affluent and privileged masses that rushed to CBGB's, flocked to Jean-Michel Basquiat's studio, and now sing the praises of Pussy Riot: spectacle and projected vainglorious self-worship. The cult of personality by proxy. At worst, considering the relative ease with which Jay Z received permission to visit Cuba, under the pretense of cultural exchange, this more accurately could be described as stealth invasion—the cultural industry mobilized. The Dolls/Automatons of the Arcades at the gates of the phantasmagoria of happiness are now traveling salesmen/women that

no longer are stationary greeters at the gates but have now become private jet-setting ambassadors for capitalist utopic ascendancy.

For Jay Z, the image of Che is a mere accessory with ahistorical reference only functioning as masquerading carnival. What is lost is Che's fight for social justice and economic equity. It is important to note, however, that Che Guevara did in fact oversee La Cabaña prison, which imprisoned those, in post-revolution Cuba, that were convicted of war crimes or considered dissenters, deserters, or more generally, counterrevolutionary agents of capitalist interests. For supporters of the revolution, the two tribunal process reflected the Nuremberg Trials and was advocated as such, but for those that opposed the revolution, Che Guevara is perceived and caricaturized as the "Butcher of La Cabaña"—despite a two tribunal process, which separately tried civilians in one and military war criminals from the Batista regime in another, and despite a general Cuban public—many of whom were victimized by the Batista dictatorship—that demanded justice.

Nevertheless, after conviction and sentence, if determined so, war criminals were in fact executed. For Guevara, "revolutionary justice is a true justice. When we pronounce a death sentence, we are right to do so." Guevara's vigilance against traitors, dissenters, and counterrevolutionary agents was partly developed as a result of his time spent in Guatemala. Specifically, while living in Guatemala in the early 1950s, Che Guevara witnessed the United States overthrow the Guatemalan government of democratic, popular elected President Jacob Arbenz. United States President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and three other men "were to be instrumental in the fall of Arbenz: John Foster Dulles, his brother Allen, and General Bendell Smith" (Gleijeses 235); in short, the CIA, acting as agents of capital and in order to destroy Arbenz's land reform programs, mobilized and organized the designed execution of terroristic tactics to destabilize the Arbenz government and replace it with the military dictatorship of Castillo Armas.

In 1973, this exact program would be reinstated by the CIA to

overthrow the democratically elected Salvador Allende government in Chile, and install the military dictator Augusto Pinochet—a free market capitalist and Friedmanite. Even as recent as 2002, the United States and CIA, in a failed attempt, organized a (media) coup to overthrow the democratically elected Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. In Guatemala, Operation PBSUCCESS was spearheaded by board members from the multinational United Fruit—also known as the Green Octopus—board members that simultaneously doubled as the United States Secretary of State (John Foster Dulles) and the CIA Director (Allen Dulles). The incestuous relationship between capital and government is the dissolution of the nation-state and the usurpation by multinational corporations. The imperialist banner is no longer a national flag but a conglomeration of corporate brand logos. Over a decade into the twenty-first century, during postmodernism or late capitalism and the post-nation state, Marxist revolutions of the past century are dead. The end of colonialism is only the beginning of neo-colonialism. Cuba is reverting to its previous position as the mistress of the United States once more. A United States pathological need to engage in imperialistic enterprise can only be satisfied by neo-colonizing Cuba, by fetishizing the virgin, an economic gaze that sees only untapped capitalist potential—so pure, just lacking the experienced touch of muscular individualism and capitalist determinism. The revolution is dead.

The United States capitalist power-structure juxtaposes a contradictory image of Cuba as simultaneously a mistress and a virgin—rekindled love affair with a mistress while simultaneously a forbidden encounter with a virgin. All this is a hyper-macho fantasy that reinvigorates our bruised and aging traditional national identity, complicated by the reality that it is now a world of the post-nation state. Cuba provides an opportunity for the United States to conquer a land behind the guise of cultural exchange and mutual benefit. Cuba is a macrocosm: Cuba is the representational narrative of anti-capitalist Revolution. Eventually, revolution becomes commodified, frivolous, and superficial. Any revolution now only exists to the extent that it works within the pre-established space set forth

by capitalist ideology and doctrine. In other words, revolution is acceptable insofar as it is fashion and spectacle.

An increasingly ignorant public is inherently disconnected from the reality of its material conditions. Public audiences clearly identify the revolutionary spirit of freedom set against oppressive totalitarian governments in widely popular book and film franchises such as *The Hunger Games* and *The Divergent Series* franchises, yet rather than triggering any concrete movement towards dismantling a capitalist machine, these franchises among others, become corporate brands, essentially, and generate massive amounts of capital for corporations that double as entertainment giants. We hiss the villains on-screen and champion the heroes on-screen, only to abandon or repress that sentiment ultimately, but at that moment self-identify with the protagonists challenging authority.

Instead, once removed from the theater, we masochistically punish ourselves by worshiping the gods of the celebrity pantheon. We have no desire to fight repression; we simply fantasize about one utopic future day defined speculatively—this one perpetual someday when we ascend and become an oppressor ourselves. We do not want the system to fail. No! We simply want the ever-exploitative system to work for us, always at the expense of others. In the meanwhile, follow us on Twitter and Instagram, a simulation for that ever-evasive speculative future when we each become celebrity gods ourselves.

We are brainwashed to believe that cultural freedom and choice equates to democratic freedom and choice; more accurately cultural freedoms and choices are designed specifically to supplant or negate democratic determination. Based on Jameson's observations, class struggle does not end because everyone owns a television—in fact it is precisely because we own televisions, multimedia devices, and the like technology that class warfare continues unabated. We now choose to ignore class struggle, not remedy it. Class struggle still exists, but superimposed over it is a collage of celebrity imagery and iconography—a cacophony of media soundbites and auto-tuned and derivative mechanizations voicing over the utopic presen-

tations of celebrity high-living.

We then live out celebrity by proxy, fooling ourselves into thinking we have ascended into the capitalist world-elite because celebrity mannequin #1 has befriended us on social media. It is because we have the access to technology or, as many naïve or dubious individuals will claim, the freedom to be consumers that we are fooled into believing we have celebrity standing—as evinced by the numerous followers we have accumulated across several of our social media accounts. We become micro-celebrities and indulge in the clichéd poses and dresses. The question then becomes, “how is this postmodern, late capitalist phenomenon related to the political relevance of interpretation”?

Within this current postmodern, late capitalist condition, the Marxist critic becomes a future relic. At this point we can only interpret the world because even the principle acts of revolutionary change become commodified and celebritized. Revolution is no longer a process but a performative farce in drag. It is not about being a revolutionary, but rather, it is about being seen as a revolution. Revolution has been reduced to a pro-wresting style gimmick—a caricaturization: there is no desire to dismantle government and overthrow the capitalist power-structure; the only desire is to be showcased as wanting to challenge government and overthrow the power-structure. As such, revolution is as easy as tapping a Like icon—it is as easy as superimposing the flag of a nation on a profile pic (a pic belonging to an individual that more often than not could not identify that aforementioned nation on a map). It is therefore our obligation to historicize and re-contextualize the world as it is and not how it is fabricated to be—to expose the material realities of global capitalist exploitation. To interpret the world is to begin to change it.

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“For a Marxist, the link from theory to practice (from reason to rebellion) is an internal condition of theory itself, because truth is a real process, it is rebellion against the reactionaries.”

Alain Badiou