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# A Fascism for Our Time

THE RECENT APPEARANCE of the plague (COVID-19) along with rhetorical and empirical flashes of fascism in contemporary American political and social life may imply an immense unscheduled convergence in their respective traffic patterns but also suggests an hitherto unimagined and unexpected kinship. On closer examination the plague and fascism look a lot alike, even though there could be no organic and historical relationship bonding them. Their accidentally swerving trajectories, bringing them together into a fateful partnership to overdetermine the production of pain and hardship we are obliged to endure, should not come as a surprise, since both have followed the planet's pathway of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Both are connected to the movement and expansion of capital that only the globe itself can constrain.

Fascism, the most characteristic political form of the age of industrial capital, originating in the last century in the interwar period, claims this status because it is embedded in capitalism as if it were the ghost in its machine, an axiom ready for actualization whenever capitalism encounters crisis situations and needs to be saved from itself as it desperately tries to outrun its constituent contradictions. This time the terms of the crisis arrived from outside of capital, with the plague, yet, as we've been forced to observe, the subsequent failures to make the proper accommodations and adjustments have added immeasurably to the original emergency. For its part, the virus, rapidly exiting and travelling from its origination to the rest of the world, has exacerbated the conditions of uneven development and increasing inequality everywhere it has passed through. Since no region has been spared by the destructive aptitudes of capitalism, there is no place in the inhabitable world that the plague has not spread its deadly effects. Both plague and fascism, each in its own way, are as lethal though slower than the poisons that come out of Russia's cabinet of toxic pharmaka. They undermine the capacity to exercise continuing sociality, and in some places, like the United States, the plague has been used to recruit fascism in order to reinforce the fear of a general crisis—and thus the

necessity to open things up and get people back to work to avoid a complete economic collapse. Such a tactic has encouraged those in command to guarantee quick containment of the virus, even though the promise has done more to enable the spread and increase the death count of its citizens than realize the illusion of confining its progress.

Both COVID-19 and fascism also prey on the circulation of false information, enthusiastically conveyed by social media: promises of quick solutions to economic collapse, unbelievable and dangerous medical “cures,” and the reality of rising deaths from the plague. But expressly anticipating the prospect of an ending is, itself, a delusional gesture, in fact, a conspiracy, since fascism will disappear only when capital is dissolved, and the plague will diminish, but probably still stay around indefinitely, once a workable vaccine is devised and effectively distributed. The convergence of the virus and capitalism has shown that each by itself is disastrous, but together they have proved to be a world historical catastrophe productive of a global culture of lasting duration and destruction, which means this convergence should have been confronted as a worldly effort, instead of reinforcing regional and national barriers.

Admittedly, this pairing joined by time seems somewhat exaggerated. But the strangely unanticipated coming together in a newly created global conjuncture of a deadly plague and a violent political disposition pledged to re-establish order at all cost, now acting in accidental concert to threaten and destroy the last frayed remains of a democratic impulse and literally causing an untold number of unwanted deaths, leaving its survivors with incalculable and uncertain aftereffects, is in process of demolishing what many now remember was an acceptable normalcy. What seems now to have been romanticized as normal is itself an exaggerated account of the recent past, for the simple reason that COVID-19 and the spectral appearances of fascism have unintentionally acted to expose a political figure allegedly based on the rule of law, masking the reality rooted in norms already long shredded. What this means, as recent events have dramatized, is that a constitutional system that has established laws governing its citizens has instead been inverted into a system that makes it easy for an individual to breach any and every norm in the interest of satisfying a personal quest for power. Furthermore, this wrecked system has been increasingly exacerbated by the presence of a failing economy and a totally inadequate national “health system” benefitting not the welfare and safety of the

citizenry but rather engorging insurance and pharmaceutical companies and the political classes controlling the two parties.

We live with the insult of a having to be “represented” by a virtual hereditary and unworthy political class that has been empowered too long to behave as a natural oligarchy of leaders whose recognition of and concern for the people occurs only momentarily, when it does, during the ritual of elections. The current president is only the latest but undoubtedly best example of the deformed nature of the American political imaginary, a deformation that actually dates from the origins of the putative Republic and its “sacred” Founding Fathers, as they are tiresomely called, as if they were Olympian gods who temporarily descended to earth to create this exceptional “City on the Hill” called the United States, only to withdraw to their perch above the clouds and observe its inevitable unsuitability once the country began to expand. James Madison had oddly advised that this “feudal system” would work best in an “extensive sphere,” because its effects would enhance the Republican form that he and his contemporaries envisioned. But, as America’s history was to show, the commonness he hoped the nation would realize with expansion undermined the achievement of a “common motive” and “unison.”<sup>2</sup> The real problem America is now made to remember and forcibly recognize is that its so-called acceptable normalcy was already abnormal before the coming of the plague and arrival of the political signs of fascism, a normalization that made possible Trump’s acquisition of power.

ACTUALLY, the appearance of fascist specters announcing a second coming already marked Bush’s decision to invade Iraq. We are still engaged in war in both Iraq and to a greater extent Afghanistan, now shaping up to become America’s version of its very own Thirty Years War. But at bottom these wars have been nothing more than lame imperialist adventures that had no purpose, other than to allegedly protect American national security, which was never threatened by what was happening in these remote regions. The real threat to national security is quite evidently the ingrained political system. Hence, the habit of augmenting pointless wars has accomplished two things: they have reinforced the expansion of executive powers domestically and needlessly paid for this step toward fascism with the heedless killing of young American lives as well as unaccounted civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, who were simply caught in the wrong place, even though

it was where they had lived for generations. This habit also ratified an old saying that came from philosopher Max Horkheimer, who proposed that, “Anyone who does not wish to discuss capitalism should also stay silent on the subject of fascism”—a silence I will break, but we must also consider Nicos Poulantzas’s revision of Horkheimer, which advises as well that a person, “who does not wish to discuss imperialism. . . should stay silent on the subject of fascism.”<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Trump’s administration began to increasingly appeal to institutionalizing a nationalism less concerned with strengthening the sinews of national community in the sphere of the social than to eradicating its remaining threads, by carrying out a vague scheme to achieve a form of fascist community, now disclosed as a true democracy founded on the racial superiority of white Americans. It is almost as if President Trump tried his hand at organizing a social movement and staging a slow *coup d’etat*, one which would bring him to power *from within the state over which he already presides*, which finally would declare him leader for life, hinting at a desire for the very monarchical authoritarianism that the eighteenth-century constitution sought to avoid, by replacing that constitution with a presidential executive (whose powers have exceeded kingly privilege and grown exponentially with the extension of the country and its expansion abroad since its inaugural moment). Yet this widening of presidential executive power includes the contributions of both Presidents Bush and Obama, as well as some of their more recent predecessors. With Trump, the executive branch has been broadened to the point that he has begun to refer to himself as the “leader,” distantly echoing the resonance of its German equivalent, *Fuhrer*. There has been a mobilization of a putative fascist movement accompanying this renaming, directed at a base comprised of white lower- and middle-class workers, whose mutual but vague sense of *ressentiment* Trump has ceaselessly exploited to convince them that he shares the same sentiment. This is, perhaps, his greatest accomplishment and one that recalls Reagan’s earlier success in convincing ordinary Americans that he was one with them. But Reagan was clearly a better actor, whereas Trump makes no effort to simulate the very fake ideological kinship with which he is trying to convince his base that he is one of them. In fact, the reverse is true, inasmuch as he has encouraged them to believe that they can become like him.

The philosopher Theodore Adorno, referring to the German con-

text and the spread of antisemitism before World War II, has explained how this bonding of leader and followers work, in a manner relevant to the Trump phenomenon. In a 1951 essay, titled “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,” Adorno was concerned with showing how Freud tried to understand the transformation of individuals into a mass, identifying what factors unified individuals whose “rational self-interest” was incompatible with a “fascist demagogue” who must secure support for aims not shared by large numbers of people.<sup>4</sup> It is an artificial bond of a *libidinal* nature, the coherence of which stems from the pleasure principle, that is, “the actual vicarious gratifications individuals obtain from surrendering to a mass.”<sup>5</sup> Freud observed that, while the followers who submit their bodies to the masses are not primitive men, they nevertheless display the contradiction of primitive behavior expressed in emotional violence to their normal rational conduct. This transformation of rational individuals into primitivity reveals an affinity between certain peculiar attributes of mass behavior and the archaic. What strikes close to the desired effect is that the “leader has to appear himself as absolutely narcissistic,” “in order to allow narcissistic identification” among the potential fascist community. The individual is confronted by a conflict between a strong self-preserving ego agency and the continuous failure to satisfy its desires which, accordingly, can only be resolved by “strong narcissistic impulses which can be absorbed and satisfied only through the idealization and partial transfer” to the leader. Making the leader into the ideal results in self-love and rids the tormented ego “of the stains of frustration and discontent,” since the follower is “reflected in the leader’s own self-absorption” and gravitates toward racialized kinship or comradeship.<sup>6</sup>

Adorno suggests that this pattern of idealization is a collective undertaking. Yet, we must be careful to avoid attributing to this configuration of followers the qualities of either a class or a movement, even though some elements will identify themselves as militants capable of armed insurgency. What is described here instead is an instance of “psychological impoverishment” of a subject that “surrendered itself to the object” which “it has substituted for its most important constituent” (i.e., the superego), it “anticipates...the post-psychological de-individualized social atoms which form the fascist collectivities... The category of ‘phoniness’ applies to the leaders as well as to the act of identification on the part of the masses and their supposed frenzy and

hysteria.” Moreover, the followers do not actually identify with the leader as such, but enact “their own enthusiasm, and thus participate in their leader’s performance.” Despite the utility of Adorno’s adaptation of Freudian psychology to the phenomenon of fascism and racism, this analysis still lacks, as he acknowledged, a consideration of the socioeconomic conditions of capitalism that mediate both the sentiment of *ressentiment*, unfilled desire, and the formation of the fascist mass.<sup>7</sup> In any event, we can see in this post-psychological profiling the way that fascism became the negative distortion of subjective autonomy.

It should be additionally proposed that followers of a leader are committed “true believers,” faithful adherents who barely understand the message and arguments that are being directed at them, to the point where words do not really matter. The reason for this rests with the followers’ fixation on the leader, who can say anything and often makes no sense. What seems primarily important for the psychology of the followers is less their indifference to the messaging than the leader’s capacity to project a figure of absolute narcissistic self-confidence and strength that authorizes whatever he says, that is, what matters is the form of his presentation rather than its content. When listening to followers it is frequently evident that they have not grasped the message and end by repeating whatever they might have randomly remembered, rarely accompanied by an articulation or explanation of argument, they instead cling to the mantra of keywords, catch phrases, outrageous lies, and clichés. With Trump, no tactic has been more important than the repetitive circulation of lies, especially a big one. Yet none of this matters because the followers identify with the leader, sealed as true believers, means that the leader will do what he is saying and they, the followers, need not worry about the details and their frustrated desires will finally be resolved.

This particular reflex goes a long way towards explaining the claim of Italian fascists that they had no ideology, even as that announcement revealed what their ideology was. But in the case of Trump and his followers, there is another dimension, often overlooked. In the four years of his presidency, Trump—when he was not playing golf and twittering—was orchestrating countless rallies throughout every part of the country, mainly by what might be described as his movement’s “grassroots.” Although these rallies, where he ranted and played out the role of a tormented hero who had been unfairly treated, were seen by most observers as Trump campaigning years before the coming elec-

tion, they were also large-scale entertainments. It has occurred to me that, as a TV entertainer of a “reality” show, with this road show Trump was entertaining mobs of people who took these gestures personally, bringing the spectacle directly to them, even if he was motivated by sheer manipulative calculation. And in the United States there is an awful lot of people who would rather be entertained than pursue their own material interests, and what such entertainment means to them has become the principal problem. Politics here is nothing but pure, personalized performance, and its audience are the followers.

WHAT IS NOT FULLY GRASPED yet is the certainty that fascism and capitalism thrive on what Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari named as microfascisms. “[F]ascism is inseparable from a proliferation of molecular focuses in interaction, which skip from point to point.... Rural fascism and city or neighborhood fascism, youth fascism and war veteran’s fascism...fascism of the couple, family, school, and office: every fascism is defined by a micro-black hole that stands on its own and communicates with the others, before resonating in a great, generalized black hole.” Fascism’s power lie in its implacable capacity to proliferate micro-organizations that made available ““an unequaled, irreplaceable ability to penetrate every cell of society, in short molecular flows (beliefs and desire).” In this regard, fascism’s greatest danger stems from its molecular or micropolitical power, secreting from its grassroots, which aggregate into mass movements—“a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism.” At the level of the large, assembled, and concentrated crowd of people, it is always easy to identify its fascist purpose, like Hitler’s Nuremberg spectacles, or even paler, less spectacular performances dedicated to entertaining followers, and at the same time being able to acknowledge what Rey Chow described as the fascism within us, Jean-Luc Nancy’s “our history,” i.e., fascism’s lived history, sustained, nourished, and cherished “with molecules both personal and collective.” What remains visible occludes the more importantly invisible.<sup>8</sup> Building a national community on the basis of *ressentiment* vocalized by atomized individuals can only produce society’s absence.

The great contemporary anxiety lodged in the making of *ressentiment* in the United States is the lower- and middle-class white fear of losing their privileged status as a majority population. Race in the United States, it should be noted, has always been a convenient dis-

placement for class and a way of avoiding the threat of class conflict. Migrant ethnic communities were initially separated from each other, even though they were crowded into the same shared spaces, usually in ghetto enclaves, despite later formal efforts by the state to encourage assimilation (though rarely removing the impediments to it). Conflict between racial groups was always preferable than conflict between workers and the alliance of capital and state. The theory is rooted in the presumption that one can never choose their race and must live with what one is born with, while class is open to all and invites anybody to affiliate, despite their ethnicity, and thus offers the prospect for wide-scale mobilized solidarity, based on the recognition of mutual interests, cutting across racial lines and genders and presenting a permanent threat of social conflict. It is not difficult to see that American capitalism from its beginning could easily tolerate the identification of enslaved Black workers and the privatization of their labor power for a lifetime of plantation work. It was, as it still is, capital's principal axiom to control labor by every means available, short of literally imposing the chains of slavery on it, in order to prevent labor's capacity for generating conflict that aims to interrupt the industrial process of production. The history of both industrial labor in the Midwest and Northeast and agricultural labor in the West, especially California—"written in blood" as Marx has written earlier of labor everywhere, and employing the appeal to Americanism to stoke greater exploitation among workers—has become the continuing negative other of the narrative of America's rise to power and world status.

We must recognize that fascism has a history, which means there is always a chance of it reappearing, as if it were obeying some law of historical repetition. However, its reappearance has not been a return, as such, since it never went away, despite the confident assertions of all kinds of historians who were convinced that fascism was safely deposited in an irretrievable past. By contrast, COVID-19, as such, has had no prior history; however, like fascism, it is in process of evolving one and will never go away. Like the plague's capacity for mutations, the reappearance of fascism will not be an exact replica of what existed in the past but a significant difference reflecting the particular moment. Owing to its axiomatic relationship to capitalism, the form of fascism, its destruction of subjective autonomy, remains unchanged, but with every new reappearance it brings new content in different, historical presents, as Primo Levi observed in the 1970s, when he declared



that every age could expect the return of fascism in new and different materializations. Levi described this as the continuation of the “Silent Nazi Diaspora.”<sup>9</sup> The fascism of our time might not resort to the kinds of violence and coercion associated with its prior historical experience, but it can still lead to that destination in innumerable ways—most notably, in the circulation of its symptoms of morbidity, conveyed in such insurmountable nostalgia for fictionalized and romanticized pasts that easily sanction precisely those devices employed to maintain the illusory fear of disorder, and those accompanying disciplines dedicated to affirming the retention of order.<sup>10</sup> In the US the rule of law, a principal preoccupation since the eighteenth-century drafters of the Federal Constitution, valorized the protection and safety of property over the general welfare of the citizenry, a tendency that has continued down to our present. The appearance of conflict in even the slightest expression of protest automatically animates this illusion of fearful disorder and its putative challenge to private property.

According to Theodore Adorno, who would agree with Levi’s remarks, the truth of fascism’s unnoticed presence is assured, because it never went away. He proposed that the “objective conditions” that have produced fascism still continue to persist.<sup>11</sup> This move departed from an earlier position he accepted in *The Authoritarian Personality*, a collaborative work in which Adorno went along with bracketing the objective conditions mediating historical moments in order to assess subjective psychological determinants in the formation of fascism. At the same time he proposed, in another text, that civil society—and its bourgeois custodians—invariably fails to maintain itself under its own conditions and as a result slides into a final stage of development, one which relies on organizational forms of a statist and authoritarian nature that abandon the “play” of immediate economic forces, attempting to curb this “dynamic” by resorting to coercion that seeks to “return society to... simple reproduction.” In other words, civil society’s effort at self-preservation leads to a “tendency towards fascism and the totalitarian state,”<sup>12</sup> which seems to be the place the United States has recently reached.

It is interesting to note that the virus and fascism not only share a contemporaneity but also seem to function dialectically. Just as the objective conditions that breed fascism have not disappeared but are still with us, so the virus almost immediately exposed all of the objective conditions that have contributed to the faulty early responses to curb

its excesses. Adorno, it should be noticed, was concerned with the structural determinants of fascism, which led him to the proposition that it could not have derived simply from “subjective dispositions,” because the objective conditions that produced it are very much alive in every present. He was convinced that fascism, despite a weakened memory and the process of “cold forgetting,” always accompanied capitalism in every present but remained unseen in the shadows of its cyclic success, ready to reappear when the economic system slips back into decline and distress. Instead, it was the machinery and organization of the economic order that constitute the foundation which, “now as then, renders the majority of people dependent upon conditions beyond their control and thus maintains them in a state of immaturity.”<sup>13</sup>

People in capitalist societies have had no other choice, if they wished to continue living, than to submit to a model of economic organization they scarcely, if at all, understood, an infrastructure that shaped their society and its relationships, compelling them to disaffirm the necessary subjectivite autonomy that the ideal of democracy aspires to realize in a form of subjectivity which, in most industrial capitalist societies, has been replaced by a consumerist atomized and egotistic individualism). Despite the historic length that the democratic idea has been experienced in American society, in its knowledge of what authorizes political subjectivity and democracy, its population is as politically immature as any new nation. Yet it must also be understood that the willingness to submit to objective conditions that can neither be grasped nor be controlled opens the way to immediate compliance with any authoritarian expectation and with the way things are presented and given by the authorities. “Those whose real powerlessness shows no sign of ceasing... would prefer to get rid of the obligation of autonomy... and throw themselves into the melting pot of the collective ego.”<sup>14</sup> In this regard, Adorno is right to have proposed that people “can preserve themselves only if they renounce their self,” which loops back to his earlier espousal of Freud’s explanation as to why individuals surrender themselves to a leader. Their political immaturity and the limits compelling their dependency drives them to misrecognize the source of their rage and dissatisfaction and they blame others instead of the structure of circumstances or even themselves. They live a shallow political subjectivity, “subjectivizing” their own powerlessness, which reinforces the distancing between

subject and object that ultimately leads to the misrecognition of the latter for the former, that is, themselves.<sup>15</sup>

WHATEVER ELSE IS CLAIMED for democracy, its principal purpose is to augment a form of personal autonomy in each subject that also recognizes it in others, as the basis of a genuine human or civil community founded on a mutuality of interests. Wearing a surgical mask is not a principle on which to make a stand to push for one's individual rights and their supposed violation, because not wearing it affects others, whose rights have been ignored. But people have not yet worked through and grasped the deception inflicted upon them by the appeal to a "democracy" that has never been naturalized to the extent that people can actually see themselves in it and experience themselves as subjects of a political process, as their own rather than as the body of elected leaders, said to represent them, but who stand only for special interests.<sup>16</sup> Democracy certainly does not authorize taking things in hand and organizing derelict gangs of tattooed white men, draped in combat fatigues and weighed down by automatic assault weapons and other military hardware, as exemplified by the State of Michigan's Wolverine Watchmen, whose recent plan to kidnap that state's governor as retribution for her policies concerning the plague was uncovered by the authorities and its would-be perpetrators apprehended. These are men whose maturation has been stunted and who undoubtedly have seen too many bad movies where fake heroism substitutes for personal inadequacy, and so they attempt to re-enact the drama of being heroes of their own lives. It is my contention that, beginning with its "Founding Fathers," in this country the practice of the autonomous subject has always been limited to those who would constitute the oligarchy of rulership. Not the demos, left in the dark and the wilderness, who must settle for being good citizens, that is, willing followers.

The political economic model of capitalism that molded the organization of American society has no history other than the cycle of repetitions of its processes; the form of fascism inhering in it and its claims of an unchanging ghostly countenance makes unscheduled appearances like a revenant to remind us what must be done and what must be sacrificed to make the machine right again. Most people in the United States, as well as other industrial societies, occupy a timeless zone, a permanent present indefinitely stretching out to an infinite

horizon, their everyday lives determined by the time of the working day that repeats itself endlessly, until the economic machine breaks down, as it has during the time of the plague, and reveals the unattended, unrecognized, and overdetermined double crises of a failed health care system and the disastrous destruction of the global climate and environment. Hence, fascism hives off economic crises produced by capitalism itself and seeks to correct and save it from itself, deriving its own historicity from the event of the rescue mission. Adorno elsewhere named this mission “the nightmare of a humanity without memory.”

From its beginning, the rise of the American Republic was rooted in the early domination of merchant capital and the importance of commercial trade. In this regard, the United States was committed to an unfettered capitalist impulse from its inception, as Max Weber recognized when making Benjamin Franklin its ideal paradigm; the country itself emerged from its original bourgeois presuppositions, manifest in a corporate liberalism and the unregulated excess or “possessive individualism” that stems from it. What is important to recognize is that societies like the United States have been founded under the principal sign of exchange, the negotiation between one party and another, money for commodity, which leaves no subsequently remaining record. In other words, the act of exchange is essentially timeless, without history: once the exchange has taken place, it is removed from time.

A number of thinkers have reminded us that the institution of the factory and its systematic organization of production similarly works as the place where the magnitude of socially necessary time has already been calculated in order to determine the amount of labor it takes to make a commodity and discipline the worker, but where the marking of time, as such, is absent in the actual production. The introduction and implementation of time study to estimate and determine the optimal amount of time required to produce a product led to time’s effacement, because from that point on its movements were routinized and automatically repeated in capital’s production cycle. Where the factory system differed from traditional society was precisely in this effacement of time, whose continued presence capitalists increasingly saw as an irrational residue. Franklin may have believed that “time is money,” but his view was constrained by the horizon of merchant capital. As Marx had observed in his *Grundrisse*, industrial

production reduced categories of “feudal” artisanal labor, like the time of training involved in mastering a trade or craft, into repetitive cycles that required little or no accumulated experience, which had been so important in traditional work. In this way, “concrete time vanishes” from the industrial scene.

What makes this emphasis on rationality and the course of rationalization so important is that it overtakes traditional forms of production, eliminating with it the continuing necessity of exercising recollection, memory, and time as vital phases in the production process. The divesting of memory ultimately leads to “conforming to what is immediately present,” not being able to see beyond it, and reflecting “an objective developmental law.”<sup>17</sup> Workers, in other words, have been objectified, robbed of selfhood and any reflexive history where they can see themselves in and as their own, thus furthering the loss of autonomy and contributing to the permanent political immaturity that induces workers to identify with the status quo and see it as the only model of life available to them. Such a move further explains their decision to fuse with the collective ego which, put in a different way, is a tribal form of nationalism.

When the New York Times divulged on September 28th the contents of Trump’s income tax returns, which he so assiduously fought to keep secret, we learn again that the U.S. government, in its traditional support of capitalism and the rich, has devised an impossibly complex tax code weighted to favor the rich with all kinds of means for declaring losses in order to retrieve what they have lost and pay no income tax. This is dramatic proof of the deliberate attempt by the state to make sure that most people, apart from the expert tax lawyers only the rich can afford, are kept in the dark about how the economic system works to simply add to their political immaturity. No authoritarian state has been as successful as the United States in keeping its citizenry in a state of benign ignorance about how the economic system advertises itself as a democracy, yet works to convince average citizens that they have no control over it. In fact, the American state has probably done as much for subsidizing, enriching, and protecting businesses as any putative socialist regime committed to a more equable distribution of resources, even though it has represented itself as the vanguard of capitalism and its values of free competition and trade.

Since fascism, by the same measure, derives its sense of time and memory from their absence in capitalism, it is thus free to imagine a

fictional or fantasy temporality that must be situated in the present as a substitute for the vacated time. What the most recent manifestation of fascism shares with its earlier historical episodes is this invitation to invoke an affinity for an archaic and anachronic present (usually the same thing), whether it is Mussolini's Romanness, Hitler's thousand-year Reich, Japan's divine origins, or the "American jeremiad"—the Puritan myth of origins about a new, exceptional civilization and the twilight of older civilizations abroad, those that had exhausted their productivity, together with the ceaseless advance of this new civilization into an endless frontier, pushing back the boundary of "savagery," and advancing imperialism and genocide. These days we too often hear a repetitive plaint about America's exceptionalism, its unique difference, and its accompanying implied corollary, about a played-out Europe from which we must separate ourselves.<sup>18</sup> But fascism's appearance in our contemporary history together with capital's descent is not coincidental, it is rather a response to the failure of Obama's attempted reforms in the wake of the financial failure of 2008, and the "long aftermath of an economic collapse" first set into motion by Bush. The inadequate response offered by Obama bailed out the principal banks involved in bringing it about but never punished those responsible for perpetrating the crisis nor tried to correct the underlying causes; worse still, there was no real help to those untold Americans who lost their homes and savings.<sup>19</sup>

I have proposed that the specter of fascism in the United States has linked up with a pool of *ressentiment* vocalized by white people, who fear the loss of white hegemony to people of color, and who look back to a time when this prospect was not yet written on the horizon. Mass *ressentiment* and its lingering presence has developed in a number of countries, upon encountering the prospect of the unwelcome arrival of migrants which, like fascism itself, never really disappears but remains in a dormant state. In this connection, it should be added that the incantation of solidarity of white racism, or indeed any claim to racial purity, is an attempt to simulate the singular ethnicity that defines an emotionally toxic organic nationalism, the sort which has usually escorted historical fascist attempts to mobilize the nation. What whiteness in the United States lacks in the authority of ethnic authenticity it makes up for with greater threats of violence to prove the solidary sincerity and rightness of the cause. But the advent of such a collective in recent days suggests that the object of opposition

is posed against change, which can only be overcome by negating it and returning to an imagined past when “America was Great,” which means white. Yet, it is possible to note the figure of a recurring scene in the expressions of *ressentiment*, and a replaying of an older struggle between countryside and city, most recently repeated in the Scopes Trial of the 1920s. This particular conflict, ending up in a famous trial capturing national attention, focused on a teacher who was accused of breaking Tennessee law by teaching evolution instead of the creationism narrated in the Bible. Above all else, this must be seen as a conflict between small-town America and the growing industrialization of the cities, politically pitting science against religion, a conflict which still resonates to this day in the different registers of climate warming and medical practices.

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, what are we to make of democracy in the United States? To begin with, America has never been the democratic republic we have all been led to believe in, as an unimpeachable article of faith. Despite the declared desire of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution’s avowed embrace of equality of all people, these sacred texts of the nation have been little more than aspirations; their putative promise has remained unfulfilled since the time of their inception and continues to be finessed by that fiction. The Declaration of Independence was destined to remain an untried remnant of the French Enlightenment, and the Federal Constitution, along with its amendments, resembles a wide, loose fishing net, one that lets out more than it contains. The so-called American experiment in democracy was always a facade rather than a substantive reality, and its achievement, delayed for several centuries, is now more urgent than ever.

The problem from the beginning has been the inability to resolve the paradox of a double bind: the choice between democracy as a commitment to full-scale participation of the people or an enterprise directed to the satisfaction of individuals, between democracy as a form of political and social life or private interest over social welfare. A good democracy must be the form of government and social life capable of mastering the twin excesses of collective activity and individual isolation inherent in democratic life.<sup>20</sup> We know that the formulators of the constitution were devoted to protecting the order of property and seeking the best form of governance, which came down to the

same thing for its founders. This preoccupation resulted in capitalism's incapacity to square the liberal valorization of the sanctity of private property with the claims of political and economic equality. American liberal society was achieved through the agency of unbridled imperial expansion in the continent under the claim of free trade, thus cancelling the contradiction between private property and equality by dissolving its ambiguous relationship through the changing meaning of its content. Eventually, equality came to mean the promise of open and free markets. It was John Locke who overrode the idea of a general welfare, finessing it with a conception of unregulated individualism that easily reinforced the early founders' belief in the primacy of oligarchic control of the reins of government—a hedge against what Locke considered as the anarchic excess ensured by popular democracy. Locke's inversion of the principles of America's claim to exceptionalism authorizing the common good led to recalibrating earlier conceptions of uniqueness into unrestrained individualism and removing obstacles to the realization of individual goods; it also incorporated conflict, inequalities, and the acquisition of excessive wealth caused by obsessive individualism, thus universalizing particularistic principles guided by a minimalist government.<sup>21</sup>

This figure of oligarchy was framed within an arrangement whereby an early form of capitalism—merchant capital—was combined with the adaptation of received political and economic practices belonging to prior historical developments. Nowhere is this more evident than in what historian William Appleman Williams called the “feudal constitution” and the fixed employment of slave labor to a production system implicated in the emerging world market in the nineteenth century. The author of this feudal constitution, which is echoed in the Federal Constitution, was James Madison. The idea was undoubtedly brought to America by English colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in practical forms and in the formal discourses of John Locke and the first Earl of Shaftsbury, which Madison reconfigured to adapt to the new American environment. In short, capital appropriated what it found useful at hand, which more often than not came from a pre-capitalist past and was put into the service of a different mode of production in pursuit of surplus value.

Implied, but never stated in this argument, is the spectacle of what Marx named as “primitive” or “original” accumulation, experienced in and borne by the horrors of slavery. With widespread utilization



of slaves imported from Africa, an older form of exploitative labor was made compatible with the new mode of capitalist production for the world market. It was Madison who worked out the principles designed to avoid factionalism from capturing a government system supposedly balanced between the state, the people, and the central government. Baptized as 'Dual Federalism,' the feudal principles informing the Constitution required a hierarchic organization of mutual obligations and called for the implementation of what Williams described as an overall corporate structure shaped by individual units of society, authorizing the figuration of a stratified social order.<sup>22</sup> The goal was to strike a balance of parts that would in fact check the excesses of each, a fantasy that only men possessing the same class consciousness with aristocratic aspirations could support, knowing that they were in fundamental agreement on the singular importance of property rights, since "land qualified a man as a full member of natural society..."<sup>23</sup> But the issue was never resolved, and today we see the same deep divisions, restoring the shadowed "feudal" figure of the states, now fueled by the oligarchic surrogate of a two-party system never endorsed by the constitution, persisting to suggest that the narrow possibility of resolution is not perhaps the recovery of a vanishing unity but found only in the act of separation and secession.

In the four years of the Trump presidency we have seen not only a departure from established bureaucratic norms but a complete indifference toward the putative balances and checks the constitutional division of labor supposedly embodies, singular acts that have brought on the constant warning of "constitutional crisis" and uncertainty regarding their legality or illegality. Whether a crisis or not, this course has demonstrated time and again that checks and balances guaranteed by the class consciousness of the founders could only last the duration of a generation; they opened the door to ignoring and even disobeying agreements that have characterized the institutional functions of the three bodies of government, which have resulted in sending everything to the Supreme Court, including the adjudication of outcomes of presidential elections. This original, inaugural failure was illustrated in the compromises that led to equal representation of large and small states in the Senate and proportional power in the House of Representatives. As for resolving interests, the South demanded that slaves be counted as three-fifths of a human being, producing the political grotesquery of an Electoral College, which by its definition reduces

the election of a president, not to a simple majority of the population, but to the voters in a number of small states whose aggregate electors can override a majority vote. The outmoded formula of the Electoral College has provided small states with disproportionate power to their smaller populations, as if it was still necessary to account for the institution of slavery. The South may have lost the Civil War, but it clearly won the subsequent political contest. The representational system of the nation was flawed and already de-democratized at its inception: it was never conceived as a procedure of direct representation, whereby a simple majority of the population elects the president. Rather, people voted for electoral representatives who would then decide the next president. In addition to this electoral arrangement, the equal representation of states in the Senate guaranteed the institutional conditions for a permanent oligarchy, already in place by the late eighteenth century.

Regardless of any necessity that led to such undemocratic compromises, what appeared at the heart of the eighteenth-century founders' project of the American constitutional order was a profound distrust of the masses of ordinary people, the very figure of the *demos* that still recalls for us the instance of political bad faith attending the origins of the nation, and which continues to stalk the conduct of American politics and governance. Madison's feudal structure was the most dramatic evidence of this distrust; its insistence on a hierarchical system of mutual obligations and responsibilities suggests that the very political structure in place since the beginnings and celebrated as a democracy has never really existed. And Americans have lived to see the system's complete inability to serve the general welfare of its people in whose name it has promoted this fiction.

Why this history lesson seems important today is that the vaunted checks and balances that supposedly were designed to avoid the current political situation we confront, despite the plague, and the chaos unleashed by the recurring complaints that name what is happening as a "constitutional crisis," easily open the path to a fascism that tells us we must again return to the safety of the distant past and the founders' promise of a pure white hegemony. A cursory unpacking of the political mythologies associated with the American constitution discloses not democracy, as such, but the silhouette of what in the 1930s a Japanese philosopher once designated, referring to Japan's own political endowment, as a "constitutional fascism" and what, nearly a

century later, Alain Badiou has labeled “capital-parliamentarianism,” which strikes me as the same difference. All of the historical furniture enabling the realization of fascism is in place, yet now manifestly occupying a different temporal register, one that no longer needs mass mobilization in and of the streets, as I’ve proposed, instead coming from within the presidency itself. The so-called checks and balances are little more than a set of “gentlemanly” agreements, and the actual porousness of the legal relations between the three bodies of the executive, congress, and court allow an unreasonably wide latitude for interpretability. The progressive regularity of executive acts departing from bureaucratic norms are, in many instances, violations of what presumably are legal categories set in stone, like subpoenas; such acts dramatically illustrate how easy it is to subvert the state from within its highest office and get away with it, simply by asserting they were committed in compliance with the law. When in doubt, we hear the plea that the US is, after all, a society pledged to the rule of law, usually joined by appeals to the “founding ideals” of the country. What are we to make of the rule of law when the law itself is indistinguishable from a virulent ideology based on a priori assumptions, both arbitrary and impossible to demonstrate, veiled behind unassailable claims of impartial objectivity?

What the recurrence of fascistic specters in the United States shares with its historical prototype is a sense of crisis. Historic fascism confronted a crisis of world depression in most nation states, complicated by the inflection of a bourgeois fear of a proletarian/communist revolutionary impulse among the working classes. Whether imagined or real, it proved to be the right combination to undermine liberal and social democratic regimes and provide the occasion for right-wing movements to swell in the face of economic collapse and political mismanagement. In pointing to the custodial failure of capitalism by liberal regimes, the right was positioned to make the most of the communist threat and its promise to abolish capitalism. By contrast, the growing incompetence of political regimes in our time, coupled with the bankruptcy of leadership and political classes in many, if not most, of the advanced industrial societies has displayed a collective paralysis rather than confront the overdetermined crisis spawned by a deadly global pandemic and economic shutdown it has demanded, which, in many ways, is approaching the scale and depth of magnitude of the world depression of the 1930s.

What is apparently absent is the threat of a proletarian revolution and the establishment of communism, even though there is the still a repetitive harkening back to the playbook of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s, with the attempt to utilize the threat of the country sliding into socialism and communism to animate voters. In the United States, this feeble attempt to scare the electorate that the country is becoming like Venezuela has been accompanied by exaggerated imaginings of left-wing militants in the nation's cities, which discloses how the current administration has misrecognized legitimate protests against a number of incidents involving police killings of African-Americans. Yet we must see in this misrecognition the power of a pervasive and violent white racism, one which refuses to distinguish between genuinely legitimate protests that support movements like Black Lives Matter and the terror of losing their white hegemony, which is recoded in a loss of "rights" and "freedoms." When lost rights and freedoms are broken down into concrete demands, we are at the level of banal and individualistic temper tantrums over refusals to wear surgical masks, which has become the way that the categories of inclusion and exclusion are now redefined. Trump may have his performative Mussolini moments, when he is trying to whip up crowds attending his rallies into a frenzy about his personal enemies, with wailings of infantile self-pity and dire warnings (interchangeable with threats) of what will happen to the United States if he is no longer in command. But his messages, unlike Mussolini's, have more to do with his own self-regard and the fictional narrative of how he has made America great, not the welfare of the people, who have already witnessed over 350,000 deaths from COVID-19 because of his own indifference and decision to hold back to make sure that the economy would not shut down. It is hard to see in the ranting and rhetoric anything more than the need for constant recognition and the desire to reinforce identification with the masses that attend to take part in such planned spectacles, which, unfortunately, provides them with the occasion and opportunity to perform forms of self-enactment and photo-ops.

While such recent presidential behavior may appear as anomalous in American political history, its politics are not and have a long genealogy. Regardless of the party, presidential conduct has always demonstrated actions designated to serve the interest of a plutocratic oligarchy and its historic entitlement to rule, which takes us back to

Madison and the eighteenth-century feudal constitution. It should be pointed out that republicanism in the eighteenth century didn't mean mass democracy. It was seen as a temporary form, suitable to a small territory. With subsequent westward expansion and "territorial acquisition into an Empire" outgrowing the size suitable for a republic, it would require a form of governance capable of managing the conflict that comes with the greater growth of both factionalism and guarantees of private rights. Despite concerns with the rights of individuals, history has known two principal qualifications for the entitlement of political leadership: those who claimed superiority from access to divine filiation or human superiority according to birth (class), and those who possess wealth and have access to the organization of productive activities and social reproduction. These two principles have been occasionally supplemented by educated people and those scientific specialists who have shown skill and expertise.<sup>24</sup>

Societies like the United States have habitually been governed by a combination of people associated with these two qualifications, more from the latter than former, which lasted until English colonialism ended. Hence, it is difficult to conceive of the founding of the United States as a democracy, since "democracy is neither a type of constitution nor a form of society."<sup>25</sup> Perhaps this is what happens when a local tax revolt is called a revolution. The so-called power of the people was never a re-united population, constitutive of its majority or working classes; instead, it simply redefined those not qualified to govern but only to be governed, requiring thus the necessity of preventing the untitled from intervening in politics. This was accomplished by emptying the people of the sovereignty supposedly ascribed to them. Opinions held by the framers of the constitution converged around the proposition that the people should have no real involvement in the political realm that would affect the conduct of governance.

The founding oligarchical intention would thereby claim that the carrying out of governance for the people by the few who were qualified to govern has resulted in the growing distance and chronic concern for the general welfare of those who supposedly are among the represented, which in recent decades explains the widening dissociation from governmental concern for the general welfare that now accounts for the catastrophic condition of our contemporary society. A recent book asks how we got here, yet it never addresses the structural problems of oligarchic control cloaked by appeals to "democracy." It

is simply not logical to speak of democratic governance, since its excess is the prerogative of the minority who rule over the majority. This oligarchic heritage disguised as democracy explains why so much American foreign policy has been directed to propping up authoritarian regimes throughout the globe during the post-World War II era and calling them democratic. Jacques Rancière proposes that the so-called “powers of the people” is necessarily “hypertopic,” occurring only in abnormal times and place and thus without function in a society dedicated to inequality.<sup>26</sup>

By the same measure, we have learned that representation has never been a system devised to compensate for the presence of a large population but instead remains yoked to an oligarchic form which indicates the representation of minorities, who have claim to occupy common affairs, to actually constitute the exact opposite of democracy. In the United States, representation appears more responsive to lobbyists acting for private business interests, which repay the representatives for their support. This cycle of support and payment is the method of political reproduction on which elites in power are able to retain their positions in governance as virtually permanent sinecures. The American “Founding Fathers,” as well as some French imitators, saw representation as the instrument of the elite to exercise, in the name of the people—a power they are obliged to recognize, but that they do not know how to deploy without risking ruin of the same principles of government.<sup>27</sup> This is what Rancière has called, correctly I believe, the “hatred of democracy.” In the final analysis, even voting has turned out to be only a procedural operation, rather than a substantive one, driving the major preoccupation among parties toward spending more time and money on voter suppression of large numbers of people than on those actually casting a credible ballot. As I write, variations on the cheap tricks long used in Southern states to inhibit African Americans from voting are still being attempted.

The point of this brief discussion on the absence of democracy is not to show something that was previously unknown about American political history and life, as if it were a best kept secret. The damning evidence was always out in the open, in plain sight, like Poe’s “purloined letter,” before us, yet unseen or deliberately unrecognized. What it seeks to disclose is how institutionally the historical furniture filling America’s political space has already been arranged in such a way that it would always leave open the prospect of evolving even

greater authoritarian forms like fascism. Jump-starting the political origins of the nation with a ready-made semi-feudal structure and the entitlement of enlightened leadership, reserved for those who possess the requisite qualifications, was never going to grow more democratic than authoritarian in time but rather the reverse, unless it is interrupted by a genuine social revolution.

A cursory look at the New Deal suggests a glimmer of the possibility of this tendency toward authoritarianism, a mild but not revolutionary anti-capitalist sentiment provoked by the economic Depression and widespread drought conditions in the West, resulting in Roosevelt's reforms that led to greater regulationism but never farther, since entry into World War II took precedence over the pace of domestic recovery and political re-arrangement.

But in our time, we have already gone far down the pathway to fascist authoritarianism. It is important to remember that the reappearance of fascist specters did not emerge from or in confrontation with a revolutionary threat, as had occurred in historic fascisms of the 1930s. In the contemporary American case, it's an inheritance from the incomplete and uneven economic recovery of the financial crash of 2007–2008—and its subsequent exacerbation, stemming from the removal of vast numbers of regulations previously issued on businesses and the environment, justified on grounds that it would benefit the nation and its people. The effect was to increase inequality exponentially and create a new class of billionaires. In this way, according to Dylan Riley, “the specifically counterrevolutionary energy so characteristic of fascist movements is (today) impossible... to reproduce.”<sup>28</sup>

As I've suggested, it would be wrong to merely summon the examples of historic fascisms to describe the current situation, since such a move would undermine the specific singularities of both then and now. Because we live in different political climates and historical circumstances, we can see that the political forms of oppression will diverge. While we need not worry about storm troopers breaking into our homes in the early hours of morning and carting us away, we should be troubled by self-proclaimed paramilitary gangs pledged to prevent any “infringement of their rights”—rights which immanently inhibit the rights of others, especially when this vaunted defense of rights is fueled by presumptions of white superiority and race hatred. There is nothing democratic about such groups who, I believe, have been mistakenly marked as “populists” when they are nothing

more than gangs of swirling, atomized egotists seeking to establish barriers to inclusion. Not only is their “program” undemocratic, it is a false populism that camouflages their defense of rights of exclusion as personal freedoms. What is more worrisome, in the long run, is the institution of the Supreme Court, now captured by a dominant reactionary political partiality which, together with its expanding intervention into virtually all aspects of everyday life, whispers a hint of how the German courts were bent to serve Nazi imperatives. The Supreme Court, whose members the federal constitution liberated from any direct accountability to the populace, giving them whose the privilege of lifetime tenure, insinuates too powerful a presence of the eighteenth century into twenty-first century life and society, especially when some of its current members have embraced that archaic presence in the ideology of “originalism.”

I have proposed that the procedural forms we invariably advertise, such as elections and representation, the institutional checks and balances attributed to the eighteenth-century constitution and what American historians have decorously called a “revolution,” have long been emptied of their contents. What seems to have happened is that the state—up until the end of the Cold War the protector of the private realm, that is, civil society—has withdrawn from its traditional tenancy of public space, where it had once been obliged to provide some form of honest accounting of itself, or at least a gesture towards it, now no longer needs to listen to what people have to say. The state has learned that telling a lie is as good as the truth. Hence, the state has come to occupy the vacated space of the private realm, insofar as what it does is no longer other people’s business. With the onset of neoliberal hegemony and the dissolution of a failed liberalism, real power has shifted from the state, as such, to the financial and political classes, which are the beneficiaries of state policies to enrich them and who see the state today as only an instrument for suppressing signs of protest as instances of conflict, disorder, and terrorism. In other words, the state acts as a placeholder for capital and is now the privileged instrument consecrated for the task of enhancing the wealthy and creating greater inequality among the populace. At the same time, the state has made an enemy of the people it once pledged to protect. It thus seeks to diminish the subjective autonomy once considered the cherished principle of democratic individualism (and feared by fascism) in order to leave the public as simply a domain for discourse—endless chat-



ter—that will not lead anywhere.

Why call it *fascism*? We can't use totalitarianism, since that term most recently referred to Soviet Communism, which was opposed to capitalism and today to the People's Republic of China, a putative state capitalism and a communist political regime, or, likewise, authoritarianism, a term which cannot help but recall diverse forms of petty dictatorships, some we've supported and others we've tried to smash, or even the imperial presidency, which makes the executive look like the very king that the so-called American revolution tried to exorcise with the invention of the presidency.

With fascism there is at least a minimal family resemblance between prior historical forms and what seems to be developing today, assured by the shared task of saving capitalism from itself, at all cost. Whatever else it might be, the current state of American politics in this time of plague has shown in every respect its profound failure as a viable system capable of serving the people, who have been forced to live within its limitations for too long, knowing at the same time they can have no future by retreating to a fictive past. As for the widely expressed desire to return to an imperfectly remembered normalcy, such people should be careful of what they wish for, since the normalcy for which they yearn is a return to what brought the spectral fascism that is now upon us. There is simply no reason to go back to the political and economic mess that existed prior to the onset of the plague. It would be far better to begin the difficult labor of separating ourselves from the incapacitating illusions of the past and to start thinking about how the United States can liberate itself from a broken and rotted system of governance that has brought to its people both unyielding economic and political inequality as well as the spectacle of ruin once attributed to the demos, if they had even been obliged to rule in their own name.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, by all means, Andrew Liu's perceptive article on the relationship of global capital and the virus's worldly pathway "Chinese Virus," *World Market in n+1*, March 20, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> I have benefited much from William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History*, with an Introduction by Greg Grandin (London:Verso, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London:Verso, 1979), 17.

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Albert Toscano's "Notes on Late Fascism," 2 April, 2017 found in Blog, *Historical Materialism*, unpaginated, for his penetrating reading and reminder of this important text by Theodore Adorno, "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhart (New York, Continuum 2000), 12

<sup>5</sup> Adorno, "Freudian Theory," 122.

<sup>6</sup> Adorno, "Freudian Theory," 126; also Toscano, "Notes."

<sup>7</sup> Adorno, "Freudian Theory," 136-37.

<sup>8</sup> Quotes from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 214-15.

<sup>9</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York:Vintage, 1989), 20.

<sup>10</sup> See Primo Levi, *L'asymétrie et la vie*, trans. Nathalie Bauer (Robert Laffont: Paris, 2004), 70.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Critical Methods*, trans. Henry Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 98

<sup>12</sup> Theodore Adorno, *An Introduction to Dialectics*, ed. Christoph Ziermann, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Adorno, "Working Through," 98.

<sup>14</sup> Adorno, "Working Through," 99.

<sup>15</sup> Adorno, "Working Through," 93.

<sup>16</sup> Adorno, "Working Through," 93.

<sup>17</sup> Adorno, "Working Through," 339.

<sup>18</sup> William V. Spanos, "American Exceptionalism, The Jeremiad, and the Frontier: From Puritans to the Neo-Con-Men," *boundary 2*, 34, no. 1 (2007): 35-66.

<sup>19</sup> See Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe* (London:Verso, 2019), xxv-xxvi

<sup>20</sup> Jacques Rancière, *La Haine de la démocratie* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2005), 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, "Contours," 27-74.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, "Contours," 152.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, "Contours," 153.

<sup>24</sup> Rancière, *La Haine*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Rancière, *La Haine*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> Rancière, *La Haine*, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Rancière, *La Haine*, 60.

<sup>28</sup> Riley, *Civic Foundations*, xxvi.