

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

Conspiracy and the Modern Novel: A Study of Zola, Conrad, and Kafka

by

Andrew Cunningham Long

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York**

2000

UMI Number: 9959202

**Copyright 2000 by
Long, Andrew Cunningham**

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform9959202

Copyright 2000 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

**All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346**

© 2000

Andrew Cunningham Long

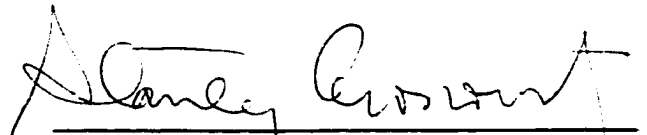
All Rights Reserved

Approval Page

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy


12/26/99

Date



Chair of Examining Committee

Date



Executive Officer 12/16/99

Prof. David Ferris

Prof. Robert Dombrowski
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor David Ferris and Professor Stanley Aronowitz for the support and assistance which made this dissertation possible. Stanley, in particular, has been my most important intellectual influence, and is everything a teacher should be. I would also like to acknowledge Terry Geesken, as well as my mother, Sarah Ann Long, for their encouragement. Lastly, I thank my friends, Michael Pelias and, especially, Tara McGann, for the reading groups, arguments, and late night conversations which informed so much of this effort.

Abstract**Conspiracy and the Modern Novel: A Study of Texts by Zola, Conrad, and Kafka**

by

Andrew Cunningham Long**Co-Advisers: Professor David Ferris and Professor Stanley Aronowitz**

This dissertation describes the relationship between conspiracy narratives and political consciousness in Émile Zola's Germinal, Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes, and Franz Kafka's Das Schloß. Conspiracy is understood as a form of political thought, albeit flawed, and I argue that in conspiracy narratives power is necessarily hidden or inaccessible--these narratives track the attempt to encounter, engage, and expose this power. Conspiracy is, however, a form of thought which inhibits any abstract or theoretical conception of social relations, for it blocks and substitutes for the synthesis of concrete and theoretical analysis. Finally, conspiracy is the consciousness of the quintessential modern subject, the paranoid and the psychotic, the subject who is unable to grasp the totality of social relations, fragmented as they are by capitalism.

In Germinal Zola relates the tragic attempt by the Montsou miners to control their own destiny through a strike. Yet, the strike fails, many of the workers die, and the consciousness which they actually attain is ineffective and finally self destructive. I maintain that the workers are never able to imagine social relations under capitalism, and instead resort to pursuing local scape goats and blaming the demiurge of capitalism who crouches over the horizon of their political imaginary.

Conrad's Under Western Eyes is about an informer, Razumov, who informs on an anarchist assassin, an acquaintance and fellow student, and subsequently agrees to spy on the anarchist circle exiled in Geneva. My interest lies with Razumov's reasons for informing and his allegiance to the state, which I link to interpellation and subject formation. The form of the novel is presented by the Conradian narrator as Razumov's written confession of his role as informer and spy. As a confession of a guilty conspiratorial consciousness this oddly mediated novel definitively links conspiracy, confession, and abject political consciousness.

Finally, much of Kafka's work has a conspiratorial quality due to the inaccessible figures of power whom his protagonists seek, and Das Schloß traces K's attempts to reach Count West West, his purported employer. This desire for an encounter with power must (necessarily) never be satisfied--the desire of the hysteric--and so this is not a transformative notion of desire. Instead we find that the desire for (a) desire, a structure of unrequited desire, entails repetition due to a constitutive lack. This notion of desire lies at the heart of any conspiracy narrative and points to their abject political character and implications thereof.

Contents

	Introduction	1
1.	Conspiracy and Class Consciousness: Zola's <u>Germinal</u>	19
2.	Confession, Conspiracy and Ressentiment in Conrad's <u>Under Western Eyes</u>	65
3.	Conspiracy and Kafka's Aesthetic of Hopelessness	120
	4. Conclusion	164
	5. Bibliography	184

Introduction

This dissertation concerns the appearance of conspiracy as a narrative form and problem in novels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By narrative form I refer specifically to the plot line and the structural elements which comprise the novel and distinguish it, all of which I will concern with regard to each novel. The problem which conspiracy narratives is actually of a double character, for all conspiracies have a problem at their core, while the specific kind of conspiracy found in these late 19th and early 20th century novels at hand, as well as the reference of the word today concerns a specific political-social crisis. It is not a coincidence that the novel of this period is often referred to as the novel of crisis, a problem and crisis which Franco Moretti addresses in an insightful essay on Ulysses in Signs taken for Wonders (and I will return to this essay in the conclusion).

The novels I will examine are Zola's Germinal, Conrad's Under Western Eyes, and Kafka's The Castle (*Das Schloß*). I argue, first, that conspiracy is a significant aspect of each of these novels, in so far as it is related to their respective storylines, but specifically in that these authors aptly treat conspiracy or the conspiratorial as a form of abject consciousness. I maintain that this position taken here towards conspiracy-as-abject-consciousness lies somewhere between the strictures for artistic engagement delineated by Georg Lukács in several of his texts, particularly Realism in our Time, and Theodor Adorno's notion of negative knowledge which specifically emerges in his essays on Kafka.

Conspiracy, here, is by no means simply a common theme in these novels, and so this dissertation is not a thematic reading of the texts. As I will explain shortly, conspiracy is a particular form of narrative which is endemic to the novel as such, and also a symptom of modernity. Of course conspiracy narratives predate the period covered by these novels (the 1880s to the 1930s) and is certainly evident in texts written under the aegis of the Inquisition in Europe, and can even be found in some medieval narratives (courtly intrigue, eg. Yvain and Morte d'Arthur). It is important to recognize, however, that there are particular structural characteristics of the conspiracy narrative of the late 19th and early 20th century novel which we will consider in these three novels, and which distinguish it (the novel of this period) from its antecedents.

Concepts: Conspiracy as a Narrative Form.

The impetus for this project is twofold, deriving in the first instance from the current prevalence of conspiracy theories and their popularity in the public consciousness (in the United States), whether as “theories” about “one government” and the “New World Order”, in films (Twelve Monkeys, The Rock, Alien III, Strange Days, to name a few), television shows (The X Files) and in novels (from Pynchon’s The Crying of Lot 49 to DeLillo’s Libra, and even the rightwing screed, The Turner Diaries). In contemporary politics, Hillary Clinton’s reference to a “vast right wing conspiracy” was greeted with guffaws and dismay, despite overwhelming evidence that at least one wealthy organization, the Scaife Foundation, was funding lawsuits and destabilizing activities against the Presidency of Bill Clinton. I do not defend Clinton but it is interesting that this word, conspiracy, is so charged in the American political unconscious, that its use brings about the immediate dismissal of even the most extensive and substantiated investigative reports and interventions. The controversy over allegations of CIA and Contra drug link to the 1980s cocaine trade in Los Angeles is one example, while the anger over the allegations of nerve gas use in Operation Tailwind (a Vietnam era secret operation in Laos) continue to bring down respected reputations, namely that of Peter Arnett. In the conclusion I will address the contemporary usage of conspiracy (in the U.S.) and its rise as a political phenomena in a brief commentary on Mark Fenster’s Conspiracy Theories.

Conspiracy, it seems to me, is a word used to dismiss leftist scholarship, and this is interesting, for it suggests that any revelation of secret government actions (the FBI, the CIA, the NSC, or whatever) are always vulnerable to this taint, even when true. Yet, there is a link to paranoia here, and this is not lost on Richard Hofstadter who writes about (mostly) right wing paranoia in American politics in his essay, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics”. The relationship between conspiracy and secrets is of interest, and I will explore this shortly, but the revelation of secrets is always a somewhat pleasurable and near mystical activity. And, after all, even the most paranoid conspiracies sometimes retain a kernel of truth.

Capitalism, in this last regard has always entailed risks, whether the narrative traps of financial scandals and evil doings of a devilish individual, “Jewish” conspiracies, or

secret organizations (the Masons, the Knights of Malta . . .). Again, conspiracy is often used to dismiss leftist scholarship, but sometime the charge of ‘conspiratorial thinking’ comes from the left as well. In his book, The Cultural Turn, Fredric Jameson argues that economist Robert Fitch is guilty of “conspiratorial” thinking in a review of the latter’s The Assassination of New York, and though Jameson elaborates on his disagreement with the book, this comment, as charged as it is today, is not explained. Maybe capitalism is a conspiracy, after all!

By conspiracy as a narratological concept (and problem) I refer to an individual’s attempt (or a collection of individuals) to manipulate or otherwise decisively influence others or a course of events for a particular purpose or end, an attempt which entails a plot and storyline (in the dual sense of the former word—this definition also captures the legal sense of a conspiracy). A conspiracy narrative is populated by players who are variously schemers and victims. This is a key feature of conspiracy for it is a social narrative in so far as it involves several or many players. Also, the consequences of the conspiratorial action transcend the limits of the narrative itself and concern, say, the fate of a nation or some greater cause (democracy, humanity, Christianity, etc.). Conspiracy is clearly related to paranoia, which is suggested by the contemporary films and novels listed above, and this relationship is certainly a large part of this project. Indeed, in his important essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” historian Richard Hofstadter distinguishes between conspiracy fantasies as personal persecution fantasies and those which take on a greater, supra-individual or social dimension (though they are finally individual in their reference, articulation, and significance, points I will explore in this project). Another aspect of Hofstadter’s essay which will especially concern the reading of Geminal offered here, is the relationship between conspiracy and knowledge. Again, in Hofstadter’s essay the paranoid style of politics, and the function of any demagogue for that matter, always hinges on the proposition that a destructive scheme is afoot and only a few people know anything about it, or can do anything with this knowledge. While we know the identity of those who effect the conspiratorial plot and the attempt to influence or manipulate others or events, the identity of the schemer(s) and their motivations are hidden from the victims, or at least obscured so that resistance is difficult. To this extent the relationship between

conspiracy and knowledge is also about consciousness and power. Can there be forms of group consciousness which lead to effective resistance, or is the conspiratorial state of mind one which necessarily limits consciousness and action?

As a purely narrative concern conspiracy always involves a process serializing events (into a sequence) which then constitute the frame of the story. Moreover, the process of setting the sequence of events comes about with both the process of reading and writing. A conspiracy is an extreme form of narrative in so far as it is centered around the very problem of sequencing the events in such a way as to render the story transparent or meaningful. We should note that this process of sequencing is mimetic in that it is an "after the fact" reconstruction of a past or lost moment. Again, the order of events and the relative importance of the various actors and their roles, and the significance placed upon a given moment in the narrative are crucial, for the "truth" of the conspiracy is at stake, as is the credibility and importance of the conspiracy narrator (or "theorist" whether this is the author of the novel, or the reader/interpreter). The activity of telling or weaving a conspiracy theory is, then, mimetic in a double sense for it entails both a matter of interpretation (one's interpretation of a sequence of events and analysis) and narration (the theory is then related as the narrative of the novel or the informed analysis of the pamphlet or in some other textual form).

We can also establish here that conspiracy narratives are always grounded in a process of mimetic desire (René Girard's phrase in Deceit, Desire and the Novel), a phrase I will explain briefly. As I stated above, we (the writers and readers) derive a certain pleasure from deciphering the sequence of events, that is from interpreting the events and passing opinion upon the actions of others, or revealing the guilt or innocence of a given character in a narrative. Again, this is mimetic to the extent that the interpretive process involves the re-creation (in the sense of Plato's simulacra) of a (past) narrative sequence of events for the purposes of examination and interpretation. Still, mimetic desire, is a bit more complex than that. The first factor we must bear in mind, again, is that a conspiracy, as a mimetic process, hinges on the notion of a lost or past sequence of events. The re-playing or re-production of this sequence is necessarily fraught with controversy in that the character of the original scene, "what really happened," will forever remain a mystery (in

the double sense of a religious mystery and an enigma which remains to be solved). The notion of something lost that a narrative attempts to “regain” is by no means anything new, and certainly takes us back to Biblical sources and various Greek myths (Auerbach’s comments on Odysseus’ scar—the externalized contra historical truth—come to mind). Nor is this attempt to regain the “lost” past the sole purview of conspiracy narrative, it is simply that the attempt to regain the “lost” past or object is injected with an unusual fury which I attribute to the new social character and inflection of conspiracy narrative. The controversy around any single individual’s attempt to interpret the mystery of the “lost” narrative, for example, might concern the fate of the nation or or some ideal and “truth”.

Yet we cannot attribute nor explain the desire for conspiracy narrative with reference solely to its “lost” aspect. As I stated above, a conspiracy always involves hidden knowledge and power. Something, usually information such as the identity of the primary schemers and their ends and means, is always and necessarily hidden. So, it is not simply that the original object or narrative is “lost”—it is complicated further in that the resolution always involves access to information or “truth” which can never be revealed. This is an explosive situation which feeds into a fury of endless interpretation. Oddly, given that the conspiracy narrative always involves social relations, the emphasis is placed on a process which shifts our attention ever further away from the consequences of the plot, the ends, to the process of revelation. That is, with the factor of hidden information the emphasis always lies with the ever sharpened or informed analysis, for, after all, the primary schemers and their ends might be manipulated themselves in an ongoing and expanding web of intrigue. The “truth” of the conspiracy is irrelevant in that it signifies an end to the desire of endless interpretation (one should not assume that the “truth” ever really stops people from doing whatever they do, hence Freud’s “disavowal”). The characters in a conspiracy narrative are, in a way, caught or trapped in a repetitive cycle of mimetic desire, a process marked by the characters’ various attempts to interpret and respond to a given situation, where the response is realized in the characters’ actions.

In an essay on Conrad’s Under Western Eyes Frank Kermode points out that most narratives withhold “secrets” which induce multiple interpretations. These secrets are those aspects of a narrative which are not explained and are encompassed or hidden by the

“illusion of narrative sequence”. These secrets point to tensions between, on the one hand, the need for order to be brought about by the narrative sequence and other elements which are never quite dissolved into the narrative or completely pushed into the background. We should hold on to this notion that narratives always have a “left over” or excessive aspect. Still, while Kermode’s argument is certainly relevant to conspiracy and this particular project, my concern lies with conspiracy as a “desire machine”, that is with the narrative structures which draw in many readers and interpreters, and then hold them (us) in an ongoing repetitive cycle.

Concepts: Conspiracy, the Novel, and Capitalism

So far I have explained my interest in conspiracy (and what this means), but what of the novel and particularly conspiracy novels? Again, conspiracy novels are known by certain structural characteristics. As I stated above, a conspiracy novel is explicitly social in its reference in so far as it concerns an action by an individual or group which has consequences which far exceed the ostensible victims. By contrast Great Expectations is not a conspiracy novel if only because the ostensible scope of the narrative (at least in its reference) is limited to the characters of the novel. Moreover, this novel, like other Dickens novels and novels from the period, turns on a neat resolution--there are no loose ends. There are few “secrets” in Kermode’s sense, there is no issue of hidden knowledge (there are no schemers or motives whose identity and motivation is hidden), and there is no pleasure in non-resolution. While Great Expectations and the tradition of novels of which it is a part, are all narrative “desiring machines” in a limited mimetic sense, there is no pleasure or desire related to the repetition of interpretation.

The novel, at least through the 19th century, provided a counterpoint and commentary on the devastation brought about by modernity. Consider Dickens’ vision of the smoke obscured Coketown in Hard Times:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black

canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy and madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another and many small streets still more like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next (Hard Times 17).

This passage is memorable for the vision it offers of a mid-19th century industrial town, that is, a social formation which is not a city such as London, but a product and feature of capitalist production. Like Balzac, the reference to the steam engine as an elephant suggests on the one hand the naturalization of a machine and the social formation of which it is a part, and on the other it retains the sense of something which is harnessed for the extraction of labor value, as in slave labor. Denaturalization is carried out by means of a "natural" reference. Yet the most important aspect of this passage is that the town and its social relations are obscured by the smoke and by the destructive and grinding repetition of the working day. That is, they are obscured from everybody except the novelist whose purpose, at least for Dickens, is to peer through this deathly shroud and to reveal for the reader the horrors it conceals. This gesture to see through the obscured social relations is a typical feature of Dickens' work, notably the moment in Dombey and Son when a narrative voice refers to a "benignant hand" which will lift the rooftops from the houses below and reveal the hidden lives they contain. Dickens' conception of the novelist in this sense, is of a social commentator and even an activist, where the novel serves as a kind of proposition which is negotiated with the reader. To an extent this relationship between the reader and the writer is a prototype of Sartre's pact in Ou'est ce que la littérature.¹

On the social function and role of the novel Lukács writes in The Theory of the Novel :

The epic gives form to a totality of life that is rounded from within; the

¹ See the "Pour qui écrit-on?" chapter.

novel seeks by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life. . . . All the fissures and rents which are inherent in the historical situation must be drawn into the form-giving process and cannot nor should be disguised by compositional means. Thus the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers (60).

In the later, explicitly Marxist, political book, History and Class Consciousness, Lukács adumbrates the "contemplative" stance towards social processes as produced by the rationalization of labor:

As labor is progressively rationalized and mechanized his ["man's"] lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative. The contemplative stance adopted towards a process mechanically conforming to fixed laws and enacted independently of man's consciousness and impervious to human intervention, i.e. a perfectly closed system, must likewise transform the basic categories of man's immediate attitude to the world: it reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades time to the dimension of space (89).

The keywords and phrases to note in these passages from Lukács' work are the "concealed totality of life", "fissures and rents", "form", "novel", and "contemplative stance". The point to note, then, is that although capitalism is experienced as disintegration there is still the totality, even in the fragments of an individual experience and it is the explicit purpose of the novelist, in Lukács view, to represent and thereby grasp the totality despite the obscurity and confusion of modernity's (capitalism) fragmentation.

Like Lukács I am interested in novelists who attempt to grasp the fleeting phenomena and social relations that are variously obscured by capitalism. Balzac's representation of Paris as a humming beehive (Rastignac's view from the Père Lachaise cemetery) in Le Père Goriot concerns the possibility of seeing this city as a totality (whole), though there is a scene in Les Illusions Perdues which better represents the complexities of my Lukácian argument. In the second section of the novel, a chapter titled "Les Galeries de

Bois" begins with what we now know as a typical Balzacian observation of the phenomena of modernity, or capitalism:

En place de la froide, haute et large galerie d'Orleans, espece de serre sans fleurs, se trouvaient des baraques, ou, pout etre plus exact, des huttes en planches, assez mal couvertes, petites, mal eclairees sur la cour et sur le jardin par des jours de souffrance appeles croisees mais qui ressemblaient aux plus sales ouvertures des guinguettes hors barriere. . . . La donc se trouvait un espece de deux ou trois pieds ou vegetaient les produits les plus bizarres d'une botanique inconnue a la science, meles a ceux de diverses industries non moins florissantes. Une maculature coiffait un rosier, en sorte que les fleurs de rhetorique etaient embaumees par les fleurs avortees de ce jardin mal soigne, mais fetidement arrose. (Les Illusions 289)

[On the site of the cold, lofty, broad Orleans Gallery, a kind of hout-house void of flowers, were shanties, or more exactly wood huts, poorly roofed, small, dimly lit on the court and garden side by lights of sufferance which passed for windows but which were in fact more like the dirtiest kind of aperture found in taverns beyond the city gates. . . . So there was a space two or three feet wide in which vegetated the strangest botanical specimens--unknown to science--mingled with the varied, no less flourishing products of industry. Waste sheets of print hung round the tops of rose trees in such a way that those flowers of rhetoric drew some scent from the stunted blooms in this untended garden watered only with fetid liquids. (Lost Illusions 260)]

In his essay on Les Illusions Perdues Lukács aptly points out that this novel is about the commodification of words, but more than that, it is about how writers engage the business of writing, and their own exploitation and, hence, the commodification of their proper names (their identities). The dilemma is that if this was the case, then the problems and narratives of disillusionment of two characters, Lucien de Rubempre and David Sechard,

will remain the "property" and fate of, simply, two individuals. If this were so then the social fragmentation which accompanies the advent of the commodity form would remain unquestioned and accepted as though it were the work of Nature or God. Lukács points out that this is not the case in that the fate of these two characters transcends their individual conditions. He writes, "[t]he Balzac characters, complete within themselves, live and act within a concrete complexly stratified social reality and it is always the totality of the social process that is linked with the totality of the character" (Studies 55). The point here is, then, that totality can be grasped even from the most fragmented of experiences, the writings of the alienated professional writer. Of note here, in History and Class Consciousness, there is a memorable skewering of journalists and journalism, as a profession in the "Reification" chapter.

With regard to conspiracy, the novelists attempt to grasp a social totality is hobbled or redirected by a number of factors. First, the emphasis of conspiracy lies with the the recovery of the "lost" or hidden information or moment. This gesture casts one into the past—the search is retrospective or nostalgic gaze backward instead of an engagement with the present. Second, the world of conspiracy is inhabited by schemers and victims, or masters and slaves. The notion that any given individual can change or struggle against a threatening or oppressive situation is dismissed along with the very possibility of collective action (and effective organization). This denial, I will argue, entails a foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) of the possibility of understanding and grasping capitalism as simultaneously a global system and as conditioning everyday life. Foreclosure is a key idea here, for it describes an expulsion from the symbolic order, and in this instance a foreclosure of the very possibility of understanding totalities, of resisting capitalism, and of reading everyday life within a dialectical relationship to a global structuring of capital. We find this foreclosure in the prevalence of conspiracy narratives (in our own time) and in their role (now and at the turn of the century) as a form of social knowledge. This project does not dispute the claim that the "grand narratives" have been eclipsed; rather my project will necessarily focus on the symptoms, particularly conspiracy theory as a narrative structure in the 19th and 20th century novel. The vaunted impossibility of "grand" or "metanarratives", then, emerge as symptoms of finance capitalism and, with another shift,

late capitalism. It is also crucial that we understand that the narrative forms which follow or flow from this function of foreclosure is the conspiracy narrative, and, in a particular mutation, paranoid narratives. The foreclosure here is of a dialectical notion of subjectivity, that is, a social or collective notion of subjectivity. The foreclosed narrative is replaced with a fixed idea of an essential kernel where one is subjectivized by an essential trait. Indeed, with paranoia the ego stands persecuted by a collective, such as the state, and social relations are understood as personal relations. Paradoxically, paranoid narratives mobilize many who hear its "personal" call in fantasies about the threat posed by "Janet Reno's black helicopters", "Jews", "Muslims", or whatever. The anti-semitism of Farrakhan or in other parts of the world (Germany, Russia, etc.) typically replaces the travails of everyday life under capitalism with a "Jewish plot". In several places in his work on contemporary ideology critique, Slavoj Žižek finds this kind of smaller narrative in fascist fantasies (particularly in anti-semitism) which place a "human face" on an abstract system. Thus, capitalism is not grasped as a social and economic system, but is represented by the figure of the "Jew". Meanwhile, despite the destruction of national boundaries (tariffs and trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT) capitalism is understood as a simple personal exchange, between vendor and buyer, in the primordial marketplace, which the "Jew" subverts with abstraction and corruption.

The critical point I am trying to make here is that as the form of the novel changes Lukács cannot keep up, that is, he is theoretically locked into a very particular paradigm of the novel, which is limited in its moment, its form, and its social function. With regard to this last point, we have only to think of Lukács' criticism of Zola, an explicitly political writer, to understand the former's near dislike for explicitly political novels.

For Lukács representation as such is not a critical gesture, but is found within the terms of his notion of narrative technique and the historical moment of the novel concerned. So, what does the novelist do in situations which do not lend themselves to characters which fit Lukács' paradigm of the "type" or "world historical individual"? In these non-heroic moments the protagonists of narrative fiction are, perhaps, pathetic and incapable of comprehending their circumstances. I am thinking particularly of Flaubert's L'éducation sentimentale where the protagonist, Frederic, is pathetic, a consummate dilettante. Though

Frederic is obsessed with the arts as modes of individual expression, that is with the fine arts, writing, and rhetoric, his aesthetic self-definition is only superficial, and his only true moment of creation, the birth of a child, ends quickly with a stillborn death. In his early The Theory of the Novel Lukács points out that with this novel the "hero's" inner life is as brittle and "fragmentary as the outside world, his interiority possesses no lyrical power of scorn or pathos that might set it against the pettiness of reality" (Theory 125). Though Lukács goes on to favorably set this novel in a new epic tradition, this criticism attains a sharper edge in a later essay on Tolstoy and realism. He writes that novels which are carried along in "the stream of capitalism", which the former certainly is, ". . . cannot strike a spark of life from capitalist reality, thus become even more petrified, even more 'finished' than reality itself and are even more dull, hopeless and commonplace than the world they purport to depict" (Studies 156). It is my contention that the novels I have selected represent an engagement with a new set of social relations. The representation and engagement of these social relations involve changes in the emphasis and form of the novel which Lukács does not accept.

Again, the conspiracy novel is such a novel (the sort which Lukács rejects) in that the world of conspiracy is one where meaningful social interactions and political struggle is eclipsed by a reified social structure and the reification of everyday life. The conspiracy novel brings to fore the dilemmas of modernity. This foregrounding is brought about by the subject matter and the structure of the narrative. The dilemmas of modernity which I have in mind here, are, as I obliquely referred to above (and will elaborate in detail below), the dilemmas of what we know as consciousness and its relationship to community and collective struggle.

Chapter Outline

In the first chapter I examine the relationship between conspiracy and knowledge in Zola's *Germinal*. As noted above, this novel is interesting in that it is clearly about the miner's attempt to understand capitalism, and as Irving Howe comments, about the emergence of working class consciousness. The acquisition of knowledge is a part of this emergence of consciousness for as the workers meet and discuss their situation and strategies for resistance, their thoughts are shaped by the information and analysis of the

International and other left oriented texts (Souvarine's anarchist journal, Combat). Yet, it is here that many readers diverge, for the consciousness that emerges is not a progressive or a successful one--the workers flail around, finally, and settle back into the same jobs, the only relief coming due to their loss of life and an outcry in far off places such as Paris. They are actually saved by forces without, not from within, and this is understandably interpreted as a reactionary representation, or is at least implicit in Lukács' responses to Zola's work. Moreover, knowledge does not lead to a free consciousness in Germinal, but to some degree it feeds a certain paranoid and conspiratorial way of thinking about capitalism (the "owners" of capitalism are construed as "crouching, hidden gods" and are always "over there"). Germinal, in my view, is a kind of anti-bildungsroman, and this says something about its position as a novel, though its real contribution, and the achievement of Zola, lies with the interest in abject consciousness, identified here as the paranoid rage which seizes the miners, even their organic-intellectual leader, Etienne Lantier. Though I disagree with Zola's conclusions, that knowledge contributes to the dispersal of community (Etienne leaves the village to join the International, the miner's suffer for "knowing"), there is something necessary in the function of this novel as a portrait of defeated consciousness, a portrait which is neither a negative rendition (Adorno) nor an absurd narrative of heroic triumph (Lukács).

In the second chapter, on Joseph Conrad's Under Western Eyes, I focus on the protagonist Razumov's need to confess. By my count there are six, and possibly more scenes which can be read as confessional moments. Yet confession here has a political and conspiratorial edge to it, for Razumov confesses to his aristocratic father, who has disowned him as a bastard child, that he is harboring a fellow student who is responsible for a recent assassination and is a member of a violent anarchist circle. This confession takes another turn when the disavowing father takes Razumov to visit the brutal General T, who horrifies Razumov, and inspires guilty hallucinations of the arrest and torture of Haldin his former friend and anarchist. The need to confess is related to the conspiracy of the anarchists, but hidden knowledge folds back on itself, as though Razumov has something to hide. He finally confesses, and it is identified as such, in an "interview" with Councillor Mikulin, a security minister who is an approximation of a bad psychoanalyst, if

not in fact, certainly in his method; he encourages Razumov's confession, and provokes him with incomplete sentences, and allows him to rage, even characterizing him as a "misunderstood person". This scene is the centerpiece of the novel, and Mikulin recruits Razumov to spy on a Geneva based group of anarchists. I argue that this moment renders the convergence of confession and interpellation (in Althusser's sense of this term), as Razumov hears the call of a newly formulated notion of the state, a kinder father who welcomes and gently encourages a lost son-- Mikulin embodies this new conception of state and state power. Yet, as the plot develops Razumov falls into a deeper abjection, isolating himself from others and turning inwards, even as he dutifully spies and mails his reports. The written accounts of his betrayal of Haldin, Haldin's sister, whom he seduces, and the anarchists in Geneva who befriend him, forms the final and most abject if not self-pitying form of confession. Indeed, this abjection is a form of political consciousness, a politics of *ressentiment*, following Nietzsche's understanding of this term. This is, notably, the confession of a conspirator for a state unrealized. Razumov hears the call of an ideal state--this is the politics of truth.

The call, or interpellation, is also an aspect of Kafka's The Castle. Unlike Conrad's novel, the call is not from a state-to-be, or an ideal, but from a hidden power. The powerful figure or power as such, is necessarily "there" as when K. must see the castle shrouded on the hill in the opening pages of the novel, yet is also necessarily hidden. Access is limited, and interpellation is intertwined with the conspiratorial function of power. This conjunction of hidden power and interpellation is related to a certain conception of desire, a variation on the desire of the slave as Kojève would understand it, though it is a non-transformative desire. The conspiratorial function of power, which, through Adorno, I link to fascism and certain forms of charismatic authoritarianism, hails the subject into a situation of permanent subjection.

In the conclusion I return to the primary critical texts, or intertexts, which are crucial to the arguments made here, and also address the directions which this project might have taken. My focus on conspiracy brings together a turn in the modernist novel, announced by the anti-heroic protagonists of Flaubert (Frederic Moreau and Madame Bovary) and the end of liberal capitalism. Indeed this new period, from the 1870s through

the turn of the century and pre WW I marks the end of the heroic bourgeoisie and the novel which was about their world and which supported them. This new world is dominated by a new class, what we now know as the middle class, and they bring with them a new set of concerns and a new consciousness. I have stated these same points earlier, but it is important to engage them again, and to do so in direct correspondence with the work of Lukács as well as two recent critics, Ferenc Feher and Franco Moretti. The point I address here, albeit very briefly, is the relationship between a new form of capitalism, finance capitalism, and a new subjectivity exemplified by these fallen or abject “heroes”. I am a follower of Lukács in so far as I agree that the novel proposes a form of social knowledge and proposes a certain consciousness, but its function here is not merely to reveal (as a proposition) but to engage. In many ways, then, the undeclared purpose of this project, and of this last chapter in particular, following Feher and Moretti, is to re-consider what can be preserved from the work of Lukács, what can be reworked, and what must be overturned.

Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. For Marx. Ben Brewster, trans. London: Verso, 1979.
- Lenin and Philosophy. Ben Brewster, trans. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.
- Reading Capital. Ben Brewster, trans. London: Verso, 1971.
- Balzac, Honoré de. Les Illusions Perdues. Paris: Garniers frères, 1961.
- Le Père Goriot. Paris: Garniers frères, 1963.
- Lost Illusions. Herbert J. Hunt, trans. New York: Penguin, 1971.
- Conrad, Joseph. Under Western Eyes. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Dickens, Charles. Dombey and Son. London: Mandarin, 1991.
- Great Expectations. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Hard Times. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. Paris: Flammarion, 1983.
- L'éducation sentimentale. Paris: Flammarion, 1985.
- Freud, Sigmund. General Psychological Theory. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. New York: Norton, 1959.
- Three Case Histories. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- Jameson, Fredric. Marxism and Form. Princeton (NJ): Princeton UP, 1971.
- The Political Unconscious. Ithaca (NY): Cornell UP, 1981.
- Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
- Jameson, Fredric (ed.). Aesthetics and Politics. London: Verso, 1980.
- Kafka, Franz. The Castle. Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. New York: Schocken, 1992.
- Lacan, Jacques. De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1932.
- Écrits. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1966.
- Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1973.
- Le Séminaire livre III. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981.
- Lukács, Georg. The Historical Novel. trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. Lincoln (NB):

U Nebraska, 1983.

- History and Class Consciousness. trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge (MA): MIT, 1971.
- Studies in European Realism. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964.
- The Theory of the Novel. trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge (MA): MIT, 1971.
- Writer and Critic and other Essays. A.D. Kahn, trans. & ed. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. The Postmodern Condition. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, trans. Minneapolis: U Minnesota, 1984.
- MacDonald, Andrew [William Pierce]. The Turner Diaries. Washington (DC): National Alliance, 1980.
- Mandel, Ernest. Late Capitalism. London: Verso, 1978.
- Marx, Karl. Capital. vols.1-3. trans. Ben Fowkes. New York: Vintage, 1977.
- The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Martin Milligan trans. New York: International, 1986.
- The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. New York: International, 1987.
- The German Ideology. New York: International, 1978.
- Moretti, Franco. Signs taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Forms. Fisher. Forgas, and Miller, trans. New York: Verso, 1997.
- The Way of the World. London: Verso, 1987.
- Pynchon, Thomas. The Crying of Lot 49. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Qu'est ce que la litterature". Situations II. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.
- Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- Culture and Society: 1780 to 1950. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
- The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. London: Hogarth, 1984.
- The Long Revolution. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- Zizek, Slavoj. For They Know Not What They Do. London: Verso, 1991.

----- The Sublime Object of Ideology. London: Verso, 1989.

----- Tarrying with the Negative. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

Zola, Émile. Germinal. Paris: Livre de poche, 1955.

----- Germinal. Stanley and Eleanor Hochman, trans. New York: Signet, 1981.

Conspiracy and Class Consciousness: Zola's Germinal

A necessary component of any conspiracy narrative is knowledge: It is from knowledge that the conspiracy narrative is woven. But it is a special knowledge, for knowledge in the conspiracy narrative is privileged. Only an elite group has insight into the conspiracy; only they understand how the conspiracy works or, for that matter, recognize that there even is a conspiracy. Within a conspiracy model, knowledge cannot be generalized: it cannot be collectively apprehended. Is conspiracy a useful model through which to understand the workers' search for knowledge in Émile Zola's Germinal, specifically knowledge of how capitalism works and how to confront it? The conspiracy model outlined above might seem to have little relevance to their search for knowledge, as, for one, conspiracy involves cabals, not collectivities, and knowledge, finally, is not possible for these workers. Nonetheless, knowledge works along such a conspiracy model in Germinal, one of three novels in Zola's Rougon Macquart series that directly address capitalism (along with La Curée and L'argent). The workers, in wanting to understand who owns and controls their mines, want to put faces on capital. They want to see capitalism as a conspiracy controlled by a cabal of owners. Ultimately their attempts at achieving knowledge fail: they cannot grasp the nature of the relationship of the mines they work at to the company that owns them nor comprehend the effects of such mediated ownership. Germinal is then an anti-*Bildungsroman* of the working class, for it tracks the failed attempts by the workers to gain a knowledge of capitalism in order to resist and eventually overthrow it. Further, the workers mistakenly think knowledge will lead to a successful resolution of the strike, if not to revolution, i.e. knowledge will lead to the workers' *Bildung*. We could say the novel concerns the impossibility of their *Bildung*, for the integration of knowledge, vocation and community, the premise of the *Bildungsroman*, is not possible in Germinal. The acquisition of knowledge, as in the case of Étienne Lantier, the young leader of the strike, leads to one's separation from the working class, a separation that is reinforced when, at the end of the novel Étienne leaves the village to join the International.

In many ways the interpretation of Germinal being explored here is not far from the

work of Georg Lukács (who wrote several essays about Zola's novels) and Raymond Williams concerning representations of the working class in the novel of the 19th and 20th centuries. My greatest difference from their (particularly Lukács's) disposition towards these novels (and towards novels in general) is that I see the most radical work--the most inventive and provocative novels--as often representing the abject and failed rather than the heroic and successful. The image of working class consciousness in Germinal is disturbing--but this does not constitute a pejorative characterization! While Zola might finally be patronizing and even elitist towards the working class, his representation of the struggle for class consciousness, which in this novel winds up in profitless rampages and depressing failure, is propaedeutic. Not all forms of class consciousness are revolutionary or even progressive. Zola's achievement is to demonstrate how knowledge and the emergence of consciousness can "go wrong," and in Germinal, knowledge is both the grist of paranoid fantasies and the very forms that, instead of opening up the workers' consciousness, limit their thought.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the development of the workers' consciousness (the attempt to understand capitalism) and follow its transformation into praxis, as knowledge mobilized. I will focus on those scenes in Germinal which involve the discussion of the strike, particularly how to resolve it. At the outset, the resolution is not pre-given: the result of the strike might favor the workers, or some compromise between the workers and the capitalists *in situ* (Hennebeau and Deneulin) might be effected. Zola does not offer easy answers nor prescriptions. I also want to pose the question as to whether Zola views the workers as masses rather than classes in his attempt to understand failed class consciousness--does he see workers as incapable of consciousness, as necessarily being degraded to the status of masses?

In Raymond Williams' Culture and Society and The Long Revolution, he pays careful attention to the word "masses" and "massification," respectively. In Culture and Society Williams traces "masses" through its usage in 19th century newspapers and the popular press, and he connects it to the pejorative associations surrounding "the mob," namely associations with 18th and 19th century popular uprisings. Williams connects three "social tendencies" with the semantic evolution of this word: the "concentration of

“social tendencies” with the semantic evolution of this word: the “concentration of population in the industrial towns,” the concentration of workers in factories,” and the “consequent development of an organized and self-organizing working class” (297-298). Clearly, for Williams, this word expresses aristocratic and then bourgeois fear and loathing of the working classes, and is a word used by those who do not perceive themselves to be part of a “mob” or of the “masses.” Thus, Williams concludes, “There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses. In an urban industrial society there are many opportunities for such ways of seeing” (300). The word, for Williams, always entails a politics, a politics involving distantiation from and rejection of said masses. Exploring “massification” in The Long Revolution (as part of his examination of early 1960s contemporary popular culture in the UK), Williams builds upon these last points but wants to understand the term as signifying a failed class consciousness. He writes that “What the Americans call the ‘massification’ of society can only happen, however hard the new elites may work, if a majority of the people whom they regard as ‘the masses’ accept this version of themselves” (350). Williams is obviously grappling with the class implications of these words and the implications as regards class consciousness.¹

This chapter also (albeit obliquely) responds to the Lukács contra Zola debate. Critics quickly takes sides when reading Germinal. The contest is one between Zola and Lukács: one sides with Zola and against the attacks of Lukács, or with Lukács and against Zola. I will address Lukács’ reading of Zola in a discussion of Sandey Petrey’s chapter on Germinal, but briefly put, Lukács rejects Zola’s representation of reified consciousness-- Zola’s characters are petrified while the role of the writer is a passive one, by design. In Irving Howe’s engaging essay on Germinal, “Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism.” Howe writes the following striking passage which stands as a counterpoint to Lukács from the

¹ The crowd, the mass, and masses are also keywords in French literature and thought from the Revolution (1789) into 20th century commentary, some of which brings new wrinkles and determinations. Specifically I refer to Le Bon’s Psychologie des foules from Zola’s own time (1895), historian George Rudé’s The Crowd in the French Revolution, and Walter Benjamin’s multiple references to the crowd and the mass in his work on the flâneur and Baudelaire in Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism. Of course Edgar Allan Poe’s short prose work, “The Man of the Crowd” and Baudelaire’s commentary thereof (in The Painter of Modern Life) is also critical for a complete examination.

writes the following striking passage which stands as a counterpoint to Lukács from the left:

Zola sees the possibility that in the very emergence of solidarity—that great and terrible word for which so many have gone smiling to their death!—there would be formed, by a ghastly dialectic of history, new rulers and oppressors: the Rasseneurs, the Plucharts, and even the Lantiers of tomorrow, raised to the status of leaders and bureaucrats, who would impose their will on the proletariat. Zola does not insist that this must happen, for he is a novelist, not a political theoretician. What he does is to show in the experience of the Montsou workers the germ of such a possibility. As it celebrates the greatest event of modern history, the myth of emergence contains within itself the negation of that greatness. (115)

Again, I maintain that this novel is about the emergence of an abject consciousness, and then its failure, and more to point, how this plays out as an inability to grasp capitalism, to know what their situation entails in a systemic sense. This novel is a necessary attempt to do this while, on the other hand, Zola's ambivalence towards working class consciousness impacts upon his project in telling ways which we will explore.

Seeing, Speaking, and Learning

From the first page of Germinal, we readily grasp that Zola's world view is a bleak one, as we note in the opening paragraph of the novel:

Dans la plaine rase, sous la nuit sans étoiles, d'une obscurité et d'une épaisseur d'encre, un homme suivait seul la grande route de Marchiennes à Montsou, dix kilomètres de pavé coupant tout droit, à travers les champs de betteraves. Devant lui, il ne voyait voyait même pas le sol noir, et il n'avait la sensation de l'immense horizon plat que par les souffles du vent de mars, des rafales larges comme une mer, glacées d'avoir balayé des lieues de marais et de terres nues. Aucune ombre d'arbre ne tachait le ciel, le pavé se déroulait avec la rectitude d'une jetée, au milieu de l'embrun aveuglant des ténèbres (7).

[On the flat plain, under a starless sky as thick and black as ink, a lone man was following the route from Marchiennes to Montsou--six miles of paved road cutting straight across the beet fields. He was unable to see the dark ground in front of him, and it was only the March wind, coming in mid-sea bursts and chilled by its sweep over miles of marshes and bare land, that made him aware of the immense, flat horizon. Not one tree was silhouetted against the sky, and the road spread before him as straight as a jetty through the blinding darkness of the shadows. (5)]

This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the image we are presented with, namely that of a solitary figure lost in a threatening, night landscape, threatening mostly because it is inscrutable, unknowable, and imperceptible. Of course, it is nighttime, but the narrator leaves no doubt that the flatness and hostile, barren qualities of the land would leave the "lone man" in no better condition were it the middle of the day.

Moreover, the "lone man" ("L'homme" in the French text--a man without a name!) seems to be a proto-existential protagonist. The narrator tells us that Étienne (who is unnamed in this first scene) is unemployed, homeless, and "could think of only one thing--that perhaps the cold would be less sharp after sunrise" (5). The isolation of the figure is important, for the image suggests more than a struggle to grope one's way along a dark road towards a warm hearth and a hot meal. This introductory image, which presents the plight of a homeless, cast-off worker stumbling through the cold and dark across a bleak landscape towards an uncertain future, becomes a synecdochal image of Étienne's class, of their prospects and of their consciousness. However, Étienne, as we learn over the course of the novel, has an intellectual bent, and this sets him apart from his class. Étienne is doubly isolated, then, and isolation seems his inevitable fate, which leads to the second point I want to make about this passage. Our protagonist does not speak at this juncture, and though he does do so shortly, the initial silence in the novel is notable. The narrator, not Étienne, tells us that this landscape is harsh and imperceptible: Étienne does not seem capable of finding the words to describe his situation, for such articulation would suggest being able to form some knowledge of one's circumstances. His inarticulateness seems linked to his inability to see: the narrator suggests that if Étienne could see, he could

understand his circumstances. The narrator's description seems to come in the place of the character's lack of speech and lack of awareness.

The only distinguishing marks on this inky landscape are the burning fires that surround the Le Voreux coal mine. Étienne does not yet know what these fires indicate yet aims for them, and when he finally reaches them, he comes across a "red haired and rawboned" ("un gaillard roux et efflanqué") cartman and his horse slowly working. This cartman, whose name, we learn, is Vincent Maheu, or Bonnemort (the nickname he has acquired from his many death defying escapes from mine calamities) is taciturn and slow to talk with Étienne. The latter is interested in getting work, so his questions initially concern work possibilities but lead quickly to a broader discussion of the mine's profits and ownership, thus to questions concerning capitalism. Étienne tells Bonnemort that he is an engineer looking for work, but the work Étienne can get requires little skill. There are no engines for Étienne to tend here, only back-breaking manual labor to be performed: work at the mine represents a kind of *declassement* for Étienne, from highly-skilled, to semi- and even un-skilled labor. These bleak prospects resonate with the depressed economic conditions of the area. Bonnemort tells him that there used to be factories in the area: "Everything was booming." Now, however, "men are being fired and factories are closing, one after the other." Bonnemort and Étienne begin to engage in a dialogue about the lack of bread and meat in a worker's diet, but the dialogue plants no seeds of consciousness; the narrator tells us, "[t]heir voices were lost in the gusts of wind that carried words in a dismal howl" (8).

As their discussion continues, Étienne realizes that Bonnemort is suffering from a coal-related lung disease, which the latter dismisses ("it keeps your insides from spoiling"). The mine is not only incorporated into his body, but mine work is his heritage, for his grandfather, Guillaume, discovered the profitable Guillaume coal vein. He, in turn, has passed on the legacy of mine work to his son, Maheu, a miner who lives in the nearby village with his large family, all of whom (except for a lame daughter) have or will work in the mine. The reader, though seemingly not Bonnemort, apprehends how the workers are alienated from the products of their labor. Secondly, we see that the miners are rooted in place--trapped within the mine. This becomes fatal for the many workers who are

entombed in the mine when it collapses.

Also of note is the narrative voice introduced in this passage that narrates Bonnemort's family history. It is ostensibly that of Bonnemort, who is telling his story, but there are no quotation marks. The narrative voice is partly an example of free indirect discourse, in which narrative voice embodies the thoughts and patterns of expression of a character although the character does not directly speak—except that the narration of the mine's and Bonnemort's intertwined history seems to be more headless than free indirect discourse would indicate. Somebody, some disembodied narrator, is telling Bonnemort's story, but not Bonnemort, who is then, we are to gather, incapable of narrating his own story. On the other hand, we could interpret the narration offered to the reader as being a kind of common property, as it is not Bonnemort's narrative. We might, then, have the basis for nascent class consciousness—collective consciousness, a possibility raised by the exchange that closes the chapter. Étienne asks Bonnemort, "is your company rich?" to which Bonnemort responds with details:

Pas aussi riche peut-être que sa voisine, la Compagnie d'Anzin. Mais des millions et des millions tout de même. On ne compte plus ... Dix neuf fosses, dont treize pour l'exploitation, le Voreux, la Victoire, Crèvecoeur, Mirou, Saint-Thomas, Madeleine, Feutry-Cantel, d'autres encore, et six pour l'épuisement ou l'aérage, comme Requillart ... Dix mille ouvriers, des concessions qui s'étendent sur soixante sept communes, une extraction de cinq mille tonnes par jour, un chemin de fer reliant toutes de fosses, et des ateliers, et des fabriques! ... Ah! oui, ah! oui, il y en a de l'argent (15).

[Maybe not as rich as the Anzin Company nearby, but millions and millions all the same. They can't count it anymore. Nineteen mines, thirteen in operation--Le Voreux, La Victoire, Crevecouer, Mirou, Saint-Thomas, Madeleine, Feutry-Canel, lots of others--and then six for drainage or ventilation, like Réquillart. Ten thousand workers, concessions in sixty seven communities, five thousand tons a day taken out, a railroad connecting all the mines, and workshops and factories . . . Oh yes, there's

plenty of money there. (12)]

Étienne's follow-up question. "Who does it belong to?" ("A qui est-ce donc, tout ça?") raises the principle stake of the novel--the difficulties facing any development of class consciousness and difficulties of understanding the political, economic and social functions and implications of capitalism. Tellingly, rather than responding to this question as he had to the prior one, Bonnemort chokes on his coal spittle, spits into the wind, and responds, "What? Who does it belong to? . . . Who knows? To somebody ["A des gens"]." A detailed response contrasts with a shrug and an indefinite pronoun: somebody (or people, strictly translated). He cannot answer the question and does not recognize it as important: it is a question he has not bothered to contemplate. The narrator tells us--and this is notable--that he "pointed vaguely into the shadows at some far off and unknown place, peopled with these "somebodies" ["peuples de ces gens"] for whom the Maheus had been working the vein for more than a hundred years" (12). The voice of the narrator adds the ironic inflection to this response, that the Maheus have worked for more than a hundred years for "somebodies." Thus the narrator comments ironically upon Bonnemort's lack of knowledge and lack of interest in this knowledge; clearly Bonnemort should know, or should at the least be asking this very question. An authorial narrative voice comes in the place of speech and consciousness, as we saw in the opening scene that the narrator's description came in the place of Étienne's perceptions that were seemingly lacking.

Why is Bonnemort ignorant of and uninterested in the question of ownership? "Who owns this?" is a question often asked in novels: Who owns this house?: Who owns this land? How did he get his wealth? With Robinson Crusoe, an early and significant example of the novel, the elaboration of ownership of property provides the much of the data of the novel. Yet what is Bonnemort's lack of interest a sign of? Bonnemort is blind to all except his immediate experiences and what he has been told about the community's history. Zola is interested in what hinders, impairs, and limits vision and consciousness, specifically what obscures attempts to see and hence understand social circumstances. The smoke from the mine and the night that obscure a clear sight of the mine complex and the countryside symbolize what hinders consciousness. The mine and its environs, then, pose impassible barriers to consciousness; the mine seems beyond human creation, control or

intervention. The workers' consciousness is reified, and it is the mine that is animate:

C'était une masse lourde, un tas écrasé de constructions, d'où se dressait la silhouette d'une cheminée d'usine; de rares lueurs sortaient des fenêtres encrasées, cinq ou six lanternes tristes étaient pendues dehors, à des charpentes dont les bois noircis alignaient vaguement des profils de tréteaux gigantesques; et, de cette apparition fantastique, noyée de nuit et de fumée, une seule voix montait. la respiration grosse et longue d'un échappement de vapeur, qu'on ne voyait point (8).

[It was a thick mass, a tangle of low buildings from which rose the outline of a factory chimney. Here and there a light was shining out from a grimy window: outside, five or six dim lanterns were hanging from scaffolding, the blackened wood of which vaguely suggested the form of gigantic trestles. From this fantastic apparition drowned in night and smoke came only one sound: the heavy, labored breathing of an unseen exhaust pump. (6)]

Smoke ("fumée"), signifying a barrier to sight and consciousness, as well as ghostly animation of machinery and deformation of nature, are topoi of industrial novels we see repeated in the "Keynote" chapter from Charles Dickens' Hard Times, in the description of Coketown:

It was a town of red brick, or brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. it had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness (17).

Zola's mine is more threatening, though, than Dicken's factory, for the latter is also described (as metaphor and metonym) as a "melancholy, mad elephant". The factory in

Hard Times is a force beyond human control. Neither the factory nor Coketown itself, monotonous, interminable and red and black like the face of a savage threatens as does the Le Voreux mine. Étienne looks at the mine and sees the following: "With its dumpy brick buildings huddled at the bottom of the hollow and its chimney thrusting upward like a menacing horn, the mine seemed evil-looking, a hungry beast crouched and ready to devour the world" (7). The aptly named Le Voreux mine is indeed voracious, like a beast, and is also animated like Dickens' factory of serpents (smoke) and mad melancholy elephants (steam engines and their pistons). Both writers attempt to render with these passages what impairs consciousness. The difference between them, Dickens and Zola, is that consciousness is paralyzed in the latter, a paralysis within remediation or even mediation by the narrator. The workers in Zola cannot see anything except what is determined by the mine that consumes their bodies and their consciousness. For Dickens, the novelist's role is to brush away the smoke--to create consciousness, as Raymond Williams writes in The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence.² Zola does not agree that the novelist should perform this role. The writer, according to Zola, simply renders what is, and does not attempt to brush aside the smoke and slay the industrial monsters. Thus, the naturalist, such as Zola, does not help the workers to overcome their debilitated consciousnesses. Dickens, through an optative narrative mood ("Oh for a good spirit who would take the housetops off. . .") conjures visions to overcome debilitation of consciousness. Bonnemort, though, cannot see the distance--the other there--even in broad daylight, for his vision is blocked, and the narrator, while indicating that Bonnemort does not see, will not present an unimpaired vision for the reader. Thus, narrative, in Zola, is non-transformative, transforming neither the characters' nor the readers' consciousness.

It is into this situation of debilitated consciousness Étienne enters as a semi-educated and intelligent outsider, one who is aware of goings on outside Montsou, and one

² In The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence Raymond Williams writes that "[t]his creation of consciousness--or recognitions and relationships--seems to me indeed to be the purpose of Dickens' developed fiction" (33). He goes on to cite the image of the interventionist novelist in the famous scene from Dombey and Son (drawn from Carlyle's Sartor Resartus): "Oh for a good spirit who would take the housetops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in this tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them."

who has struck out in violence against his boss, precipitating the loss of his job and need to find another. Étienne brings knowledge and leadership to the miners, though whether that knowledge is enough to transform their circumstance will remain a question.

The critical element of an effective consciousness in the world of this novel would involve articulating an analysis of ownership and control of the mine and devising a plan for resistance to the owner's move to drive down wages. The opening scene has set up the acquisition of knowledge--knowledge of what lies "over there"--as a goal for the miners: further tasks include the formulation of class consciousness and winning the strike. What precipitates the strike is the injury caused to Jeanlin (Maheu's son) when mine timbering collapses. The managers insist that the workers spend more time timbering and, hence, less time mining for coal, which drives down their wages as they are paid for the amount of coal they mine, not by the hour. The workers are outraged and terrified by the loss to their already meager wages; the question facing them is how to go about redressing the situation, and it is here that a greater knowledge of capitalism becomes necessary.

Zola represents the situations and places where the working class gain political knowledge and where resistance to their circumstances (class consciousness) develops. It is fruitful, then, to consider some of these communal scenes and places: the bar, the home, and secret meeting places where strategies are hatched and discussed and hatched. The bar is an ambiguous place for the development of class consciousness because it is a place of drunkenness (a pre-occupation of Zola's naturalism). Indeed, Étienne has hereditary problems of drunkenness and violent temper caused alcohol, as delineated in L'assommoir.³ Yet it is at Rasseneur's bar that Étienne develops some sense of the miner's situation and develops class consciousness. Rasseneur's bar is distinguished from the other bar frequented by the workers, The Vulcan, because it is not a place to get drunk and there is no female "entertainment." Rasseneur's bar is a place to share a pint and discuss issues. Rasseneur was a pitman just like the other workers of the village until he became embroiled in one of the periodic struggles for better wages and working conditions, during which he gained a reputation as a socialist and man with connections outside the village. For his efforts Rasseneur was "blacklisted," so he opened his bar with some

³ See the "Sex" and "Speculation and Dissipation" chapters from Brian Nelson's Zola and the Bourgeoisie.

additional income from the two lodging spaces he and his wife keep. The primary lodger, until Étienne's arrival, is Souvarine, an engineman at Le Voreux and, notably, a foreigner tainted by radical causes (his involvement with radical politics while at university in St. Petersburg brought about his exile from Russia and his subsequent disinheritance by his "noble family"). Both Souvarine and Rasseneur are "blacklisted" to some degree. The former keeps to himself and does not interact with the rest of the villagers--notably his politics are not Marxist or socialist, but anarchist. He is a follower of the anarchist theorist Mikhail Bakunin and plays the role of Étienne's interlocutor and antagonist to Étienne's growing socialist beliefs (his disparagement of Marx, the Communist International, and his apocalyptic solution to class struggle--"Everything must be destroyed or hunger will spring up again. Yes, anarchy!--nothing left, the earth washed in blood and purified by fire" ["la terre lavée par le sang, purifiée par l'incendie"] (117)--are examples of his political antagonism. Étienne's inchoate activist ideas win him the second spot as a lodger at Rasseneur's, and it is here that his political ideas blossom, in conversations with both men and with others and through the reading material to which he is exposed to here:

Et chaque soir, c'étaient des conversations semblables, dans la salle nue, autour de l'unique chope qu'Étienne mettait une heure à vider. Un fonds d'idées obscures, endormies en lui, s'agitait, s'élargissait. Dévoré surtout du besoin de savoir, il avait hésité longtemps à emprunter des livres à son voisin, qui malheureusement ne possédait guère que des ouvrages allemands et russes. Enfin, il s'était fait prêter un livre français sur les Sociétés coopératives, enfin des bêtises, disait Souvarine; et il lisait aussi régulièrement un journal que ce dernier recevait, *Le Combat*, feuille anarchiste, publiée à Genève (138).

[And every evening, over the single mug of beer that Étienne took an hour to empty, there were similar conversations in the bare room. A world of shadowy ideas that had lain dormant in him was beginning to stir and grow. Devoured by a rage to learn, he had nevertheless hesitated to borrow any of his neighbor's books, most of which were in German or Russian; but he had finally borrowed a French book on cooperatives--more foolishness,

said Souvarine--and he was also regularly reading a newspaper Souvarine subscribed to, *Combat*, an anarchist sheet published in Geneva. (117)]

Clearly, it is this reading about cooperatives which leads Étienne to propose that the workers join the International, as a contact outside the village and as an organization which might lend some logistical support in the advent of a strike, and specifically this reading helps him to formulate his plan for the worker's weapon: the strike fund.

The following passage precedes the one cited above, but it is of note in that it signals exactly the point just made, that Rasseneur's bar is a site of education and a link to the outside world, the world of the International: "The initial illusions of his ignorance and his natural predisposition to rebelliousness both acted to throw him into the fight against capital ["Toute d'une prédisposition de révolte le jetai à la lutte du travail contre le capital. dans les illusions premières de son ignorance" 135-136.] The association they [Rasseneur and Souvarine] were talking about was the Workers' International, the famous International that had just been set up in London" (115). The narrative voice is interesting here, for it is certainly not the voice of an objective and removed narrator; beyond expressing Zola's social Darwinist beliefs, it tinges our opinion of Étienne's new-found radicalism as deriving from innate violence. Authorial attitude does intervene in the text, in ways that are significant. This is a novel about the coming to consciousness of the working class, as Irving Howe eloquently argues, but Zola has ambivalence about the very project, an ambivalence that bleeds into the text. The novel presents no value-neutral examination of the pitfalls and vicissitudes of class consciousness, as we see in the scene I analyze next.

Another site of learning is the home, and in this instance the outsider, Étienne, arrives and adds an element of discussion to the daily routine. In the following passage he discusses his new ideas and the current problems and working conditions with his village sponsors, Maheu and La Maheude. Étienne attempts to counter Bonnemort's fatalism ("there will always be bosses"):

Comment! la réflexion serait défendue à l'ouvrier! Eh! justement, les choses changeraient bientôt, parce que l'ouvrier réfléchissait à cette heure. Du temps du vieux, le mineur vivait dans la mine comme une brute, comme une machine à extraire la houille, toujours sous la terre, les oreilles et les yeux

bouchés aux événements du dehors. Aussi les riches qui gouvernent, avaient-ils beau jeu de s'entendre, de le vendre et de l'acheter, pour lui manger la chair: il ne s'en doutait même pas. Mais, à présent, le mineur s'éveillait au fond, germait dans la terre ainsi qu'une vraie graine; et l'on verrait un matin ce qu'il pousserait au beau milieu des champs: oui, il pousserait des hommes, une armée d'hommes qui rétabliraient la justice. . . . C'était pour ça, nom de Dieu! et pour d'autres choses, que tout péterait un jour, grâce à l'instruction (159-160).

[What, weren't the workers allowed to think? Why, things were going to change just *because* the workers were finally thinking. In the old man's day a miner lived in the mine like an animal, like a coal extracting machine--always underground, his ears and his eyes shut to what was going on outside. And that was why the rich people who ran things could agree among themselves so easily, could buy him and sell him and gobble him up alive: he never even suspected anything. But now the miner was waking up down there; he was germinating in the earth just like a real seed, and one day you would see what would spring up in these fields: men would spring up--yes, an army of men who would reestablish justice. . . . By God, that was why--and for other reasons, too--everything would blow up some day, thanks to education. (135)]

We could interpret this passage as supporting the interpretation of *Germinal* as the *Bildungsroman* of the working class since, according to this passage, the workers are learning about capitalism in ways which they had never before been able to apprehend. The use of free indirect discourse in this passage allows us to hear Étienne's voice and emphasizes--allows us to encounter a worker coming to consciousness and instructing other workers. However, the tone of the passage is ironic, and we, the readers, are subtly influenced to cast a suspicious if not jaundiced eye towards Étienne's speech. We sense, for instance, that Étienne likes to be heard and gathers steam from having an admiring audience. The narrator's irony, though, makes us ask necessary questions: How, at the end of the day how does a little knowledge really challenge power, particularly power which is

always “over there”, and is confused with its local representatives and ciphers? Yet the situation is still more complex. The novel is, I argue, an anti-*bildungsroman* of the working classes, a novel about the pitfalls and failures of working class consciousness, for which I value the novel. Yet Zola’s necessary insight is admixed with his deep skepticism towards and ambivalence towards the very project of working class consciousness.

The other sites where working class consciousness is “germinated” are the entertainment hall, Bon Joyeux, and a forest clearing known as the Plan des Dames. The Bon Joyeux differs from Rasseneur’s bar in so far as it is a traditional bar, the sort of place where people go for convivial and sexual purposes. Appropriately, the proprietor of the Bon Joyeux is one Madame Désir. In response to the company’s demand that the workers timber more in conjunction with a decrease in pay (and increased timbering itself reduces pay), the miners have declared a strike. Seeing so many of her neighbors and customers suffering from the everyday hardships of this action, Madame Désir decides to invite the strike committee to hold its meeting at her establishment. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce the workers to Pluchart, the Paris-based leader of the Workers International, the Communist group with which Étienne is now affiliated, and to hold a vote to cease or continue the strike. For Zola, class consciousness and a workers’ movement cannot be born in the 19th century analog to a strip club; the meeting is doomed to failure. Yet another bias is concerned here, namely Zola’s suspicion towards public speaking. Having an audience feeds Étienne’s ambition and self-image, as we have seen, so public speaking will enable his faults to blossom.

Dissension occurs at this meeting: Étienne’s rivalry with Rasseneur for leadership of the workers is finally an overt conflict, especially when the latter tells him that he has written Pluchart, the guest of the evening, and asked him to remain in Paris. Also, while waiting for Pluchart to arrive Souvarine takes the stage, and gives his own interpretation of the strike and the general situation: “As he spoke, Souvarine became terrible. Ecstasy [“Une extase”] lifted him from his chair, a mystic flame [“une flamme mystique”] darted from his pale eyes, and his delicate hands murderously grasped the edge of the table” (196). Though Étienne rejects Souvarine’s violent solution (“his race rejected this dark dream of the extermination of the earth”), this scene suggests that public meetings and

public speaking of this ilk is a dubious activity, generated by and generating egoism and factionalism.⁴ This suggestion is confirmed when Pluchart actually appears and speaks to the delegates assembled at the Bon Joyeux. Yet Pluchart does not offer the strikers strategy or material support, or insight, rather, as from the moment he stepped out of his carriage, worrying about the membership cards, he is there to recruit them for the International. Pluchart's speech throws out empty promises, clearly promises the International cannot keep (a criticism again made evident by the conjunction of free indirect discourse and an ironic tone):

Une houle agita les têtes. Quelques'un crièrent: --C'ent ça!... Nous en sommes! Lui, continuait. C'était la conquête du monde avant trois ans. Et il énumérait le peuples conquis. De tous côtes pleuvaient les adhésions. Jamais religion naissante n'avait fait tant de fidèles. Puis, quand on serait les maîtres, on dicterait des lois aux patrons, ils auraient à leur tour le poing sur la gorge (237).

[The men's heads bobbed as if on a tidal wave. Some of them cried out: "That's right! ... We're with you!" He went on. In three years the world would be theirs. He listed those who had been won over. Memberships were pouring in from all sides: no new religion had ever made so many converts! Then, when they were the masters, they would dictate the laws to the bosses and have them by the throats in their turn. (200)]

Is class consciousness furthered here? The workers are awed rather than educated.

Pluchart's claims are inflated and fatuous. Pluchart is a huckster. His speech, with all of its promises of solidarity, support, and final victory, is intended to rile up the men. In the midst of the hubbub and tumult the speech creates, the worker's champion tells Étienne "They're ripe" and tries to distribute membership cards. His plan is foiled by the arrival of the gendarmes, and a hurried vote by acclamation brings about the recruitment of ten thousand Montsou miners into the International. Pluchart's aim has been achieved, though the workers are in no better circumstance as a result of his visit. Again, the scene ambivalently presents a cynical vision of working class organizations while making us

⁴ See Nelson's chapter on "Leadership".

recognize the pitfalls facing the acquisition of class consciousness. We witness mob formation rather than class mobilization.

The final site where we see the workers' class consciousness form leads to the creation of a mob and incites the rampages that are the highlights of the novel. This site is the clearing in the forest, the Plan de Dames, and, like other names in this novel, this suggests something, perhaps female (mis)rule. Is this meeting, like the meeting at Bon Joyeux, tainted by sexual excitation and animality? What are we to make of a night-time meeting, lit by torches, in a forest clearing? The question we need to pose is Zola's coding of this meeting place, and whether this coding overdetermines the action that emanates from this meeting: the women's destruction of pit machinery, molestation of Cécile Gregoire and then castration of the dead Maigrat. The workers must meet in order to discuss the progress and failures of the strike, and they have to meet secretly due to the real threat of the gendarmes or other agents of the bosses: this has driven them to the open air meeting in the place where we have been told sexual assignations are often conducted. The meeting place is sexually-tinged, but it is a place chosen of necessity. It is here, at the Plan des Dames, that our hero of sorts comes to the fore and emerges as the leader of the strike. As with the earlier speech by Pluchart, Étienne first vanquishes Rasseneur and the conservatism he represents (Rasseneur endorses "evolutionary" solutions, which alone suggests Zola's sympathies for his politics) and then offers a speech laced with the language of the International. His speech is also larded with analytical terms and technical language gained from his readings--"the attribution of the instruments of production to the collectivity"--a truly clumsy phrase, and deliberately so! Zola casts suspicion upon the language of a working class intellectual and demonstrates its abstract quality. Nonetheless, Étienne's speech induces a feverish spell, a response deriving from animal passions, and this only underscores Zola's ambivalent characterization of working class consciousness and "education" (if we can call this such):

La lune, maintenant, blanchissait toute la clairière, découpait en arêtes vives la houle des têtes, jusqu'aux lointains confus des taillis, entre les grands troncs grisâtres. Et c'était sous l'air glacial, une furie de visages, des yeux luisants, des bouches ouvertes, tout un rut de peuple, les hommes, les

femmes, les enfants, affamés et lâches au juste pillage de l'antique bien dont on les dépossédait . Ils ne sentaient plus le froid, ces ardents paroles les avaient chauffé aux entrilles. Une exaltation religieuse les soulevait de terre. la fièvre d'espoir des premiers chrétiens de l'Église attendant le règne prochain de la justice. (273)

[By now the moon was bathing the whole clearing in white light, throwing into sharp relief the swelling sea of heads that stretched all the way out to the vague outlines of the underbrush between the great gray tree trunks. And under the glacial sky there was a seething mass of faces--burning eyes, open mouths, a whole people in heat, starving men, women, and children unleashed to justly pillage the ancient inheritance of which they had been dispossessed. They no longer felt the cold: Étienne's burning words had warmed them to the marrow. A religious exaltation lifted them from the earth--like the feverish hope of the first Christians awaiting the coming reign of justice. (231)]

Étienne's "burning words" ("ardents paroles"), with suggestions of the occult and of religious fervor, ensure that attempts at creating working class consciousness can only lead to the mob and to mob action. The rampages of the mob, which mark the memorable scenes of this novel, return us to the question of whether Zola sees the workers as masses. for, as noted earlier, Raymond Williams reminds us that masses is a word denoting how one sees the working class.

Some critics have ascribed this characterization of Étienne and Pluchart to Zola's suspicion of leaders, particularly of working class leaders. In Zola and the Bourgeoisie Brian Nelson points out that the "strong element of religious exaltation in the socialism of these revolutionaries was naturally antipathetic to Zola's positivist outlook, and he stresses the reinforcement of their idealism by their haphazard reading in socialist literature, underlining, for example, Étienne Lantier's autodidact inadequacy . . ." (21). Nelson goes on the contrast Étienne with Souvarine, who, though not a leader, nonetheless has insight into the worker's situation as well as having a sophisticated understanding of capitalism. Examining the theme of leadership, certainly a useful theme when considering this text

along the totality of Zola's work, points us back to the problem of knowledge. The knowledge achieved by Étienne is itself inadequate: haphazard and a product of his auto-didact study. Further, knowledge does not help the working class and actually contributes to the dissolution of class solidarity and of community.

The rampage of the the strikers, as well as the day-to-day coordination of the strike mark the moments when the workers' education, particularly that of Étienne, exemplify the potential catastrophe of applied knowledge. Early in the novel, and prior to the strike, the workers send a deputation to speak with Hennebeau, the manager of the large Montsou mine, Le Voreux. The deputation includes Étienne and Maheu, a life-time resident of the area, descended from a long line of miners. Étienne, we recall, is a recent arrival to the village, a city dweller with little employment history at the mine. These two men come to the fore within the group though their abilities vary widely. While Étienne's speaking skills are not very good at this point (the narrator comments on his stammer and hesitation), he is obviously the intellectual amongst the miners and the only one who can rebutt the rhetoric of Hennebeau and the mine ownership. On the other hand, Maheu's commitment to the village and to the mine is unimpugnable, and yet it is also a liability. Silence and humility seem to be Maheu's recourse in situations in which he confronts representatives of the company, as we know from his earlier visit to Hennebeau to complain about the timbering fines. At this meeting he was silent and simply held his cap in a classic pose of humility (or humiliation) while Hennebeau complained about outside agitators (Étienne) and dismissed his complaints. Afterwards Maheu blamed himself.

Zola uses odd or jarring juxtapositions for didactic purposes and for ideological motivations, and the meeting with Hennebeau is preceded by a dinner scene at the manager's house with the Grégoire's, a local bourgeois family. The purpose of the dinner is to confirm the marriage between the Grégoire's daughter, Cécile, and Hennebeau's nephew and fellow manager of the mine, Paul Négrel. Hennebeau suspects that Négrel is having an affair with his wife, with whom Hennebeau does not have sexual relations. (This is a Zolaesque touch of obscenity and decadence, an indulgence which he could not suppress!) The dinner, which includes scrambled eggs and truffles, followed by trout, as well as other delicacies and wine, is a stark contrast to the paltry meals and near starvation

of the miners. Moreover, apart from the promiscuous indulgences of some of the younger miners, the domestic scene in Maheu's household is pure compared to that of our bourgeois characters.⁵

Also of note, at the beginning of the strike Souvarine pointed out that the mine might actually profit from a work stoppage (this is another summation by the narrator: "The Company was in the grips of a crisis ["La Compagnie, atteinte par la crise ..."] and had to reduce expenses if it didn't want to go under, and naturally, it would be the workers who would have to pull in their belts; the Company would invent any sort of excuse to chip away at their wages" (141). This insight is actually articulated by the bourgeois characters in their dinner discussion of the strike and of the workers' complaints. While eating partridge wing, Deneulin an owner of a small mine, comments that the current crisis is global ("Everything's connected") and then loudly states, "The worst thing about it is that if you want to lower production costs you've got to produce more["Le pis est que, pour abaisser le prix de revient, il faudrait logiquement produire davantage ..."]--otherwise the cut comes from wages, and the worker is right in saying that he's the one to bear the brunt of it" (166). This insight and the comment about a global crisis riles Hennebeau, and in an echo of a phrase or notion we are already familiar with he tells Deneulin, "Aren't you a Montsou stockholder? You don't do anything--you live off the work of others ["Vous ne faites rien, vous vivez de travail de l'autres"]. Why, you're the infamous capitalist himself, and that's enough. . . . You can be sure that if the revolution triumphs it will force you to restore your fortune as stolen money ["l'argent volé"]" (169).

I will explore the import of this last comment shortly, but for now we need only recognize how the situation is set for the arrival of the strike deputation. The passage describing the workers' entrance into Hennebeau's house has been the basis of several critical articles, notably a chapter of Sandey Petrey's Realism and Revolution, and it is worth another citation here:

D'abord, le domestique leur dit d'attendre, en refermant la porte sur eux;

⁵ Henri Mitterand's essay, "Ideology and Myth: Germinal and the Fantasies of revolt," offers an excellent and straight-forward semiotic diagramming of the pairs and parallels which form Zola's narrative design, and he also explores their ideological references. I will refer to this essay later in this chapter.

puis, lorsqu'il revint, il les introduisit dans le salon, dont il ouvrit les rideaux. Un jour fin entra, tamisé par les guipures. Et les mineurs, restés seuls, n'osèrent s'asseoir, embarrassés, tous les propres, vêtus de drap, rasés du matin, avec leur cheveux et leur moustaches jaunes. Il roules leurs casquettes entre les doigts, ils jetaient des regards obliques sur le mobilier, une de ces confusions de tous les styles, que le goût de l'antiquaille a mises à la mode: des fauteuils Henri II, des chaises Louis XV, un cabinet italien du dix-septième siècle, un contador espagnol du quinzième, et devant d'autel pour le lambrequin de la cheminée, et des chamarres d'anciennes chasubles, réappliquées sur les portières. Ces vieux ors, ces vieilles soies aux tons fauves, tout ce luxe de chapelle, les avait saisis d'un malaise respectueux. Les tapis d'Orient semblaient les lier aux pieds de leur haute laine. Mais ce qui les suffoquait surtout, c'était la chaleur, une chaleur égale de calorifère, dont enveloppement les surprenait, les joues glacées du vent de la route. (206)

[At first the butler told them to wait and closed the door on them; then he came back and showed them into the drawing room and pulled aside the curtains. Daylight filtered dimly through the lace. Left alone, the miners were afraid to sit down; they were embarrassed, starchy clean, dressed in their Sunday best, fresh shaven, their blond hair and moustaches gleaming. Twisting their caps in their hands, they glanced out of the corners of their eyes at the furniture--a jumble of all styles, made fashionable by the taste for dubious antiques: Henri II armchairs, Louis XV chairs, a seventeenth-century Italian cabinet, a fifteenth-century Spanish contador, an altar frontal draping the mantelpiece, and embroidery from old chasubles sewn on to the portieres. These old golds, these fawn colored silks, all this churchly richness, inspired them with an uneasy respect. Their feet seemed to be sinking into the deep pile of the Oriental carpets. But what most overwhelmed them was the heat; their cheeks still frozen from the wind along the road, the unvarying furnace heat enveloped and surprised them.

(173-174)]

This scene is paralleled by the many descriptions of the worker's poorly furnished, spartan houses, and specifically it acts as a pair with La Maheude's visit to the Grégoire's, when she visits with the children, hoping they will give them some money for provisions. The grubby and hungry children and their mother disrupt the Grégoire's breakfast and chill the warmth of this bourgeois interior, introducing a disruptive reality: human suffering. Though the Gregoires are sympathetic to various degrees, (especially the doomed Cécile), they only offer the children only breakfast food: chocolate and brioche.

The scene (lengthily) cited above offers another opportunity for the workers to use their education, to articulate their thoughts, and to speak in a contested space. However, when the workers enter they are initially silenced, or rather stunned, not by the boss' rhetoric and agonistics, but by the furniture. Awed, they cannot speak and are uncomfortable. When Hennebeau enters the room this discomfort continues, as the workers are "worried by the embroidered silks." Yet after a silence and in answer to Hennebeau's invitation to talk, Maheu steps forward. This, as we noted above, is significant, for it seemly presents a change in Maheu's previously cowed stance towards the bosses, and Hennebeau comments on this, referring to Maheu as a "good worker who's always been so sensible." Maheu accepts this characterization and explains that he is the spokesperson so as to rebut characterizations of the strike as the result of outside agitation. Maheu relates the unacceptable living and working conditions the miners endure and lays out their strike demands. Maheu even disputes the company's accounting, telling Hennebeau that the separate payments for timbering effectively lowers the price per cart by two centimes (thus, producing a company profit). This moment is important for it demonstrates two things which have changed due to the "education" of the workers; they are ready and willing to speak their minds and are not intimidated, and that they have a counter analysis and a set of demands.

However, Zola both complicates the scene and takes away what he has given. As the discussion continues, it becomes more heated and is joined by a cacophony of other voices. Rational discourse is slipping. When Hennebeau charges that the labor conflict is the work of the International, Étienne denies the charge but adds that the workers will soon

join up if their demands are not met. In other words, Étienne draws the fire towards him, suggesting a nascent egoism on his part; the narrator tells us, “From that moment on, the battle was between Monsieur Hennebeau and Étienne; it was as if the other miners were no longer there” (176). Étienne, though a worker, is clearly different from the other miners: he is city-born, intelligent and has good tactical instincts, and, simply put, he can read. But his knowledge here does not bring about the solidarity of the workers. Rather, knowledge sets him apart and he uses his superior knowledge to become a spokesperson for the group. We see here the imprint of Zola’s suspicion towards working class intellectuals and radicals, but we see as well the difficulties of transforming Étienne’s knowledge into a transformative knowledge for the entire group. The meeting has become a dialogue between two figures, to which the other workers cannot contribute.

The exchange between Hennebeau and Étienne is no exchange really, just an iteration of scripted positions. Two discourses run past each other but do not confront each other. What emerges is that the Hennebeau and his group speaking for the interests of capital, but are not themselves that mysterious entity. They are its representatives and managers, and even small owners, but they are not the company. Étienne’s threat that the workers will go their own way is shrugged off with a resonant comment; Hennebeau retorts, “I’m not rejecting anything! I’m just an employee like you, and I have no more to say in this matter than the least of your mine boys” (178). Hennebeau tells the workers they are only dealing with a manager in order to evade responsibility, but the information also signifies the complexity of capitalism, even (as projected by the text) the unknowability of capitalism. When Étienne responds that if the miners “only knew where to go” they would take their complaints accordingly, Hennebeau follows his initial evasion of responsibility with a wave of his hand and tells them, “things begin to get complicated if you don’t have confidence in me . . . You’d have to go over there” (178). Over there—that vague place indicated by Bonnemort at the beginning of the novel. The following comment by the narrator (interlaced with free indirect discourse) is significant:

Les délégués avaient suivi son geste vague, sa main tendue vers une des fenêtres. Où était-ce, là-bas? Paris sans doute. Mais ils ne le savaient pas au juste, cela se reculait dans un lointain terrifiant, dans une contrée

inaccessible et religieuse, où trônait le dieu inconnue, accroupi au fond de son tabernacle. Jamais ils ne le verraient, ils le sentaient seulement comme une force qui, de loin, pesait sur les dix mille charbonniers de Montsou. Et quand le directeur parlait, c'était cette force qu'il avait derrière lui, cachée et rendant des oracles. (212)

[The delegates followed his vague gesture, his hand pointed towards one of the windows. Where was "over there"? Paris, probably. But they weren't really sure--it all seemed so terrifyingly far away, in some inaccessible, sacred land ruled over by the unknown god crouching in the recesses of his tabernacle. They would never see him but they felt him as a far-off force, bearing down on the ten thousand miners of Montsou. And when the manager spoke, it was this hidden force, uttering oracles, that he had behind him. (179)]

The group interview with Hennebeau is the first moment where the workers use their newly-formulated knowledge about the company and capitalism, a knowledge they use for resistance, as the basis for a strike. Sandey Petrey devotes an interesting chapter of Realism and Revolution, titled "Performance and Class in the Month of Germinal," to this encounter between the miners and their boss. Petrey's analysis of this encounter is based on Austin's notion of *constative* language, though he dedicates much of his analysis to the passages which describe the miners' entrance, particularly their silence when confronted with Hennebeau's property. Petrey focuses on this moment in order to engage in a dialogue with Georg Lukács' criticism of Zola as expressed in "The Zola Centenary." Petrey uses his analysis of Germinal to settle accounts with another Marxist theorist, Louis Althusser.

Petrey focuses on how Hennebeau's carpets, antiques, and objets d'art intimidate the miners, as does Lukács, with the intent of undermining Lukács' argument. Petrey addresses the following passage from "The Zola Centenary":

The autonomy of the details has varied effects, all deleterious, on the representation of men's lives. . . . But the description [in Zola's novels] of things no longer has anything to do with the lives of characters. [T]hings

[are] described out of any context with the lives of the characters, attaining an independent significance that is not their due within the totality of the novel (qtd. in Petrey 169)

Petrey' presents Lukács's argument as being the following: "such an alienated vision of the world ignores the potential of proletarian revolt" (169). In refuting Lukács, Petrey refers to the constative language of this passage and argues that far from validating or simply "reflecting" bourgeois reality, Zola's naturalism engages it critically: "It is when they are most uncompromisingly depicted as things that the material constituents of the universe of *Germinal* are most decisively the effect of conventions. Zola's representation of commodity fetishism magnifies commodities to make the fetishism unmistakable" (170). Petrey correctly and astutely directs attention to the flaw not only in the specific argument but in Lukács' thought, namely that he cannot accept the representation of decadence or of an abject consciousness as potentially offering a criticism of that consciousness. (For these reasons he dismisses Flaubert's *Fredéric Moreau* and Kafka's *K* and *Gregor Samsa*.) However, Petrey's counter interpretation is equally questionable. For Petrey, again following Austin, this scene entails a certain performance of class on the part of the workers, and this performance, the speech act, effectively dissolves the hold of Hennebeau's objects on the workers' consciousness: "Bourgeois objects vanish because a proletarian voice is making itself heard. The 'stranger' speaking (in) Maheu is in fact a visitor from elsewhere, from a world where the conventions for effective verbal performance are incommensurable with those governing conversation across class lines in the industrialized economy of nineteenth century France's mining region" (172). My objections to Petrey's interpretation are several but concern his poor understanding the concept of reification (a term Lukács delineates in History and Class Consciousness) as well as poor reading of the passage.

As stated earlier, Lukács develops the term reification in the "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" section of History and Class Consciousness. Reification, literally meaning "thingification", is derived from Marx's commentary on commodities and commodity fetishism (see chapter 1 of Capital, v.I. especially part 1, section 4). Lukács cites the following passage by Marx:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. (86)

This circumstance, this reversal of perceived relations, must necessarily follow the universal conquest of the commodity and not prior, hence the abstraction of exchange value which replaces simple mercantile capitalism. And so, also following from this reversal of perceived relations, Lukács notes:

Objectively a world of objects and relations between things springs into being (the world of commodities and their movements on the market). . . . *Subjectively*--where the market economy has been fully developed--a man's activity becomes estranged from himself. it turns into a commodity which, subject to non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article. (87)

The reified consciousness of the worker entails, then, a consciousness entirely determined by terms and even phrases of work and the workplace. and, importantly, leaves the worker in a contemplative (not active) stance. The "thingification" of the worker's consciousness certainly describe the situation amongst the miners of Montsou, and, I argue, even describes the encounter with Hennebeau we examine above. Petrey would seem to think that reification can be cast off by a single speech act (in which case reification is hardly the intractable dilemma of our time, as Adorno thinks it is). For Petrey, the workers achieve a radically transformative consciousness that frees them from reification--thrall in the face of the commodity form. Petrey is unable, then, to recognize any irony on the part of Zola towards the workers, especially towards Étienne. Petrey is locked in the Lukács contra Zola debate with disables Petrey criticism. Indeed, Zola does present debilitated, enthralled consciousness. The problem with Lukács' criticism of this gesture, to repeat Petrey's fine analysis, is that Lukács cannot acknowledge how the representation of commodity fetishism can render fetishism unmistakable. Lukács would only have rewarded Zola's

efforts had the represented the workers as exploding reification--and here Lukács and Petrey oddly converge. Neither here nor elsewhere in Germinal do the workers escape reification.

Returning to the miners' entrance into Hennebeau's drawing room, Zola's representation of this scene is almost a *mise en scene* of the contemplative and defeated consciousness which Lukács analyzes decades later in History and Class Consciousness. The miners are all uncomfortable, silent, and intimidated and, as Petrey notes, they are intimidated by things, by Hennebeau's antiques, carpets, and furniture. They are not angry or even resentful, but they are quiet, as though they feel their presence is a vulgar and unwanted intrusion; the use of free indirect discourse suggests they feared their feet "crushed the carpet." Such a statement is the product of their consciousness. The narrative voice separates itself from the consciousness of the workers, commenting that the collection of objects and furniture represented a "jumble of all styles" popular at that time, while the authenticity of the antiques was "dubious". Clearly, and this is important, a fellow bourgeois would know that Hennebeau was simply pretentious, and really a laughing stock, instead of the sophisticate which he believes himself to be (and which the workers believe him to be as well). We can conclude two things. In criticism of Lukács we can say that the representation of a defeated consciousness is not necessarily an endorsement of defeatism, nor does it vaunt the triumph of capitalism. Yet Lukács is on to something--there is a certain condescending aspect to the notion that anyone with good taste would mock Hennebeau, rather than find him a scary presence. Taste becomes a category naturalizing the effects of class. Indeed the workers do have reason to fear the manager, for he does have absolute power over their lives. He can bar them from work and so force starvation or homelessness on any of them; he can have troublemakers arrested.

What this scene finally tells us about working class consciousness and knowledge is that knowledge is not transformative. It tends towards the fragmentation of the group (the meeting becomes disorganized), and Étienne's knowledge serves to separate him from the group and to enforce a contemplative stance upon the others workers. They become passive spectators to his talk with Hennebeau. Hence the man who knows cannot necessarily make a difference; his knowledge is impotent and his threats are empty.

Further, Étienne knows through Souvarine (though the other workers do not know) that the company welcomes a job action, as it will use it as an opportunity to lay off workers and close unproductive mines.

What the workers learn from this encounter is that Power, the source of capitalism, is over the horizon, what we learned at the very beginning of the novel. However, now the workers have an urge to force a face-to-face encounter with the capitalists, to wage a final showdown with the bosses. Obviously, this is a ridiculous impulse. They cannot encounter capital face-to-face; they can only succumb to a violent rage. Consider, again, that the workers' meeting in the Plan des Dames. This was ostensibly an organizational and educational management meeting, an attempt to instruct the workers, manage the strike and maintain a certain discipline. However, the workers become frenzied, not disciplined. After the vote to continue the strike, the newly discovered orator, Étienne, whips up his comrades with his speech. In the following passage, we should pay some attention to the content or substance of Étienne's speech, a speech to which the women in particular respond with excitement:

Il fut terrible, jamais il n'avait parlé si violement. D'un bras, il maintenant le vieux Bonnemort, il l'étalait comme un drapeau de misère et de deuil, criant vengeance. . . . Oui! le travail demanderait des comptes aux capitalistes, à ce dieu impersonnel, inconnu de l'ouvrier, accroupi quelque part, dans le mystère de son tabernacle, d'où il suçait la vie des meurt-la-faim qui le nourrissaient! On irait là-bas, on finirait bien par lui voir sa face aux clartés des incendies, on le noierait sous le sang, ce pourcentage immonde, cette idole monstrueuse, gorgée de chair humaine. (276)

[He [Étienne] was terrifying. Never before had he spoken so violently. He was holding on to Old Bonnemort with one arm, displaying him like a flag of misery and mourning, crying for vengeance. . . . Oh yes, labor would demand an accounting from capital, from that impersonal god, unknown to the worker, who crouched somewhere in his mysterious tabernacle and sucked the life from the starving wretches who fed him! They would go there, they would make him show his face in the light of the

destructive fires, they would drown him in blood. the filthy pig. the monstrous idol gorged with human flesh! (234)]

On the other hand, we have to think about the narrator's intrusion into this free indirect discourse (*erlebte rede*). Who is speaking here and whose attitude is expressed? Zola is, as stated several times, ambivalent about both working class consciousness and radical discourse, but here Zola is perhaps not so ambivalent. The narrator intrudes to code the speech as crazed rhetoric--ultimately, the narrator controls Étienne's voice here.

The workers want a face-to-face encounter with capital, the owner of the "filthy pig"--to put it better, with Mr. Capital. Overlooking the problems of voice and the interference of the narrator's attitude, let us assume that the speaker here and elsewhere is Étienne or the other workers. If this is the case, then, according to the logic of the text, this desire for a personal confrontation is ominously created by the process of workers education, by the process of acquiring knowledge. Étienne, and by extension the International, have introduced new discussions, new language and new analyses. Yet education and knowledge lead to frenzied destruction and to conspiratorial imagery: a "hidden" god. At this irrational, frenzied moment, the workers direct their knowledge towards revealing this hidden god whom they want to bathe in blood. The workers gathered at the Plan des Dames see capitalism in thoroughly conspiratorial terms. It would seem that conspiracy and education are odd partners.

The workers have achieved no transformative class consciousness. They have no understanding of the meaning of "over there," of the relation of their mines to the company. They cannot transcend place, and want to force face-to-face encounters at the place of their exploitation. To an extent, the capitalists control space, the movement from the metropole to the periphery, while the workers hold places for a while (occupying mines). Because they do not understand how "over there" controls the strike, they cannot comprehend how little their attempts to occupy places effect. Indeed, their destruction of pit machinery leads to the absorption of Denulin's mine (Deneulin is a small capitalist) by the company. The company is stronger than before. The workers are under the spell of their own rhetoric. The worker's rampage across the plains, attempting to sew together places of production through their movements, is the centerpiece of the novel. The exhausted, starved workers

tramp from mine in an attempt to deal a death blow to the beast; again, they want a face-to-face encounter. Their learning process has motivated them to fight hidden powers. Though assaulting and harassing scabs, their destructive energies are directed largely towards pit machines. At the Jean Bart mine the women attack the machine room and wildly throw the burning coals from the steam engine around the room, starting a dangerous fire which eventually rousts Deneulin from his hiding place. The steam engine is destroyed when Jeanlin releases the water from the boiler, ensuring that it will be damaged and the engine permanently disabled. The workers want to inflict a coup de grace; Levaque, wildly waving a file, begins to cut the cables which operate the mine elevator, thereby leaving the scabs (down) in the mine galleries, and in danger. The crowd screams out "Cut the cables! Cut the cables!!" (260).⁶

This last attack is carried out over Étienne's objections, but it is clear that he has lost control of the crowd which has now become a mob (and the narrator notes this). Their actions have gone beyond sabotage to acts of arbitrary violence; the crowd is becoming intoxicated by violence:

Lui même se grisait, emporté dans cette fièvre chaude de revanche. Il luttait pourtant, il les conjurait d'être calmes, maintenant que les câbles coupés, les feux éteints, les chaudières vidées rendaient le travail impossible. On ne le écoutait toujours pas, il allait être débordé de nouveau, lorsque des huées s'élevèrent dehors, à une petite porte basse, où débouchait le goyot des échelles. (309)

[He himself was becoming intoxicated, beginning to be carried away by this burning fever of revenge, but he fought against it and urged them to be calm, now that the cut cables, the doused fires, and the empty boilers had made all work impossible. They wouldn't listen to him, and he was about to be swept aside again when the sound of shouts and hoots was heard from outside, next to a small, low door that was the exit from the ladder well. (262)]

⁶ See Henri Mitterand's interesting close reading of Catherine's climb from the galleries of Jean Bart in Yale French Studies #42, 1969, 115-125.

Yet, as the rampage continues Étienne even indulges in the frenzy himself. When the mob reverses course and returns to attack the Gaston Marie mine, having passed it before due to rumors of gendarmes, it is Étienne who calls for an assault on the pump which is integral to the mine's operation, and he demands that the captured scab, Chaval, take the first blow of the hammer against the Gaston Marie pump:

Il était ivre, il lançait lui-même ses hommes contre cette pompe, qu'il avait sauvée quelques heures plus tôt. A Gaston Marie! à Gaston Marie! . . .

.....
On arriva à Gaston Marie, en une mase grossie encore, plus de deux mille cinq cents forcenés, brisant tout, balayant tout, avec la force accrue du torrent qui roule. . . . En moins d'un quart d'heure, les feux furent renversés, les chaudières vidées, les batiments envahis et dévastés, pas qu'elle s'arrêtât au dernier souffle expirant de la vapeur. on se jetait sur elle comme sur une personne vivant, dont on voulait la vie. (321-322)

[He [Étienne] was drunk; he himself was launching his men against the very pump he had saved a few hours earlier. "To Gaston Marie! To Gaston Marie!" . . . By the time they arrived at Gaston Marie their number was swollen still more--over twenty -five hundred madmen. breaking and sweeping everything before them with the pent up force of an unleashed torrent. . . . In less than fifteen minutes the fires were put out. the boilers were emptied, and all the buildings broken into and wrecked. But it was the pump they were really after. It was not enough that it had stopped as the last breath of steam died--they threw themselves on it as though it were a living person whose life they were determined to have. (271-272)]

The attack on things, as the narrator characterizes these events, represents a substitution for an attack on people. However, I believe these attacks are more complex than merely being substitutes, for we need to explain the special fury the workers reserve for the machines. The attack on the machines is complex because these are the "means of production," the machinery which produces private wealth at their expense, but they are also perceived in irrational terms. In the passage above the narrator represents the mutilated

machines as live beasts taking their “last breath”: the workers want to murder someone, or something. The worker’s personification or naturalization of the machines (through the narrator’s voice!) is overdetermined, expressing Luddite hatred of the machine, a fetishized consciousness, and a desperate attempt to engage in a fight to the death with capital.

Thus, the workers destroy the machines which embody their alienation, but is this the blossoming of a revolutionary class consciousness, or something else, something abject? Again, the representation of abject consciousness has both a propedeutic and problematic aspect. Clearly, Zola sees the consciousness of the workers at this point as abject, irrational, frenzied, even sexually frenzied. The question is this: Does Zola conceive of working class consciousness as only leading to the frenzied activity of a mob?

This rampage is wild, violent, and arbitrary: even worse (in the terms of the text), it is headed by women. It is difficult to plot the movements of the crowd from mine to mine, but the narrator tells us that these movements are determined by rumor concerning the whereabouts of the gendarmes, as well as by a random shouts directing the crowd to another mine. The crowd has no leadership—at least no rational leadership—though frenzied women propel it forward. Étienne has lost control of the crowd whose fury he stoked with his rhetoric at the meeting in the Plan des Dames, but now he is as much a participant in the excesses as any other. The bourgeois, hidden in a barn, watch the crazed behavior of the crowd:

Les femmes avait paru, près d’un millier de femmes, aux cheveux épars, dépeignés par la course, aux guenilles montrant la peau nue, des nudités de femelles lasses d’enfanter des meurt-de-faim. Quelques-unes tenaient leur petit entre les bras, le soulevaient, l’agitaient, ainsi qu’un drapeau de deuil et de vengeance. . . . Et les hommes déboulèrent ensuite, deux mille furieux, des galibots, des haveurs, des raccomodeurs, une masse compacte qui roulait d’un seul bloc, serrée, confondue, au point qu’on ne distinguait ni les culottes déteintes, ni les tricots de laine en loques, effacés dans la même uniformité terreuse. Les yeux brûlaient, on voyait seulement les trous des bouches noires, chantant Marseillaise, dont les strophes se perdaient en un mugissement confus, accompagné par le claquement des sabots sur la terre

dure. Au-dessus des têtes, parmi le hérissément des barres de fer, une hache passa, portée toute droite; et cette hache unique, qui était comme l'étendard de la bande, avait, dans le ciel clair, le profil aigu d'un couperet de guillotine. (333-334)

[The women had appeared--nearly a thousand of them, their hair disheveled from racing across the countryside, their bare flesh showing through tattered clothes and exposing the nudity of animals weary of giving birth to starvelings. Some of them had babies in their arms and were lifting them over their heads, waving them about like banners of mourning and vengeance . . . Next came the men--two thousand madmen, a single, compact, swarming mass of mine boys, cutters, repairers, so squeezed together that their faded trousers and their tattered woolen sweaters had merged into one uniform earth color. Their eyes were blazing, and all that could be seen were their gaping mouths singing the Marseillaise, the stanzas of which were lost in a confused bellow accompanied by the clatter of sabots on the hard ground. Above their heads, among the bristling iron bars, reared a vertical ax, and that single ax, the crowd's banner, was silhouetted against the clear sky like the blade of a guillotine. (282)]

This passage is initially striking due to its revolutionary imagery, visual references which by the latter part of the 19th century were stock for any novelization of revolution and social unrest. The tattered women exposing their bodies is reminiscent of Delacroix' painting, Liberty at the Barricade, while the women who raise their children over their heads suggests several paintings by Jacques-Louis David, the painter of the Jacobin party and revolutionary image maker. The last reference to the guillotine also brings to mind Dickens' Tale of Two Cities and Madame LaFarge. The point is that these descriptions are both overblown and derivative, and at least here this is recognizable, showing Zola's ideological hand. Zola sees masses, not classes.

Lukács was finally correct, then, in his assessment of Zola's political intentions, and this passage cited above bears out his conclusions. The following passage seems to cement our suspicion that Zola's sympathy for the working class is dubious, at best

patronizing, despite his stated intentions and his notes for this novel:

C'était la vision rouge de la révolution qui les emporterait tous, fatalement, par une soirée sanglante de cette fin de siècle. Oui, un soir, le peuple lâché, débridé, galoperait ainsi sur les chemins; et il ruisselerait du sang des bourgeois, il promènerait des têtes, il sèmerait l'or des coffres éventrés, Les femmes hurleraient, les hommes auraient ces mâchoires de loups, ouvertes pour mordre. Oui, ce seraient les mêmes guenilles, le même tonnerre de gros sabots, la même cohue effroyable, de peau sale, d'haleine empestée, balayant le vieux monde, sous leur pousée débordante de barbares. (334)

[It was an apocalyptic vision of the revolution that would inevitably sweep them all away on some bloody evening of this dying century, Yes, one day the people would slip its harness and, unleashed, race along the roads just like this; it would make the blood of the bourgeois flow, it would parade their severed heads on pikes, it would scatter the gold of disemboweled cashboxes. The women would shriek and the men would have those wolflike jaws open to bite. Yes, there would be the same rags, the same thunder of heavy sabots, the same terrifying mob, with its dirty flesh and its stinking breath, sweeping aside the old world in a wild, barbaric onslaught. (283)]

This passage is very similar to the narrator's comment about the apologists for the brutality of capitalism in Dickens' Hard Times, but the difference in sympathies is instructive.⁷ This (Zola's) characterization of the workers as barbarians is followed by a well known scene of barbarism, a truly memorable moment in the history of the novel, when the women, a

⁷ "Utilitarian economists, skeletons of school masters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's eared creeds, the poor you will always have with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you" (125). Clearly Dickens' purpose is didactic, if not prophetic, but importantly, he places the blame for violence on those who effectively rule society, as well as those who justify this rule. This is very different from the mediated sympathy and understanding articulated in the passage above--and Dickens does not begrudge the poor the cash box.

“stampede of furies.” see the petty-bourgeois grocer Maigrat and chase him into his house. Their anger is mediated by Maigrat’s history with the women of the mining villages. He exchanges credit and foodstuffs for sex with the daughters of the miners, showing little compassion for the desperation of his neighbors and customers, and even less concern for his own wife, who is (as Zola would have it) a passive and defeated bystander. So, the anger of the women is apparently justified or at least understandable, and when Maigrat eventually dies it is not immediately at the hands of the women. Rather, scrambling around on the roof of his shop, he falls off and cracks his skull. What happens afterwards, however, is a weird conclusion to the rampage, and a final most brutal example of the tableaux of violence we have considered to this point:

Elles tournaient en le flairant, pareilles à des louves. Toutes cherchaient un outrage, une sauvagerie qui les soulageât. On entendît la voix aigre de la Brûle. Faut le couper comme un matou! Oui, oui! au chat! au chat! ...Il en a trop fait, le salaud! Déjà, la Mouquette le déculottait, tirait le pantalon, tandis que la Levaque soulevait les jambes. Et la Brûle, de ses mains sèches de vieille, écarta les cuisses nues, empoigna cette virilité morte. Elle tenait tout, arrachant, dans un effort qui tendait sa maigre échine et faisait craquer ses grands bras. Les peaux molles résistaient, elle dut s’y reprendre, elle finit par emporter le lambeau, un paquet de chair velue et sanglante, qu’elle agita, avec un rire de triomphe: Je l’ai! je l’ai! (352)

[They [the women] circled about, sniffing at him like she-wolves. They tried to think of some outrage, some act of savagery that would relieve their feelings. Ma Brûlé’s shrill voice was heard. “Let’s cut it off, like with a tomcat!” “Yes, yes, get the cat, get the cat! . . . He’s done it too often, the bastard!” Mouquette was already at work, pulling his trousers off while La Levaque held up his legs. Then La Brûlé, with the dry hands of old age, spread his naked thighs and grabbed his dead virility. She clutched it all, tearing at it with a force that arched her thin back and cracked her long arms. The soft flesh resisted, and she had to try again; at last she was able to rip it loose—a lump of hairy bleeding flesh that she waved around with a

triumphant laugh: "I've got it! I've got it!" (298)]

This crude act offers a barbaric spectacle for our shocked yet titillated delectation, the reader's voyeurism mirroring the rapt gazes of Mme. Maigrat, who watches from an upper window (and she seemed to be laughing, according to the narrator), and of the Grégoires and of Mme Hennebeau who peep out from behind the shuttered windows. Étienne and Maheu, the leaders who have completely lost control of their followers, behold the episode in a "frozen horror". The female mob parades Maigrat's "dead virility" past the house, impaled on the end of a stick. Innocent Cécile thinks it might be a rabbit, until the more astute Mme. Hennebeau discerns exactly what trophy is on the end of the stick. A consensus of gazes agree that the mob has gone too far. This scene is both so ghastly and yet comic that it threatens to upend the seriousness of the episode for which it is a brutal coda. The workers' march across the countryside and their rage have led up to this. The group splinters at this point, the act separating the rational from the irrational. the men from the women.

Naomi Schor comments upon this scene that in Zola's novels, "The window functions as a balcony as long as the reactionaries are in control. However, when the people threaten to unleash their fury, vertical distance does not afford security and the window is quickly closed and shuttered. It becomes the protective shield behind which the bourgeois in Germinal cower in fear . . ." (Zola: from Window to Window 46). Schor adds that "The window is a neuralgic point where Zola's aesthetic, sexual and political concerns intersect," and this exchange of viewing positions on the part of the bourgeois, paired with the horrified gaze of the male workers, certainly bears this point out (as well as the nature of the trophy!). Phillip Walker takes up this same theme in a general exegesis of Zola's fascination with optics, like many of his literary contemporaries and his artist friends such as Paul Cezanne. Walker points out that "The window, the mirror, the eye--all those things which intervene between the observer and the object observed which obstruct light, frame, filter, bend, transform it or interpret the data it transmits--are, indeed, among the most central, recurrent, and characteristic motifs of his art" (52). He notes that "Germinal presents a series of unforgettable eyes . . .", and he lists the references to Catherine's catlike eyes, as well as those of Étienne, Maigrat, Souvarine, and Rasseneur.

Zola uses these eyes, Walker argues, to accomplish his “lie”, “the truthwards ascent from fact to symbol, from an objective view of the world to an all embracing religious and philosophical vision” (56). This “truthwards ascent”, is, notably, part of Zola’s longing for “the one and entire Truth which alone can cure my sick soul” (qtd. in Walker 67). Walker concludes that Zola’s work is a “moment in the progress of consciousness toward total self-knowledge,” while Schor’s thoughts about the author’s window imagery similarly lionize Zola. Still, this essay rather than Schor’s major work on the crowd in Zola’s novels is most relevant here, for in the latter she pursues a structuralist and textualist analysis of the crowd as language reference and as an image, a tack which dismisses the characterization of the crowd as a collective image and formation of proletarian consciousness. The essay cited is nonetheless inciteful and useful here though I maintain, however, that the window imagery and the other visions and spectacles which comprise Germinal are consonant with Zola’s politics, that is, with his suspicions about working class consciousness, and with his own limitations and contradictions.

David Bell develops Henri Mitterand’s interpretation of the rampage scene, and links the murder of Maigrat to the subsequent murder of Cécile (by Bonnemort) and of the soldier from the Midi, Plogoff (by Jeanlin):

In each case, the victim is in a clear sense attached to the power against which the miners are struggling. By the grace of the company, Maigrat owns a store monopolizing to such an extent the sale of provisions that he is free to exploit the miners--usually by exchanging food for sexual favors from the wives and daughters of the miners. The soldier killed by Jeanlin is a member of the force sent by the regional government to protect the mine during the strike. Finally, Cécile is the daughter of M. and Mme. Grégoire, who own part of the Montsou mine and live from the dividends they collect by virtue of their ownership. But although Maigrat, the soldier, Cécile are indeed linked to the source of power against which the miners are fighting, they are fundamentally secondary, of no effective significance in the struggle. . . . (55)

Paraphrasing Bell, the workers consistently target substitutes, or stand-ins, for the

capitalist, and this is evident in the encounter with Hennebeau as well as with the three victims killed by workers, and their actions show their impotence rather than their strength. When we return to the overblown rhetoric ascribed (by the indirect narrative voice) to Étienne, replete with references to hidden gods of capitalism whom the workers and the International will expose, as well as the phrase we noted throughout the novel, the owner is “over there,” we see a need to affix blame, to limit the scope of the strategic and theoretical problem the workers face. We see an insistence that capitalism have a face, that some person be held accountable and be made to redress the wrongs suffered, so the workers press for a face-to-face encounter.

The task is to sort out exactly what Zola is doing here, for I agree with Bell that this series of substitutes is important, and I maintain, that this process of substitution expresses Zola’s disposition towards the working class and towards revolutionary politics. This series of substitutions could be understood, perhaps, as a form of displacement. As this word is used by Freud and Freudian psychoanalysis, displacement is “The fact that an idea’s emphasis, interest or intensity is liable to be detached from it and to pass on to other ideas, which were originally of little intensity but which are related to the first idea by a chain of associations” (Laplanche and Pontalis 121).⁸ This fits the miners’ actions (and that of their wives and children, who are the ones who kill Maigrat and the soldier) very neatly, for, in a defensive gesture they displace (in the literal and Freudian sense of this word) their anger onto those figures caught in between them and someone unseen, or, better, something unknown and possibly unknowable. Capitalism and economic crises are understood as natural and unchangeable phenomena. The concept of displacement also offers some insight into how the workers choose their targets, for what defines displacement for Freud, especially in his analysis of dreams, is the arbitrariness of the relationship between meaning and the sign which bears meaning, or, in the case of the

⁸ For a clear definition of displacement in Freud’s mature work consider the following passage from the “The Dream-work” section of The Interpretation of Dreams: “It thus seems plausible to suppose that in the dream-work a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have a high psychical value of their intensity, and on the other hand, by means of over determination, creates from elements of low psychical value, new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. If that is so, a transference and displacement of psychical intensities occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is a result of these that the difference between the text of the dream content and that of the dream-thoughts comes about” (342-343).

novel, between capitalism and those identified as capitalists. The victims of the workers' anger are all, to some degree, selected randomly or by chance. In other words, what we have here is a chain of equivalents, where there is no difference between Mairat, the Grégoires, Hennebeau, and the capitalist "over there". Difference is effaced here. The workers's acts of rage oddly parrot the exchange of equivalencies which is the very basis of capitalism.

The captive, reified consciousness of the workers impairs their ability to struggle for greater and more meaningful change. Bell and Mitterand concur on this point; the former writes (in commenting on the latter's interpretation):

The phallus they [the women] display is one of the centralizing symbolic elements or universal equivalents that stands in a relation of homology to gold as Marx analyzes it in the first chapter of Capital. As [Jean-Joseph] Goux has emphasized in his reading of Freud and Lacan in light of Marx, psychic development goes through stages that correspond quite closely to the genesis of money. The developing psyche formulates a series of equations based on partial instinctual objects (breast, nipple, finger, the corner of a blanket, and so on). Any number of objects can serve this purpose, but none succeeds in imposing itself, in unifying the diverse objects and organizing the system. (55-56).

Bell finally rejects this explanation and concludes that the women's actions, and by extension the other actions of the miners, may be beyond "recuperation." What is at stake here is that Zola does not believe that either the working class women or the miners are capable of achieving class consciousness or of organizing a working class movement. Their rage finally plays itself out in a rampage akin to a frenzied charivari.

Foreclosure, the form of Conspiracy

Foreclosure is a complicated term, as it is linked to four other terms (actually German verbs) alternately used by Freud: *ablehnen* (to fend off), *aufheben* (to suppress, to abolish), *verwerfen* (repudiation), and *verleugnen* (to disavow). In Lacan's work (and over the course of many years) foreclosure finally "consists in not symbolising what ought to be symbolized (castration): it is a symbolic abolition. . . . [and] 'what has been foreclosed from the Symbolic reappears in the Real'" (Pontalis and Laplanche 168). In Germinal, the repeated phrase, "over there" is a crude reference to what is unknown, and, I

maintain, this phrase is akin to the Symbolic, a signifying system. As stated above, “over there” is often accompanied by references to the hidden gods and other unseen manipulators, but this does not adequately explain the significance of this phrase. From its first usage in the opening paragraphs to its usage in the interview with Hennebeau (and by the manager no less!), and its invocation at the workers meetings and on the rampage, “over there” is another substitute for capitalism as a structure. The workers, and this includes Étienne and the (intelligent) anarchist Souvarine, seem incapable of bringing together concrete reality, lived experience in the mine and their knowledge of the work and the production process with capitalism as an abstract system. They cannot construe the problems of their daily lives, the timbering problem for example, as a systemic problem, as a cycle of crisis, or, say the (Marxist) theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. There is an inability to represent themselves as part of a system, and this immediately plays out in their wild and aimless wandering around the countryside, in spaces that they know, yet wherein they seem still unable to formulate any tactics and strategies. The source of the problem, they know, is “over there” but what if it does not lie in Paris or some particular place?

The inadequacy of their (the workers’) analysis brings on paranoia and its kin, projection. When the symbolic is foreclosed, when abstract theory is decoupled from concrete fact (their knowledge of the work and mines and their lived experience), there is an inevitable return of the repressed--someone must pay! Their inadequacy is projected onto the substitutes who are simply stand-ins for what the workers cannot understand. The actions of the miners, and particularly the wives, is clearly paranoid, and seems to bear the hallmarks of Freud’s understanding of this term as it is used in the Schreber case. Indeed all of the elements are here; persecution and suffering, apocalypse (and this draws in Souvarine as well, for this is his solution!), and knowledge. In his essay “The Mirror Stage” Lacan comments in passing that all knowledge (*connaissance*)⁹ has a paranoid quality (hence misrecognition, or *méconnaissance*), and this is literally the situation in

⁹ See *Écrits 2*. This entails Lacan’s notion of *méconnaissance*, which in turn is a critical element of Althusser’s notion of *interpellation*.

Freud's early case of Dr. Schreber.¹⁰ Schreber is the original paranoid, the man with the facts and the texts (his Denkwürdigkeit) all of which have a unique and mystical significance. Only Schreber knows and only he is the elect who will finally save civilization when he gives birth to a new messiah. While our miners are hardly as vivid in their paranoia, it is certainly apocalyptic, and all of their knowledge seems to add up to an impotent rampage. Too much knowledge, facticity in this instance rather than theory, drives the workers mad, and this is a point which, I argue, Zola has grasped and which Lukács cannot accept.

Again, the link between paranoia and conspiracy is well established and is part of Freud's account of Schreber. A central element of Schreber's paranoia is the belief that he is persecuted by a group known as the "rays of God", who mock him and otherwise attempt to humiliate him and distract him from his messianic mission. There is a difference between this kind of conspiracy and paranoia and the political kind we find in *Germinal*, but it is important to note that what Schreber and the workers have in common is the reduction of the world to an immediate and deeply personal set of terms; me against them, or us against them. This is the work of foreclosure in that an abstraction possibility has been foreclosed or abolished and replaced by a non-symbolic entity; you or them, or both together.

In Richard Hofstadter's essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" he makes some points which are useful to this analysis. He writes that,

In the paranoid style, as I conceive it, the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy. But there is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoiac: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoiac tends to see the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be the living as directed specifically *against him*; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture.

¹⁰ This is not a case in so far as Freud's text is a comment on Schreber's own writings, particularly the Denkwürdigkeit. See "Psychoanalytic notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" in Freud's Collected Papers, vol.3.

a way of life whose fate affects himself alone but millions of others. (4)

The position of this paper is, of course, that while the political paranoiac or conspiracy theorist attempts to account for himself and millions of others, hence in Germinal we find a form of class consciousness, it is nonetheless a visceral politics articulated in immediate, personal, physical terms. Again, this is foreclosure, for the symbolic is abolished.

Hofstadter continues, however, to make other points which support this understanding of paranoia mobilized as conspiracy, particularly about history and knowledge. History, in the paranoid style, he writes, is also "distinctly personal; decisive events are not taken as part of the stream of history, but as part of someone's will [brainwashing, managed news, etc.]" (32). Similarly, as with Schreber's pseudo-intellectual writing about his own delusions, paranoid scholarship is replete with facts and documentation and these are "marshaled" as "overwhelming "proof" of the conspiracy that is to be established. It is nothing if not coherent . . ." (36).

Conclusion

With this last point in mind, the attempt by the workers to understand their situation, to grasp capitalism is doomed for as a matter of praxis, as knowledge mobilized it finally devolves into these immediate paranoid/conspiratorial terms. At least here, this kind of politics cannot succeed, and in fact leads to the destruction of the workers consciousness altogether. As the strike dwindles and the miners must head back to work they are defeated in body and mind, and many of them have lost their lives and the small happinesses which their poor lives afforded them. Zola offers us a bleak picture. It is even bleaker when we consider again exactly what has brought about the minimal wage increases and safety improvements which the failed strike produced; the death of Mouquette and the others in the final frenzied confrontation with the soldiers at the Montsou mine. The outside world, Paris, and other places "over there" are horrified at the reports of the shooting deaths and of the issue which brought the strike on, and the company is forced, after having won the strike, to compromise with the workers who in this instance do not even seem to negotiate for themselves. The ending of the novel seems to support the sense that there is nothing that the workers could do to change their situation, for as Étienne leaves the mine to join Pluchart and the International, underlining the point that

education/knowledge separates people from communities. While walking away from the village (and the narrator comments that he is leaving his class with this departure) Étienne mulls over speeches he will deliver, and over the failure of the Montsou strike, particularly the excesses we have examined here:

Et il songeait à présent que la violence peut-être ne hâtait pas les choses. Des câbles coupés, des rails arrachés, des lampes cassées, quelle inutile besogne! Cela valait bien la peine de galoper à trois mille, en une bande dévastatrice. Vaguement, il devinait que la légalité, un jour, pouvait être plus terrible. Sa raison mûrissait, il avait jeté la gourme de ses rancunes. Oui la Maheude le disait bien avec son bon sens, ce serait le grand coup: s'enrégimenter tranquillement, se connaître, se réunir en syndicats, lorsque les lois le permettraient; . . . Ah! quel réveil de vérité et de justice! Le dieu repu et accroupi en crèverait sur l'heure, idole monstrueuse, cachée au fond de son tabernacle. dans cet inconnu lointain où les misérables la nourrissaient de leur chair, sans l'avoir jamais vue. (498)

[And now it seemed to him that perhaps violence did not speed anything up after all. Those cut cables, tom-up rails, smashed lamps--such useless effort! What an accomplishment for three thousand destruction bent people racing wildly across the countryside! He was vaguely becoming aware that legal action might one day prove more terrible. Now that he had let off the steam of his bitterness, his reason was maturing. Yes, La Maheude's solid good sense had enabled her to understand--next time they would do it right: they would organize calmly, learn to know one another, band together in unions whenever the law allowed . . . Ah, how truth and justice would then spring awake! The glutton and crouching god, the monstrous idol hidden in the depths of his tabernacle in that distant unknown place where he fed in the flesh of the poor who had never seen him, would die instantly. (427)]

It is hard to discern to what extent Étienne speaks for Zola, and so to what extent Étienne's change of consciousness is approved, but the indirect voice we noted many times earlier

speaks one last time, offering a new vision of change to come, a vision which this reader finds odd and unsettling:

Àux rayons enflammés de l'astre, par cette matinée de jeunesse, c'était de cette rumeur que la campagne était grosse. Des hommes poussaient, une armée noire, vengeresse, qui germait lentement dans les sillons, grandissant pour les récoltes du siècle futur, et dont la germination allait faire bientôt éclater le terre. (499)

[Under the flaming rays of the sun, in this morning of youth, it was with this sound [the tapping of the miners as they mine the coal underground] that the country side was heavy. Men were springing up--a black, avenging army was slowly germinating in the furrows, sprouting for the harvests of the coming century. And soon this germination would sunder the earth" (428).]

This is the same apocalyptic language we noted during the rampage outside Hennebeau's house, but here it suggests that the workers revolution, or simply social justice, is an inevitability. Social justice will simply germinate in the month of Germinal, a month named for the revolutionary calendar, but this is a revolution without revolutionaries.¹¹

This is, perhaps, Zola's warning to the Second Empire,¹² announcing its end, but it is also a final example of his "naturalist" thinking.¹³ A final irony is that this thinking also construes history as a series of natural events and inevitabilities or, to use Zola's word, determinations, and also suggests a conspiratorial way of thinking. If knowledge will not assist the workers in the liberation of their consciousnesses and cannot break the real chains which bind them to deadly jobs, then this is not finally their fault. Their situation was determined.

¹¹ This is finally realized some years later in Eduard Bernstein's Evolutionary Socialism as well as in Zola's character, Sigismond Busch in L'argent.

¹² This is Nelson's thesis.

¹³ Again, see his essay "The Experimental Novel."

Works Cited

- Baguley, David. Critical Essays on Émile Zola. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.
- Baudelaire, Charles. The Painter of Modern Life and other essays. New York: Da Capo.
- Bell, David F. Models of Power: Politics and Economics in Zola's Rougon Macquart. Lincoln: U Nebraska, 1988.
- Benjamin, Walter. Charles Baudelaire: The Lyric Poet of High Capitalism. Harry Zohn trans. London: Verso, 1983.
- Evans, Dylan. An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Freud, Sigmund. Collected Papers (vol. 3). Strachey trans. New York: Basic Books, 1959.
- , The Interpretation of Dreams. Strachey, trans. New York: Avon, 1965.
- Hofstadter, Richard. The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.
- Howe, Irving. "Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism" Baguley 111-124.
- Lacan, Jacques. Écrits: A Selection. Alan Sheridan, trans. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Laplanche, J. and J.-B. Pontalis. The Language of Psycho-Analysis. Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Le Bon, Gustave. Psychologie des foules. Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1998.
- Lukács, Georg. History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics. Rodney Livingstone, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1979.
- , Realism in our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle. John and Necke Mander, trans. New York: Harper, 1971.
- , The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great literature. Anna Bostock, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1982.
- Marx, Karl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (vol. 1), Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. New York: Charles H. Kerr, 1906.
- Mitterand, Henri. "Ideology and Myth: Germinal and the Fantasies of Revolt" Baguley 124-130.

- Nelson, Brian. Zola and the Bourgeoisie: A Study of the Themes and Techniques in Les Rougon-Macquart. Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1983.
- Petrey, Sandy. Realism and Revolution: Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, and the Performances of History. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Rudé, George. The Crowd in the French Revolution. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959.
- Schor, Naomi. "Zola: from window to window". Yale French Studies #42, 1969, 38-51.
- Zola's Crowds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- Walker, Philip. "The mirror, the window, and the eye in Zola's fiction". Yale French Studies #42, 1969, 52-67.
- Williams, Raymond. Culture and Society: 1780 to 1950. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
- The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. London: Hogarth, 1984.
- The Long Revolution. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Zola, Émile. The Experimental Novel and Other Essays. Belle M. Sherman, trans. New York: Haskell House, 1964.
- Germinal. Paris: Livre de poche, 1955
- Germinal. Stanley and Eleanor Hochman, trans. New York: Signet, 1981.

Confession, Conspiracy and Ressentiment in Conrad's Under Western Eyes

Joseph Conrad's 1911 novel Under Western Eyes has suffered through comparisons to its shorter and more heralded companion novel, The Secret Agent. Some critics such as F. R. Leavis simply find the latter novel more satisfying and complete, and we can assume, he appreciated those aspects of the novel which are sharply critical of modernity. Also, Under Western Eyes has taken second place to the trio of Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness, and Nostromo. Lastly the novel has suffered because it is often considered merely as a political novel about anarchists.¹ Perhaps the secondary status of this novel in the estimations of literary criticism is due to confusion over what precisely the novel is about. The solution to this question of what the novel is about is sought by many in a self explanatory notion of politics, a notion which is then certainly muddled by a close reading of the novel.

All interpretation reveals as much or at least a good deal about the critic as it does the text. Nonetheless it seems strange that few critics have focused on the conjunction of two established (literary) discourses, confession and resentment (as abjection), and the manner in which Conrad has woven these together within a narrative frame of conspiracy. Conspiracy, here, overdetermines these distinct discourses, plucked as they are from a rich tradition in literary production which might otherwise interfere with textual synthesis. This textual brew combines to form a novel which is a prescient examination of the formation and workings of a very modern form of political subjectivity, that of the liberal nation state. I will provide a brief example of this form of subjectivity in question here which will guide the thrust of the reading of the novel, but for the most part project at hand, then, is to demonstrate how this combination comes about and once combined, to grasp its significance.

¹ In his major work, The Great Tradition Leavis ranks The Secret Agent with Nostromo as one of the novels, "upon which Conrad's status as one of the great English masters securely rests". As for Under Western Eyes, "it cannot be claimed with the same confidence for that order, though it is a most distinguished work." Some might also compare these "anarchist" novels to Henry James' The Princess Casamassima, a comparison without textual basis and substance beyond the fact that the writers were friends.

But what is the novel "about"? In one of several essays he has written about Under Western Eyes, Frank Kermode examines it in conjunction with other narratives, none of which are derived from novels. He explores how the plot lines of these four well known and not so well known narratives (one is from the The Bible) resist certain modes of interpretation (structuralist, analogical, etc.). Kermode begins with a brief plot recapitulation of each narrative as though he were explaining to a popular audience what these narratives are "about". He summarizes Under Western Eyes as follows:

A young man of moderate and conservative opinions in the disturbed Russia of the late nineteenth century, asks only a successful career, but is suddenly and against his will involved in an assassination plot. . . . The young man betrays his friend to the police, and is thereafter employed by them in counterespionage. He arrives in Geneva and becomes an associate of a group of political exiles, including the assassin's mother and sister. . . . Made deaf by blows on the eardrums, he is knocked down by a streetcar and crippled (894).

Indeed, the point Kermode derives from his reading of the narrative of the novel is that the certainty of what it is ostensibly "about" collapses upon closer inspection. Moreover, the complicated plot is tenuously held together by the author's use of various devices including a complicated time line (jumps in time) as well as imagistic and lexical tricks (911).²

But to return to the political interpretations of Under Western Eyes, when we also consider the biographical criticism of this novel, especially those aspects which touch on the Polish nationalist political activities of Conrad's father and brother, the standard political interpretation of this novel is irresistible and seems obvious. Yet, it is really as simple as this: both Under Western Eyes and The Secret Agent are about anarchists and

² Kermode's essays about this novel and The Secret Agent are some of the most intelligent and insightful work on Conrad, if only because he draws his arguments from a close reading of the text and so marks Conrad as a great modern writer, rather than the chronicler of imperialism and I am thinking particularly of his essay on the "secrets" which the text of the novel (this novel and the novel as such) necessarily holds back, as a matter of narration. This last comment about imperialism is not intended to diminish the considerable and politically significant work of Edward Said on Conrad, but rather to caution against the kind of pigeon holing and dismissive reading which unfortunately takes place.

anarchist politics, though this statement does not begin to describe the formal features and emphasis of the latter novel and fails to address the central focus and problem of the former novel, the troubled psychology of its protagonist, Razumov. Conrad scholars such as Eloise Knapp Hay and Avrom Fleishman as well as acclaimed writers such as Irving Howe have all taken the stance that this is a political novel with an apparent political content about goings on in Poland, Russia and most of Europe during the decades before and after the turn of the century.

This focus on the politics of the novel is certainly understandable, for the narrative of the novel, its engine in a certain sense, is a conspiracy narrative, a term and narrative form which I will explain below. Though it is a conspiracy narrative, the bond between this narrative form (which is social in its reference) and the mind set of Razumov (which is deeply "personal"), the bond between the apparent poles of the social and the individual (the other and the subject), lies with the twin discourses of confession and resentment, terms I will (also) explain shortly. As stated above, it is particularly with the conjunction of these discourses in the novel, confession and resentment, overdetermined and framed as they are by a conspiracy narrative, that Conrad has really achieved something, a prescient insight into a new political discourse.

In order to provide a clear example of what is meant by these phrases, "modern political subjectivity" and the "liberal nation state", consider Wendy Brown's exploration of the mode of identity formation and attendant contradictions in her recent book States of Injury. Here Brown explores the subjectivity of the modern state, as traced in Hobbes, Hegel, Mill, and even contemporary political philosophers such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. this state is both liberal and modern in that it is founded on the liberal assumptions of equality and due process, and then guaranteed by a governmental form which is in turn founded in regulative legislation. The relationship between the state and its subject is one where the "glue" which cements this relationship is not force or tradition (pomp and circumstance) which characterized most monarchies but rather a bond of obeisance derived from the consciousness of the citizen/subject.

The liberal nation state also necessarily turns on a tension between its primary terms, the universal "we" and the particularist "I" of equality and civil rights. Political

debate and political struggle in the liberal nation state is framed by the abstraction of the “we” and the personal character of the “I” such that effective struggle and even political critique are nearly impossible, and instead is redirected into a “politics of recrimination and rancor” as in Nietzsche’s notion of resentment, and then occluded by a conception of politics and the forms of the state which are oddly depoliticized, as with Marx’ critique of Hegel: “the universality of the state is ideologically achieved by turning away from and thus depoliticizing, yet at the same time presupposing our collective particulars—not by embracing them, let alone emancipating us from them” (57).³ Brown’s criticism is specifically directed against contemporary identity politics and the solutions sought for redressing inequalities. Identity here refers to identities which are declared as “minority”, “emergent”, “queer”, or otherwise situated (apparently) outside of the parameters recognized by the state and its laws. As she points out there can be no effective struggle against a state when the identity assumed is that which the state thrusts upon one (collectively), and we might think of so-called minority identities in our won context.⁴ Brown writes that with identity politics “history [in Marx’ formulation of Hegel in The 18th Brumaire] weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living”. Thus she emphasizes the futility of identity politics as currently conceived:

In locating a site of blame for its powerlessness over its past—and locating a “reason” for the “unendurable pain” of social powerlessness in the present. it converts this reasoning into an ethicizing politics, a politics of recrimination that seeks to avenge the hurt even while it reaffirms it. discursively codifies it. Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future—for itself or others—that triumphs over this pain. The loss of historical direction, and with it the loss of futurity, characteristic of the late modern age, is thus homologically refigured in the structure of desire of the dominant political expression of

³ Brown notes that this argument is found in Marx’ On the Jewish Question and in his Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right.

⁴ Brown offers as an example the identities conferred by the welfare state: “motherhood, disability, race, age, and so forth” (58).

the age: identity politics" (74).

The chief contention of this chapter is that Razumov's situation, his actions and his rationalization for them, and even the rhetorical quality of this rationalization, constitute a prototype of subjectivity in the late modern age and of contemporary identity politics. Conrad's combination of discourses, confession and resentment within the narrative frame of conspiracy, is a remarkable dissection of the ideology of the modern liberal nation state. Razumov is by no means the kind of figure we imagine when we speak of identity politics, for he is not an oppressed minority and instead seems a conformist would-be-middle-class -bureaucrat. And this is just the point. In a perverse way the elements of the modern liberal state, the swings between the appeals to the universal and the particular, are present in both the politics of the anarchists and in Razumov's discourse (in general), and even in his behavior and his speech. Razumov's resentment is politically mobilized by the conspiracy structure, a mobilization which also determined by its moment. for it marks a politics without political discourse, and a political movement without leaders. Subjects simply hear the call of duty and this is the interpellation of ideology. All of the inherent contradictions which mark this ideology, this form of political subjectivity, are laid bare in Under Western Eyes. Our project is to recognize these contradictions. or, to borrow Wendy Brown's word, we must expose the depoliticization (its forms and its rhetoric) of political discourse.

A Brief Definition of Terms

Before we begin a detailed examination the text, some of the terms used here (both above and below) require clarification. Our principal keyword, *conspiracy*, is complex. Briefly stated, a conspiracy is a manipulation scheme which involves a manipulator, a person who is manipulated to carry out the scheme (also known as an adjuvant)⁵, and a victim. We should keep in mind that the conspiracy scheme (in general) is not apparent or visible to those outside the plot. That is, the mechanics and structure of the conspiracy scheme as well as the identity and role of the various players is veiled, and so knowledge thereof is possibly limited to the master conspirator alone.

The conspiracy form, then, concerns critical knowledge which is veiled, encrypted,

⁵ This is James Mileham's term in his analysis of conspiracy and narrative in Balzac's La comédie humaine. See the Works Cited for further information.

The conspiracy form, then, concerns critical knowledge which is veiled, encrypted, and/or mystified, and the revelation of this scheme, as with a confession of one of the players in the scheme, is an unveiling of the way in which the scheme worked, where the knowledge is still limited to the conspirator(s) and the person who reveals the plot. Conspiracy always, then, entails a discourse of secrecy and clandestine activity. Moreover, as long as this secret knowledge remains unknown there is victimization, for a conspiracy needs victims in order to realize its form, and it creates victims as a matter of its function. As a narrative form a conspiracy might entail two sub-narratives of victimization, for both the person who carries out the scheme and the victim of the scheme are potentially injured by the plot. The person who reveals the knowledge is also a kind of saviour bearing critical information, and even a victim too (as one who is used by the plot in harmful ways), but, most importantly, one who understands his or her situation and feels compelled to save others.

For our purposes, the conspiracy is always a political scheme, for, in so far as it involves the manipulation of groups of people for a grand purpose, it is at least socially significant. The difference between this notion of politics and the abstraction of, say, the liberal nation state, is that power has a human face. Though the conspiracy is carried out by forces which though veiled, hidden or even unknowable, they are nonetheless personified, such that they can bear a proper name. This is key, for it means that political discourse is couched in the terms of personal struggle: "There is an enemy who has wronged me". This aspect takes us back to Wendy Brown's thoughts on the manner in which political discourse is depoliticized and misdirected in its its objectives.

Redressing the wrong, effective struggle, hence, is also warped by this discourse. The redress of the conspiracy is known (technically) as a counter conspiracy, a kind of "return of the repressed" where the victims and possibly the adjuvants of the conspiracy scheme attempt to fight back and destroy the conspirators and the conspiracy structure. Against the proper name of the master conspirator the counter conspiracy invokes the proper name attached to an ideal such as a messiah, or an "ideal" which is mystified so that it returns from the realm of abstraction as a tangible fact or presence. This ideal or ideal figure does not actively help in the counter conspiracy (which might only involve the

revelation of the conspiracy scheme), but still functions as a "truth" for which the subject makes his and/or her sacrifices. With regard to sacrifice, conspiracy always entails a discourse of martyrdom.

To move to our second keyword, confession, we begin with a standard definition. A confession is, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, a disclosure or acknowledgement of something which is damaging or inconvenient to oneself. Of course there is a tradition of confession as a literary form which stretches from Augustine to Rousseau and to much of the contemporary tradition of memoirs (from high to "tell all" variants).

In several essays about confession Michel Foucault draws out the larger social implications of this discourse in both the religious and secular realms, and thereby demonstrates the ways in which these apparently distinct social spaces merge. Foucault traces confession as a function of power from the codification of penance at the Lateran Council of 1215 up to the Inquisition and into the modern state, "with the resulting development of confessional techniques" and "methods of interrogation and inquest".

Confession in its early stages (prior to the counter-Reformation and limited to the religious sphere) always involves the subject who confesses and the confessor, to whom the subject makes his or her sins known, or manifest. Confessing is, then, making something visible, revealing the evil which hides within, Foucault ties this to an ancient Greek notion of *exomologesis*, the manifestation of the "truth", and to its partner, the verbalization of "truth", *exagoreusis*. This double function of confession amounts to a continual process of revelation and renunciation: "We have to sacrifice the self in order to discover the truth about ourselves, and we have to discover the truth about ourselves in order to sacrifice ourself. Truth and sacrifice . . . are deeply and closely related" (Politics 226).

Foucault argues in his work on sexuality and confession, that confession is bound up with a discourse of the "truth", where the "truth" is a form of secret and dangerous knowledge, particularly (for Foucault) sexuality and the *ars erotica*.⁶ The "truth" must be hounded or tortured, or through techniques of confession, induced from the individual.

⁶ "This instance" refers to the text in question, The History of Sexuality, vol. I.

The individual must “tell the truth”, he or she must confess, and thereby free themselves and liberate the “truth” for “Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence” (History 60). Foucault summarizes the politics of confession as follows:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence of (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile: a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation (61-62).

Confession, then, is first a discourse of the “truth” and then a function of power to the extent that the “truth” must be protected. Again, in one form of confession the “sinner” confesses to a confessor, and thereby re-cements a damaged or broken relationship to authority. One pays homage to power when one “tells the truth”. This changes with the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, for with the codification of penance there is a break and emergence of a new or second form of confession where the role of confessor (the interrogator) is increasingly internalized.⁷ Confession involves a certain self-discipline or self-interrogation. Although these new techniques of interrogation were a large part of the Inquisition tribunals, it is with the rise of Protestantism in this period (16th century) that they were spread outside of this “ritualistic and exclusive localization” and into “eighteenth century pedagogy and nineteenth century medicine” (History 63). Moreover, as Foucault points out, confession is now a large part of everyday life: “It [confession] plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one’s

⁷ For specific references to the Council of Trent see Power and Knowledge, pgs.199-201.

crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell" (59).

Again, in the later Protestant form of confession the father confessor is internalized so that one confesses to oneself and anoints oneself as the protector/defender of the "truth". The conjunction of conspiracy and confession seems apt in this respect, for both discourses entail the protection of "truth" and the relaying of secret and valuable knowledge. The secrecy of the conspiracy, as with confession, it is at once the veil behind which power hides and the apparent "freedom" with which one reveals the "truth". This "freedom", as Foucault points out, by virtue of its internalization and then externalization as a ritualistic process, is in fact the chains which bind one to authority, even when that authority exists as "Freedom" and "Liberty".

The "secret diary", the (putative) basis of Under Western Eyes, is the clue to the character and political implications of the political subjectivity in question, and brings us to another keyword, resentment and its literary analog, abjection. Again, Conrad's use of a "secret diary" as the apparent basis of the novel, which is in then "narrated" or over-written by someone who has been given the diary or has otherwise "found" it, is a well established narrative gimmick. and we have only to look to Don Quixote for a primary example. The "secret diary" is also a feature of the narrative of the abject hero, as in Dostoevsky's narrator in Notes from Underground, and Razumov is certainly an figure in this tradition.⁸

Ressentiment is a term originally outlined by Nietzsche in his On the Genealogy of Morals:

The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the resentment of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant

⁸ For our purposes the abject hero is one who is outcast, literally thrown from society in the sense that this word is a compound of the Latin *ab*(from or away) and *iacere* (to throw). With regard to the debt this novel owes to Dostoevsky, and to the many arguments about which of this novelist's works is the particular source, the informer is another variation of the abject hero of several well known novels which preceded this one, notably Dostoevsky's Notes From Underground.

affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside”, what is “different”, what is “not itself”; and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of value-positing eye--this need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself--is of the essence of resentment: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all--its action is fundamentally reaction. (36-37)

Ressentiment, then, is a form of depoliticization in that it amounts to an evasion of engagement with a given situation, and instead distorts the social character (the social formation of the “I”) and reference of the situation to reduce it to a personal struggle against an-other. In a similar vein, in this text Nietzsche also argues that social relations are construed and articulated in (according to Fredric Jameson), “antagonistic categories of good or evil”. Thus, “what is good belongs to me, and what is bad belongs to the Other” (Political Unconscious 234). This simple dialectical formulation is easily inverted so that for Christianity, Nietzsche’s object of scorn (here), “what is good is associated with the Other”.⁹ As a dialectic, however, resentment necessarily entails the obliteration of the Self, that is the resentful Subject is one who does not act of his or her own accord, but only in reaction to the action(s) of the Other. Consider the following passage:

While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside”, what is

⁹ This leads us to another discussion of paranoia which will be addressed later, but for now we aspects of this nationalistic dilemma in novels as diverse as Len Deighton’s cold-war spy novel, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy and its world of hidden power and double agents, and the now-infamous novel which purportedly inspired the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building and a more aggressive right wing terrorist network, The Turner Diaries. The latter novel is a good example of a secret diary kept by one Earl Turner which tracks wrongdoing (genocide amongst other crimes!) in the name of a future state, a racist Eden recaptured (yes, recaptured). Turner dies before the state is realized, but not before he is inducted into the secret elite of the racist hierarchy, The Order. According to this view of social relations in the late 20th century, nations, and the United States is the principal example, are largely ruled by shadowy or invisible corporate boards of directors and international trade commissions. This is true to an extent (GATT, NAFTA, and the Maastricht agreements are very real and cause everyday consequences), though the emphasis for these racist movements falls on the “identity” of the board members. That is, they are “Jews”, “Freemasons”, “Non-Whites”, or whatever. There is no structural analysis, no thought about Capitalism: social relations and “identity” are construed as “culture”, an essentialist term which is indistinguishable from genetics.

“different”, what is “not itself”; and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye--this need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself--is of the essence of resentment: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all--its action is fundamentally reaction. (36-37)

As a form of political subjectivity, resentment is a discourse where social relations are internalized so that they are literally felt as libidinal urges (anger and seething), and in this sense the resentful one is inarticulate. The language of resentment, such as it is, reduces experience and the world to a matter of personal injury.

Razumov is clearly a figure drawn from a literary tradition of and about abjection, and owes much to the novels of Dostoevsky, the preeminent writer in this tradition. As for what abjection means, in his book Bitter Carnival, Michael Andre Bernstein writes about various formations of the abject hero, ranging from Rousseau’s Neveu de Rameau to Dostoevsky’s Brother’s Karamazov and Notes from Underground and it is with reference to this last novel and Bernstein’s chapter on Dostoevsky that I want to make some points before we turn to the confession scenes in Under Western Eyes. First, Razumov clearly fits into the abject tradition in a number of ways, and in that he fits this tradition the obvious precedent in Dostoevsky’s work is Notes from Underground. This point follows from the earlier one I made about this novel as a political novel, for just as many critics have discussed the anarchists and Conrad’s sources and disposition towards revolutionary politics of the period, so many have also tied this novel to a tradition of novels about anarchists, particularly Dostoevsky’s Brother’s Karamazov and The Possessed.¹⁰ Conrad’s debt to these two novels is undeniable and clear to most readers, and given the emphasis here upon confession and interrogation, “The Grand Inquisitor” chapter of the former is an obvious source. Nonetheless we have to return to the original question as to what this novel is about in order to understand how this novel is in dialogue with Notes from Underground more so than the others. Again, this novel is a sparse text, a confession no less, and so represents the mind set of someone who has deliberately set himself apart

¹⁰ See H. M. Daleski’s Joseph Conrad: the Way of Dispossession.

from society by an heinous act, though in this instance it is a very particular form of betrayal, informing. Indeed, just as the narrator vouches for the authenticity of the text, as derived from an “authentic” text, namely the “secret diary”, so the narrator of Notes from Underground cites Heine’s comments about Rousseau’s Confessions, and so impugns the authenticity of diaries, confessions, and memoirs. He goes on to tell his “gentlemen readers” that “Heine spoke about the man who made his confession in public. I, on the other hand, am writing for myself alone, and declare once for all that, even if I write as though I were addressing readers, I do it merely for form’s sake, because it is easier for me to write like that” (45). What we derive from this passage is the uneasy relationship between the confession as a public and as a private act, which certainly serves Razumov well, for he is able to confess to his diary, and then pass it off as an authentic text, a gift of honesty, but this only points in turn to the informant’s uneasy relationship with the society he apparently acts to defend.

This brings us to Razumov’s abjection. As Bernstein understands it, abjection entails a traumatic wound, a laceration which the abject one has suffered, and which has completely disabled him, making communication with others difficult or impossible, hence the confession and secret texts. Thus:

One of the central dilemmas of abjection is this impossibility of distinguishing between inner and outer pressures, between self-loathing and social humiliation, cunning mockery and a pathetic need for attention. Irrespective of its origin, Dostoevskian abjection functions as a weapon of global aggression, whose sting is all the more venomous for continually traversing the complex passage internal and external targets. It is as though the initial desperately seized-upon gambit of caricaturing one’s own feelings not only justifies but also focuses the malice cascading outward from one’s psyche in a kind of noxious deluge from whose contamination no one escapes unbesmirched. (90)

The informant, such as Razumov, is abject to the extent that he suffers a wound, a laceration in Bernstein’s terminology, which disrupts his life to such an extent that he lives only to redress or revenge the wrong he has suffered. Again, the wrong-suffered is always

inflicted by an oppressive Other, whether by a figure of authority or overwhelming strength (the anarchists by their number loom in Razumov's psyche as this), or by authority itself, but the point is, again, that this laceration or wound never heals and so the "pain" persists and the abject one is forever in a tenuous relationship with society (which again is either responsible for the wound or will not help him redress or heal it).

Bernstein points out that Dostoevsky's abject figures are the literary progeny of Gogol's "downtrodden clerks and the numerous variations on the 'superfluous man' in nineteenth century Russian literature" (94). Moreover, these clerks constitute a segment of society which has been "declassed", that is they have lost their social status in its most meaningful sense, the economic: "The society of nineteenth century Czarist Russia, with its glimpse of an element of new social mobility, generated its own form of "class rage", especially among the educated, which was fueled by less a fear of destitution than by frustration at the extraordinary disparity in the various positions attained by the youthful circle" (96).

This last description clearly describes Razumov. It is here, however, that I disagree with Bernstein. For though he notes these seething clerks, and then continues with a discussion of resentment he does not make the obvious connection, that these are the petty bourgeois figures whose abjection, whose private seething becomes a whole politics, indeed a conception of democracy (as in private or personal choices, in private situations), a politics which has only born fruit in the second half of the 20th century, but which has its roots in the abject clerks of the 19th and 20th century novel. This politics is the identity politics discussed above, and it is one which notably occludes any discussion of class, a discussion which is certainly relevant to the frustration of the abject clerks and of Razumov. We will return to a discussion of class in the concluding remarks.

An abject vision of the world entails a very real politics particularly where it concerns another term, community. Community is usually opposed to society for where community is fundamentally the family or an extension of the family, and so has an "organic" or "natural" basis, society refers to the laws and legislative structures by which humans regulate their interaction. The muddiness of some contemporary usage, such as references to a "business community" or the "used car dealer community" is, perhaps,

indicative of a certain “naturalizing” function. These points are examined in great detail by Ferdinand Tonnies in his major work, Community and Society, but for our purposes we should think of these two words as an opposition of an apparently organic community and a society created by the regulation of social relations.¹¹

Conspiracy, Ressentiment and Abjection: Conrad’s Informer

So, to return to our original question, if the novel is not clearly a political novel which attempts to reproduce the politics of its time and setting, then what is it “about”? As Under Western Eyes is a conspiracy novel, it is seen here as a subset of the political novel. With regard to the discussion of Mileham’s notion of the conspiracy form in the introduction, and to provide a more detailed analysis of the Under Western Eyes as a conspiracy novel, we should look at its form once more. The subject of the conspiracy, or the master conspirator, is ostensibly Mikulin, though we should remember that he is a bureaucrat who represents the interests of the ruling elite (Prince K. and the Tsarist state). In this sense the novel employs a group subject, the bureaucracy, which represents and upholds the Tsarist government and its attendant aristocracy. The object of the conspiracy, the anarchist group in Geneva, is a group object. Razumov is an adjuvant though he does not initially think of himself as a victim, and in fact considers himself a subject-of-the-state, where his interests and ambitions are linked to his future service to the state as a “celebrated professor” or a “privy Councillor”.

Two simple points should be emphasized. First, Under Western Eyes is structured around two conspiracy narratives, that of Haldin’s assassination of the security minister and his subsequent attempt to draw Razumov into the web, as well as the conspiracy scheme devised by the policeman/spy master, Councillor Mikulin. The latter scheme also involves manipulating Razumov (in order to spy on the Geneva anarchists).¹²

Second, this is a conspiracy novel if only because it is centered around the actions.

¹¹ See the first chapter where he offers an exegesis of his primary terms, community and society.

¹² Mikulin’s conspiracy is not a counter conspiracy, though it “counters” the anarchists’ activities, for it does not “counter” the structure of the conspiracy scheme.

and state of mind of the most despicable of political creatures, the informer.¹³ The informer occupies the role of the adjuvant or the middle man, and does the dirty work for (usually) the state and works his or her way into the company of those identified as the enemies of the state (informers “work” for the state only in as much as they work for anyone or anything) in order to bring about their destruction, that is the deaths of individuals or the dissolution of the group, or both.

The informer also fits in neatly with a central theme in Conrad’s work, betrayal. Almost every major novel by Conrad deals with this theme: Jim’s abandonment of *The Patna* passengers and his responsibilities as an officer; Kurtz’ betrayal of principle and duty to the company, and worst of all (for the values of the novel), his betrayal of European culture and values; Nostromo’s theft of the San Tome silver; and Verloc’s betrayal of Winnie, Stevie, and (even) his anarchist comrades (given his role as a double agent). To this point, however, in Conrad’s other novels betrayal involves a personal lapse, and though the stakes might involve the fate of the state or colonial enterprise, the rationale or explanation for the lapse, is, again, articulated in personal or moral terms.¹⁴ Nostromo carries the fate of the state in his lighter (out in the Golfo Placido) and on his back, but his theft of the silver is finally a personal lapse. In contrast to the informer who is lured into an act of betrayal by money or ambition, Razumov informs on Haldin out of fear, the fear of losing his tenuous social place. In this sense informing is different, and like interpellation is akin to the call of duty or service to a political cause, the protection/defense of the state. When Razumov is charged with his spying mission by the spy-master Mikulin he finds an odd satisfaction in his new calling, for this is an avocation of sorts. Indeed there is an absurd quality to his situation, for he is not really a spy nor an employee of the state, and he does not do what he does for professional purposes. Unlike Hugo’s Javert, the self-righteous law man of *Les Miserables*, Razumov has no professional or clearly determined rationale for betraying Haldin and performing his

¹³ The informer appears in *The Secret Agent* (Verloc) and in an earlier short story, “The Informer” (included in *A Set of Six*). The crucial distinction is that in these earlier texts Conrad does not examine or question the motivations of the informer, or at least those motivations have a base albeit immoral and repugnant explanation. This cannot be said of Razumov.

duties as a spy (and writing the spy reports about the Geneva anarchists). Razumov's activity as an informer is motivated by unclear and undeclared desires and needs.

As with The Secret Agent we have struck upon a kind of betrayal which is entirely new in the novel (as such) and also marks a break from the thematization (a novel about anarchists or the politics of the period) which this novel might otherwise fit in a banal way. Again this is not a political novel in so far as the novel concerns the psychological or ideological determinations which induce people, such as Razumov, to answer the call of the state, without a direct solicitation by the state. What I am driving at here is that this novel examines the way this particular form of the conspiracy narrative, here, the narrative of an informer, involves a manipulation scheme without manipulators, a conspiracy without a master conspirator. Even though Razumov ultimately follows Mikulin's orders, his initial impulse and decision to betray Haldin derives from his own consciousness, not that of an instigator, and this constitutes a break from the initial model of conspiracy, for he is not directed by a master conspirator--Mikulin simply nudges him along, as we shall see shortly. Moreover the counter conspiracy, or the response to the manipulation scheme involves the invocation of an unknown, veiled form of "righteous" power as the "victim" of the conspiracy, the counter conspirators, act on behalf of a state which does not exist (again, a state to come, as in a prophecy).

This notion of actors acting on behalf of an absent cause, is akin to Louis Althusser's concept (and term), interpellation. In a well known essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" Althusser discusses the role of interpellation in the reproduction of the relations of the state and the relations of production. Interpellation is the "call" of the state, the "call" which draws one into the relations of the state, and hails the subject, the "citizen" of the state:

I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' (Althusser 174)

The "call" is of course grounded in the call of language, or the hailing of the policeman in Althusser's example, but it is actually much more subtle and insidious than this--the conversation which entails the "call" is really an internal one, a conversation where the speakers are both aspects of the subject's unconscious.

It is important to note with regard to Althusser's understanding of ideology that Razumov does not really know why he does what he does, and much of the novel is centered around just this; his confusion about his own actions and desires. Indeed in a way the novel is comprised of Razumov's post facto rationalization and examination of his actions. His confusion is to an extent due to an ideological lapse, a moment when the way in which he has lived has been disrupted and now he must reflect on his condition as he has not done to this point. This is what Althusser means by ideology--and as Ben Brewster succinctly defines this term, ideology is "the 'lived' relation between men and their world, or a reflected form of this unconscious relation [I]t can be coherent and logical . . . by the fact that the practico-social predominates in it over the theoretical, over knowledge" (For Marx 252).¹⁵ As a "lived relation" ideology is not necessarily a matter of conscious decisions and rational process--one simply acts without apparently thinking. As we shall see in the "interview" scene with the spy master (such as he is) Mikulin, Razumov acts out the desires of Mikulin and simply drifts along, even adopting the spy master's language and speech patterns.

Razumov's passivity or subservience, as well as his resentment, founded in Haldin's disruption of his life-plans suggests Freud's conception of trauma in informative ways. Freud argues that the traumatic incident might be suffered during wartime (what we know as "shell shock" and the "thousand yard stare"), or it might concern an event when the infant was still sucking at the mother's breast, or in fact it may not be a "real" event at all.¹⁶ Freud notes that patients who suffer from trauma are "alienated from the present and the future", and resemble those who in an earlier time retreated to monasteries. Again,

Razumov suffers from Haldin's visit just as one of Freud's patients suffers from a

¹⁵ Brewster provides a glossary of Althusserian terminology in the Verso translation of For Marx.

¹⁶ I am thinking of the "click" of the (imagined) camera in "A case of paranoia running counter to psychoanalytic theory" where the "click" of the camera is simply an arbitrary noise which might have been any sound in the street.

traumatic event with which, “[i]t is as though these patients had not finished with the traumatic situation, as though they were still faced by it as an immediate task which has not been dealt with . . .” (Introductory Lectures 338-340). The traumatic incident is not a factual event (crucially, for Freud, and for our purposes, for facticity is not the stake here, but rather the symptom), but involves a retroactive placement, or a *fixation* (Freud’s term) upon a moment in the past, a moment which can never be recaptured. The time of trauma, then, is always the preterite. All narratives are grounded in the past (an inciting incident) but the distinction between an everyday narrative and a trauma narrative lies with the disposition towards the present. With the time of the narrative of trauma/abjection the abject protagonist is preoccupied with an injury apparently suffered (the traumatic “event”) which is not redressed, a latter day “wound which never heals”. This “traumatic” wound is, of course, a mark of the abject figure, the laceration or wound is the event around which the abject one weaves his or her narrative of persecution and injury.

In addition to being an informer, the other aspect of Razumov’s background which determines the narrative of this novel is that our protagonist is a fatherless child. The narrator details Razumov’s background and parentage as follows:

Mr Razumov was supposed to be the son of an Archpriest and to be protected by a distinguished nobleman--perhaps of his own distant province. But his outward appearance accorded badly with such humble origin. Such a descent was not credible. It was, indeed, suggested that Mr. Razumov was was the son of an Archpriest’s pretty daughter--which of course would put a different complexion on the matter. This also rendered intelligible the protection of the distinguished nobleman. . . . Apart from that Razumov was not known to have any social relations in the town. . . . He was always accessible and, and there was nothing secret or reserved in his life. (57-58)

Actually Razumov is not fatherless, but rather he is an illegitimate child who was orphaned by the early death of his mother as the narrator relates in passing pages later.¹⁷

Razumov does not even know the identity of his father though the narrator informs us that
¹⁷ “Officially and in fact without a family (for the daughter of the Archpriest had long been dead), no home influences had shaped his opinions or feelings” (61).

his father is Prince K, an aristocrat whose fortunes have fallen such that he is now best known as a senator, who, significantly, never avows that he is Razumov's father. Even Razumov's name is a suspect, for given that he does not know his father's identity, Sidorovitch is a questionable patronymic, as the narrator notes in the opening passage. This is a patronymic without a known referent.

In (one of two essays she has written about this novel) "The Name of the Father in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*", Josianne Paccaud points out that this preoccupation with names and naming pervades the novel. Paccaud notes, for example, that Tekla, the anarchist hanger-on and quasi servant to Mme. S, tells Razumov that "Russia is divided between "nameless Russians" and "people with names" and "complains of being without a name" (205). Similarly, one of the daughter's of Julius Laspara, the anarchist pamphleteer, has a child whose father is unnamed (Laspara does not mind, as Paccaud points out, because "maternity should be an anarchist function"), and the novel is populated with people who have lost their names to their professions: "The little attorney", "the bony student", and "the eating house keeper". Paccaud's argument here is that the lack of a father and the questionable patronymic constitute a severed relationship to a father. With Lacan's "name of the Father" in mind here, this severance is also a severed relationship to the Law and its medium, language.

One of the narrator's funnier comments about Razumov's character concerns his status as a student, and his reputation at the university: "In discussion he was easily swayed by argument and authority. With his younger compatriots he took the attitude of an inscrutable listener, a listener of the kind that hears you out intelligently and then--just changes the subject" (57). His hesitance to speak and to engage in dialogue, this silence cuts Razumov off from the world. This, again, matches Nietzsche's figure of resentment, for with his isolation and silence the world is lived through the actions of Others and so is a reactionary posture towards the world. This is not to say that the resentful one does not have a life, for the contrary everything is internalized: "It is on such soil, on swampy ground, that every weed, every poisonous plant grows, always so small, so hidden, so false, so saccharine. Here the worms of vengefulness and rancor swarm; here the air stinks of secrets and concealment . . ." (122). To his consternation, those

who encounter Razumov project a personality or identity onto him which is not only incongruous with his self-image, but also indicates that whatever he thinks of himself, and despite his reticence and anti-social behavior (in so far as he is not part of a circle of friends or a larger student community), he is a cipher, a sign.

The opening scenes and passages of the novel are crucial for they set the stage for the metamorphosis of Razumov's consciousness, as his resentment and abjection develops into a political discourse. When the novel begins Razumov has returned from his lecture at the university, and though vaguely aware of political activities around him, he is ready to settle down at his desk to write a prize essay which would not only win him acclaim but a comfortable future as a member of the bureaucracy:

Razumov, going home, reflected that having prepared all the matters of the forthcoming examination, he could now devote his time to the subject of the prize essay. He hankered after the silver medal. The prize was offered by the Ministry of Education; the names of the competitors would be submitted to the Minister himself. The mere fact of trying would be considered meritorious in the higher quarters; and the possessor of the prize would have a claim to an administrative appointment of the better sort after he had taken his degree (61).

This is an example of Conrad's grim humor, where someone arranges for the arrest and execution of another person simply because he interrupted his studies. We know, however, that Razumov is terrified from the moment he grasps the significance of Haldin's deed, for his ambitions and future, as well as his very identity, are at stake with this essay, or so he believes, and his hopes for identity and future are destroyed by contact with Haldin. In fact the prize itself is overdetermined in this respect for, as the text notes, the previous winner told Razumov after he won that prize that he must send a telegram to his family, and comments, "Won't the old people make it a festive time for the neighbors for twenty miles around our place" (61). This comment hurts Razumov for though the essay is about an academic topic, the activity of writing it is about so much more. As it was, "there was nothing of that sort [family and neighbors] for him in the world. His success would matter to no one" (61). If he succeeded and won the prize anyway, he might be a "celebrated

professor”, a “somebody” (63). How apt that the initial impetus for the action of the novel, the betrayal of a fellow student, is not a political deed such as the assassination of the hated security minister, but the resentful backlash of a petty intellectual.

Razumov’s Confessions

The novel begins with two parallel scenes: Haldin throws his bomb, or “engine” as he refers to it, and Razumov, indifferent if not oblivious to his surroundings, returns to his apartment from classes at the university. Razumov is indifferent to his present because he is thinking about the future, predicated on the essay he is about to begin. At first his anger at the bad turn of events brought about by Haldin’s arrival at his residence is piqued simply by frustration, though as the significance of the situation unfolds his response is far more complicated. With Haldin’s arrival Razumov experiences an extreme crisis of identity; in fact Razumov’s betrayal of Haldin (he later describes it as a “betrayal”), is initially motivated by his anger at the latter’s “confidence” in him: “ ‘But pardon me Victor Victorovitch. We know each other so little . . . I don’t see why you . . .’ ‘Confidence,’ said Haldin. This word sealed Razumov’s lips as if a hand had been clapped on his mouth. His brain seethed with arguments. ‘And so—here you are,’ he muttered through his teeth” (67).¹⁸

Haldin’s “confidence” is of course projected and has little to do with Razumov’s self-image, and actually provokes a identity crisis of sorts. Though Razumov knows Haldin, he is by no means a friend and he is angered that the latter has decided to complicate and jeopardize his plans, his future, simply because he believes that Razumov inspires “confidence”. Moreover, as we shall see, Razumov fiercely defends his own identity as a “rational thinker” who is clearly isolated amongst the irrational, and the very suggestion that he inspires “confidence” in the anarchists upsets his self-image. And so, when Razumov leaves Haldin in his apartment to arrange for the latter’s getaway with the anarchist sympathizer and driver, Ziemanitch, Razumov is terrified that his life, his ambitions are evaporating as this situation continues: “There goes my silver medal” (65). Although the novel does not indicate that the police are aware of what is afoot in Razumov’s apartment he has nonetheless developed a keen paranoia about state

¹⁸ These elipsises are part of the text—hereafter I will note my abbreviations.

surveillance, and he worries that the house is being watched by various under cover police operatives (notably disguised as the poor and peasants) and that he will inevitably be discovered.

To this point Razumov's life ambitions rely upon slow but steady social progress and reward, guaranteed and protected by the status quo of the state. The narrator even notes that when the bomb explodes, "The student Razumov in an access of elation forgot the dangers menacing the stability of the institutions which give rewards and appointments." While this state is the Tsarist autocracy it supports the liberal institutions upon which Razumov predicates his future: the university, the bureaucracy, and the attendant (and nascent) middle class who run these institutions. As a fatherless child with no family and no fortune education offers Razumov a chance for social advancement (economic) and acclaim (class prestige). The arrival of Haldin throws these plans into turmoil from which he realizes he can only extricate himself by betraying his "guest": "Others had fathers, mothers, brothers, relations, connections, to move heaven and earth on their behalf--he had no one. The very officials which sentenced him some morning would forget his existence before sunset" (69). Revenge, the deed of resentment is Razumov's solution to this dilemma.¹⁹

Razumov's increasingly acute sense of a lack in his life, a lack of family, a father, a social position and even a lack of nation, and these terms are more and more intertwined are, perhaps, inseparable. Indeed in this initial conversation with Haldin we encounter the conjunction of the nation and the father; Haldin has a claim to a father, a family, and a nation, Russia, while Razumov's claim to any and all of these is tenuous at best. In a single stroke Haldin brings together nation and family. After acknowledging that he may die for his cause ("My spirit shall go on warring in some Russian body till all falsehood is swept out of the world"), Haldin comments that "Men like me leave no posterity" (70).

¹⁹ Another passage from Nietzsche seems relevant here: "[T]his plant [resentment] blooms best today among anarchists and anti-semites--where it has always bloomed, in hidden places, like the violet, though with a different odor. . . . it causes us no surprise to see a repetition in such circles of attempts often made before . . . to sanctify revenge under the name of justice . . ." (73-74). We see here how the "hidden places" of resentment combines with the struggle against the secret, veiled or hidden power behind the conspiracy, in the hidden counter-conspiracy, to form a complete discourse of depoliticization.

Such a comment takes us back to Razumov's preoccupation about his own lack of family, and though Haldin shall "leave no posterity", as he then tells Razumov, he will leave a mother and a sister who has "trustful eyes" (a loaded comment in a novel about eyes and seeing), might "marry well" and "have children". He adds that he is unlike his father who was a bureaucrat and "[a] simple servant of God--a true Russian in his way" and more like his (maternal) uncle who was a military officer, and executed by Tsar Nicholas. These comments about family are intertwined with comments about what it is to be Russian. A Russian has family and a family which is steeped in the history of Russia itself. Hence, a Russian is born, not made, and a true Russian can trace his or her Russianess through an established lineage--Razumov lacks all of this of course and so holds onto his essay prize as though it were his patrimony, his birthright as a Russian.

What we have here are two competing nationalist discourses. On the one hand Razumov has cast his lot with a brutal and autocratic regime which offers support for a poor young man such as himself, and on the other hand, as we shall see, though an anarchist at a rhetorical level, Haldin is actually an ultra nationalist. Razumov seems increasingly diffident in championing his vision of Russia and what it means to be a Russian and this is apparent immediately after this first conversation with Haldin when he eventually finds the get-away driver, Ziemanitch, in a drunken stupor in the barn attached to a squalid Petersburg eatery.²⁰ Razumov blinded with rage and in a kind of stupor of his own he viciously beats the driver, for his fate now seems sealed. When he finally calms down and collects himself (only after his beating--stick breaks) he demonstrates a certain class contempt for the Russian people, and thinks about the need for a strong leader, an autocratic government: "Ziemanitch's passionate surrender to sorrow and consolation had baffled him. That was the people. A true Russian man! Razumov was glad he had beaten that brute--the 'bright soul' [Haldin's earlier description of Ziemanitch] of the other. . . . Between the two he was done for. . . . But children had their masters. 'Ah the stick, the stick, the stern hand, thought Razumov, longing for the power to hurt and destroy" (77).

As noted above, at this moment Razumov identifies with the autocracy, an identification with the sadism of the state. Ziemanitch also represents a "Russian soul", the

²⁰ This scene is certainly reminiscent of Balzac's rooming houses and eateries, especially those of Pere Goriot.

kind of ultra nationalism which he rejects and reviles, and as he wanders the streets after his fate is effectively sealed with that of Haldin, he thinks again about what it means to be Russian: "Razumov stamped his foot--and under the soft carpet of snow felt the hard ground of Russia, inanimate, cold, inert, like a sullen and tragic mother hiding her face under a winding sheet--his native soil!--his very own--without a fireside, without a heart!" (78). With this passage we see the convergence of family and nation, thus, ideology as a "lived relation" in the visceral sense defined above. The earlier call for order, for the strong leader, is repeated as Razumov thinks about that the "conflicting aspirations of a people" , a "babble of voices", should be better entrusted to a "man--strong and one" (79). This thought culminates with the following passage: "' Haldin means disruption' . . . [my ellipsis] Obscurantism is better than the light of incendiary torches. The seed germinates in the night. Out of the dark soil springs the perfect plant" (79). This is a peculiar self portrait which is developing here, as Razumov is gradually defining himself in the very terms of his abjection, his outcast situation, and seeking to counter the nationalist anarchism of Haldin with an autocratic nationalist discourse of his own; the leader as father, the government as the great equalizer and protector of orphans (Razumov).

First, however, Razumov must extricate himself from his predicament and a betrayal of Haldin is, he believes, his only way out, though this also provokes a crisis of conscience, which he attempts to reconcile and quiet: "Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience. And how is my conscience engaged here; by what common bond of faith, of common conviction, am I obliged to let that fanatical idiot drag me down with him? On the contrary--every obligation of true courage is the other way" (82). These thoughts about betrayal are notably preceded by a scene where Razumov hallucinates and believes that he sees the prostrate figure of Haldin lying in the street just as he left him lying on his bed in his rooms--in order to move forward Razumov steps on his chest: "' Exactly as if alive! Seemed to breathe! And right in my way too!' . . . [my ellipsis] He made a few steps and muttered through his set teeth -- 'I shall give him up' " (82).

It is not surprising then that at this new moment of crisis Razumov turns to his birth

(biological) father, the aristocrat Prince K. and here we see the ideological convergence of political discourse and the family. Actually we have been set-up for this convergence, for prior to dashing to "the K Palace" there is a curious paragraph about the "naked terror" of loneliness which Razumov felt, especially when felt as a certain "moral solitude". This paragraph is followed by an even odder note, and marks the early appearance of our keyword, confession. We learn that Razumov felt a sudden urge to return to his rooms so as "to pour out a full confession in passionate words that would stir the whole being of that man to its innermost depths; that would end in embraces and tears; in an incredible fellowship of souls--such as the world had never see. It was sublime" (83)! This urge is so contrary to the self-image which Razumov has cultivated to this point, and to his politics, however inchoate these might be (we know he despises the anarchists), that we can only think of it as a longing for family though family in this instance is understood in broad and non-traditional terms. Razumov desperately wants to be loved, to belong.

While standing bewildered in the street, after he has beaten Ziemnitch (and thereby thwarted Haldin's escape plan) Razumov notices a passing whisker we are taken back to the originary vision which haunts him of Prince K's coach flying past in the street. This vision in turn invokes the urge to be held in the arms of a powerful authority which overwhelms this momentary idealistic urge (however silly it might appear). So, Razumov flies off to the K Palace to confess to authority, ironically his own father. Again, this action, the recourse to the arms of Prince K, entails a confession which manifests faith in authority, or rather an authority, a person who embodies power and, hence, the "truth". The kernel of "truth", the information he is about to relate, is not as important to Razumov as the display of loyalty and the (anticipated) acceptance conferred by the father confessor, in this instance Prince K. Razumov's appeal for acknowledgement, for confirmation and place is only covertly acknowledged with a weak handshake, a sign which only the desperate would read as an affirmation, and Prince K whisks him off to see his security friend, General T. Thus, the father turns to the police.

At this juncture confession, or an act of faith towards the state, is certainly something which Razumov is prepared to do (he refers to it as an act of "conscience". But a confession is often accompanied by an interrogation, and the introduction of the security

apparatus into this mix cements the confessional mode and its relation to the conspiracy form which will dominate the text from this point. The first interrogation scene in Under Western Eyes develops when Razumov betrays Haldin's identity as the assassin and reveals his whereabouts to Prince K and General T. The General comments to Prince K after the latter has informed him of Haldin's identity and whereabouts, and after a brief exchange with Razumov, "We want that bird alive. It will be the devil if we can't make him sing a little before we are done with him" (88). This comment reveals that the state security forces will torture Haldin and then execute him, hence, to be "done with him". In the subsequent exchange with the General, Razumov oddly defends Haldin's character stating emphatically, "Haldin will never speak" (89). In a significant turn, Razumov leaves Ziemianitch out of the story in order to save himself--his strong political beliefs are *apres coup*. After telling the General that Haldin expects to make a rendezvous with a sledge at the seventh lamp-post on the upper end of Karabelnaya, the scene is set for Haldin's arrest and execution. This point is punctuated by the General's repeated vow that "they shall be destroyed" (92).

Razumov's conscience is clearly racked with guilt, an odd inversion which seems apt given the images of his brain on the rack. The point is, however, that Razumov is beginning to display a bad conscience about what he has done, and when he does not resent Haldin evermore, he turns the situation around so that he is martyred or persecuted by his own actions. Much of this is brought on by his response to the General, when he actually sees the power he has defended with his act of betrayal. This authority is a brutal and irrational father figure, the kind of power which he rejects in the first place, autocracy. So, Razumov's guilty conscience warps his thoughts and on the way back to his apartment he hallucinates that Haldin is lying in the street in the snow, and he imagines that he has stepped on his chest in his forward progress.

If Razumov has experienced some regret at this point, this regret is erased by a new wave of anger and resentment towards Haldin. As he tells Haldin on his return, and in a double entendre, this was a "nightmare of a walk" (96) though the latter begins another political discussion. Razumov is taken aback at Haldin's commitment, or at least his willingness to take (make) drastic actions, on the one hand, and his tolerance and

generosity on the other. While Haldin is talking, however, Razumov's anger rises, though he once again thinks about how the idealistic Haldin will submit to the halter under torture. The latter disrupts this fantasy and interjects aloud: "Why be anxious for me? They can kill my body, but they cannot exile my soul from this world. I tell you what--I believe in this world so much that I cannot conceive eternity otherwise than as a very long life. That is perhaps the reason I am so ready to die" (98). This discourse of martyrdom recurs when Razumov argues that Haldin seems intent on "haunting" this world, though Haldin responds, "Truly, the oppressors of thought which quickens the world, the destroyers of souls which aspire to perfection of human dignity, they shall be haunted. As to the destroyers of my mere body, I have forgiven them beforehand" (98). Razumov can only comment to himself that Haldin is "mad".

These reference to haunting and the notion that Haldin represents something permanent or "eternal", something which leaves a posterity despite Haldin's earlier claim, invokes Razumov's sense that he does not belong, that he has no relation to nation, to community. This is evident when, as the two men continue their political discussion, Razumov blurts out that he is only a "man with a mind" with no "domestic tradition", and argues that the anarchists actions threaten his very identity, his "national past". In a flash of insight Haldin grasps the significance of Razumov's declarations and he so stands up and prepares to leave. Razumov tells him, significantly, "What were we to do together till midnight? Sit here opposite each other and think of your--your--shambles [the detritus of a slaughterhouse]" (101). Again, the tortured figure of Haldin haunts Razumov. The novel tells us that twenty four hours later Razumov was thinking about Haldin in prison "looking forward to the consummation of his martyrdom" (107).

The crux of this conversation, however, involves Haldin's undecidable or ambiguous questioning of Razumov--Haldin is apparently only interested in engaging him in dialogue and asks that he explain the positions he takes, and the plans he has made for his life, another example of his inability to meaningfully communicate with others, to engage in significant dialogue. These perhaps innocent questions are met with an explosion of anger: "As to ties, the only ties I have in the world are social. I must get acknowledged in some ways before I can act at all. I sit here working . . . [part of the text]"

And don't you think I am working for progress too? I've got to find my own ideas of the true way . . . [part of the text] Pardon me . . . but I haven't inherited a revolutionary inspiration together with a resemblance from an uncle" (100). Again, Razumov's thoughts about "acknowledgement" refer to the longing to belong to a community and the attendant discourse of nation.

This conversation with Haldin knocks Razumov off balance in a significant way. In addition to the collapse of his plan for social achievement and status, he realizes that his ideas of himself and his self-idealization are ridiculous and here lies his anger at Haldin. We see again the peculiar reversal where Razumov envisions himself as a victim of torture: "His mind hovered on the borders of delirium. He heard himself suddenly saying, 'I confess,' as a person might do on the rack. 'I am on the rack,' he thought. He felt ready to swoon" (103). This inversion is important for the argument at hand here for it clearly demonstrates the conjunction of confession and abjection or a discourse of self-pity. Moreover, the link between Razumov's discourse of abjection and confession, and nationalism is apparent when, after Haldin has left unknowingly to meet his fate, Razumov examines his now articulated motivations and politics which he summarizes on a scrap of paper which he nails (with a penknife) to the wall over his bed:

History not Theory
Patriotism not Internationalism
Evolution not Revolution
Direction not Destruction
Unity not Disruption (104)

This declaration is apparently a kind of "forced" confession of ideals and principles, though by nailing it to the wall of his room Razumov is soliciting the gaze of the state and making a public declaration or confession of faith like that of Luther's 99 theses or a manifesto pasted onto the walls of the streets of Petersburg (and Razumov even refers to it as a confession in the delirium mentioned above). Razumov takes the declaration down when he hears a servant girl in the hallway--for whom did he post this manifesto? In a darkly funny way, Razumov's solicitation of the gaze of authority ("father look at me") finds its addressee in an unexpected way. When Razumov returns from his lectures the next day he

finds his landlady outside his rooms, worried that he has fallen in with “nihilists” because the police have searched his rooms and literally turned the contents upside down and piled them into a heap. The scene is reminiscent of one which many people who have been accosted by the state might recognize, the violent intrusion into and violation of one’s intimacy.²¹ He stares dejectedly at the pile of his belongings, which is mostly made up of his books and notes, the things which embody in a reified sense, his very being: “And now he saw it lying uppermost, spread out, smoothed out even and covering all the confused pile of pages, the record of his intellectual life for the last three years. It had not been flung there. It had been placed there--smoothed out, too! He guessed in that an intention of profound meaning--or perhaps some inexplicable mockery” (113). This “confession of faith”, Razumov’s manifesto of political identity is of deep personal significance to him (of course) but there is the lingering sense that he is ashamed or afraid that it somehow “reveals” him. It is a confession which is too dangerous. We should also bear in mind that the kind of search of which he is the victim is unsettling and intrusive, but even more so for Razumov’s fragile identity. Again, this identity is still bound up with the authority, however distasteful he might have found General T’s behavior, and the search simply underlines his fear that he is fundamentally a cipher, a sign upon which others project meaning.

As for the significance of the manifesto’s content, though Razumov rejects the brutality of the Tsarist regime he still holds onto the liberal institutions which it supports, notably, the university. This is apparent in his opposition to revolution to which he opposes is “evolution”. Education is related to the complexities of culture, as Raymond Williams and before him, Matthew Arnold, have written extensively, and culture turns on the notion that consciousness, whether as intellectual consciousness or national consciousness, can be cultivated, that is, nurtured.²² This notion certainly counters the

²¹ The well known auction of the bankrupt Arnoux’ belongings in Flaubert’s L’education sentimentale, the heap of phony artifacts and bric-a-brac which Frederic has so fetishized to this point comes to mind (as a literary analog of sorts), but the difference is that Madame Arnoux and her husband can walk away from this heap of stuff without a breakdown in character. This is not the case for Razumov.

²² See Arnold’s Culture and Anarchy and Williams’ Culture and Society as well as The Long Revolution.

nationalist discourse of Haldin as well as the irrational and Philistine representative of the Tsarist state, General T. In an inchoate way Razumov is attempting to articulate a notion of the modern liberal nation state, a point we will return to shortly.

The pivotal moment in this novel, the moment when Razumov's identity and the form of its expression metamorphoses is Razumov's "interview" with Councillor Gregory Mikulin. To this point Razumov has assumed he will be pushed and badgered even threatened as he thought he was by General T., and so when he is told that he will in fact be "interviewed" by Councillor Mikulin he is very disappointed. The struggle of wills and the archetypal fight to the death between the master and the slave is replaced by a newer and insidious paradigm:

Razumov, who had prepared his will and his intelligence to encounter General T--- himself was profoundly troubled. All the moral bracing up against the possible excesses of power and passion went for nothing before this sallow man, who wore a full unclipped beard. It was fair, thin, and very fine. The light fell in coppery gleams in the protuberances of a high, rugged forehead. And the aspect of the broad, soft physiognomy was so homely and rustic that the careful parting of the hair seemed a pretentious affectation (120).

This "inquisitor" is a far cry from the fierce and overwhelming General T., and so does not mirror the power relations upon which he has predicated his struggle for being.

Razumov's expectations are further dashed during the "interview" with Mikulin. At the beginning of the "interview" Razumov persists with his fantasy about a great struggle with autocratic power and conjures up in his mind "an old print of the Inquisition", and he even imagines himself, actually his brain separate from his body drawn on the rack. The meeting with Mikulin, where Razumov perches on a sofa and Mikulin faces him sitting in a chair, parallels that of an analyst and an analysand, rather than that of prisoner facing a demanding and overwhelming authority figure and possible torturer. Like many therapy patients Razumov arrives late and blurts an extended excuse for his tardiness, before Mikulin has even spoken to him! The situation and the nature of their dialogue is also notable for Mikulin says very little, as though he is merely intent upon providing a forum

for Razumov to fill with his verbiage. The text even displays how Mikulin speaks in broken or unfinished sentences as though prompting Razumov to finish the thought, to fill the blank space: “ ‘Yes. I [Mikulin] have listened with interest. I comprehend in a measure your . . . But, indeed, you are mistaken in what you . . . ’ Councillor Mikulin uttered a series of broken sentences. Instead of finishing them he glanced down his beard. It was a deliberate curtailment which somehow made the phrases more impressive” (122). Mikulin goes on to “clarify” the purpose of his request for Razumov’s presence, informing Razumov that he is not a “suspect”, the word Razumov supplies, contrary to the latter’s understanding of the situation. Nor is he a “misunderstood person”, as Mikulin prefers to describe those whom he interrogates. This scene entails a process of interpellation, with the unfinished sentences, making Razumov a kind of partner and soliciting Razumov’s desire. After all, Razumov asks questions, and Mikulin reassures him that he inspires “confidence”. Mikulin is the grand ironizer, not the grand inquisitor, for he makes the self destabilize the self.

This last characterization functions as a further goad, taunting Razumov’s inflated sense of his own superiority: “Razumov smiled without bitterness. The renewed sense of his intellectual superiority sustained him in the hour of danger” (122). The bulk of the exchange, then, concerns Razumov’s attempt to impress Mikulin, to separate or to distinguish himself from others. He continues to insist upon his ability “to think correctly”, and describes himself as a “thinking reed”, a true image of pomposity and self-pity, and Mikulin simply goads him along, fully aware of the transference (in a psychoanalytic sense) which Razumov is developing, the more he speaks about himself.²³ This situation is hardly comparable to that of a normal police interrogation, or at least as we might understand it, and it is certainly very different from the Inquisition. This is a modern and 20th form of authority, for Mikulin is the harbinger of the ranks who will replace the Prince Ks and the General Ts.

To return to Razumov’s image of his brain being drawn on the rack, as well as the substance of the exchange with Mikulin, this image and the self-representation which he presents to Mikulin is of a rational and thinking person in the midst of chaos and ignorance.

²³ A reference to Pascal and Cherneshevsky.

In response to Mikulin's statement and question, "You are angry. . . . Is that reasonable".

Razumov bursts out:

I am reasonable. I am even--permit me to say--a thinker, though to be sure, this name nowadays seems to be the monopoly of hawkers of revolutionary wares, the slaves of some French or German thought--devil knows what foreign notions. But I am not an intellectual mongrel. I think like a Russian. I think faithfully---and I take the liberty to call myself a thinker. It is not a forbidden word, as far as I know (123).

Mikulin's statement "You are angry" provokes Razumov's angry response, but he takes the exchange a step further and shows his hand, that what is at stake is identification with nation and declares, "I am not a mongrel". As with the expected power dynamics of the interview, Razumov defines himself against others. He is "reasonable" not "irrational", not a "mongrel"--he is a true "Russian". Clearly the nationalistic basis of this self definition is highly subjective and tied up with Razumov's self idealization as a pure "thinker" amongst ignorant "mongrels" such as Ziemantich, the "bright Russian soul" (again, Haldin's phrase). Indeed, as the meeting with Mikulin progresses Razumov seems to lose control of himself and begins to rant uncontrollably about the anarchists and his anger and disdain for them. About Haldin he specifically says that he would step on him if he were lying on the floor of the office, a reference to his own vision of Haldin's phantom lying in the snow covered streets. He states, "I hated him simply because I am sane" (127). To name himself a "Russian" he must denounce the "mongrels". This is of course Razumov's political stance, that, in the face of irrational autocratic power and anarchist reaction he is the sane representative of "independent thinking--of detached thinking" (129).

Razumov also rages against the anarchists because they do not know him, though they think they do ("confidence") and recognize his special character: "I begin to think there is something about me which people don't seem to be able to make out" (129). This is, of course, a reference to Haldin's insistence that he is a friendly acquaintance and an anarchist sympathizer, a mistake which the other anarchists also make, notably the naive Kostia. To this point however, he has not articulated his anger in this way, though we have teased this out of the text, and it is significant that in the quote above he refers to himself as someone

who "people don't seem to be able to make out", a curious echo of Mikulin's phrase, a "misunderstood person". Razumov fears that he is either mistaken, by the anarchists and Mikulin, as a sympathizer, or, even worse, that, again, he is merely a cipher onto whom others pile character and personality. The interrogation session, such as it is, is successful precisely because Mikulin has provided the setting in which Razumov feels called upon, interpellated, to announce himself, to make a public confession of faith. Razumov offers up a rage of difference, the anger of the "thinking reed", precisely because he knows he is a "misunderstood person" in all of the ambiguity of this last phrase. Mikulin seems to put words into the mouth of the "thinking reed" who then loudly parrots them as though they were his own.

Mikulin's well known question, "Where to" (in response to Razumov's proclamation that he wants to retire) which ends "Part One" of the novel, defines the dilemma Razumov has backed into. Again, he can face down authority figures, and the more ruthless and irrational their anger and arbitrary their exercise of power, the better (General T is dismissed as a "goggle eyed fool"). This is a power dynamic which Razumov can reconcile with the image he has of himself, and again, in so far as his self-importance, his own sense of power and being, is predicated on resistance to this overwhelming and unjust force, his being is brought about as a most negative form of determination. Razumov literally defines himself against this force even as this force interpellates him.

The answer to the question, "where to?", is deferred until Part Four of the novel when the narrator more or less presents the "secret diary" verbatim, the conspiracy revealed through the confession. Mikulin calls Razumov again for another meeting but this meeting takes place in the offices of an oculist, an odd cover if only because it seems so overdetermined with association with the title and the preoccupation with eyes and spies, and so somewhat deliberately absurd. The points to note about this meeting, are first, that Razumov throws himself into Mikulin's hands and accepts a mission as an informer on the Geneva anarchist circle: "It as to be a dangerous mission to Geneva for obtaining, at a critical moment, absolutely reliable information from a very inaccessible quarter of the inner revolutionary circle" (293). The second point to note is that, again, Razumov has an

intolerable desire to announce himself, a tendency which Mikulin exploits in the “interview” and so Razumov becomes more and more the servant of the state, the same autocracy which he ostensibly abhors: “In short Councillor Mikulin knew what to say. This skill is to be inferred clearly from the mental and psychological self-confession, self-analysis of Mr. Razumov’s written journal—the pitiful resource of a young man who had near him no trusted intimacy, no natural affection to turn to” (293).

To this point we have examined the way in which the discourse of conspiracy, in conjunction with confession and resentment/abjection, develops and insinuates its way into Razumov’s thinking and expression and finally overwhelms his consciousness. When one thinks of confession in Under Western Eyes, however, two confession scenes particularly come to mind, rather than the scenes we have focused upon to this point: the confession to Natalia and the decisive confession before the anarchists. We will consider these confessions shortly, though prior to these scenes the anarchist circle is introduced, that is, Peter Ivanovitch, the charismatic leader of the circle, Sophia, Peter’s cohort (who is a character in the mold of Emma Goldman) and the pathetic servant woman to the Egeria of the anarchists, Madame S, who is simply known as Tekla. In this interlude we are also introduced to Haldin’s sister and mother. The sister, Natalia, also functions as a kind of foil for the narrator as he engages her at length in conversation about Russia, Russians (the Russian character) and Russian politics. To an extent these conversations are important to the development of political discourse in the novel as a whole, and though they are not immediately relevant to the argument at hand they are worthy of a brief examination. Razumov also has several interesting conversations with all of these characters, particularly the anarchists, which reveals the transformations he has undergone since his departure from St. Petersburg, especially the manner in which his anger has become increasingly internalized and so metamorphosed into resentment and abjection.²⁴

As mentioned above, the narrator’s conversations contribute to a large part of the

²⁴ The temporal structure of the novel is interesting for it is not as linear as Conrad’s other work, such as Nostromo, or The Secret Agent. The result is that the authority and narrative function of the narrator, the layer of mediation, is reinforced if not thrust into the foreground and so undermines the text’s claim to authenticity. Boris Ford provides a useful sketch of the novel’s time-line in the introduction to the Penguin edition of Under Western Eyes.

political discourse of this novel and provide some insight into the significance or meaning of the title of this novel. It is worthwhile to consider a representative passage such as the initial exchange when the “teacher of languages’ first meets the two ladies and informs them of the assassination in St. Petersburg. They understand that Haldin is probably involved and worry that there will be repercussions. Natalia adds, however, that, “concord is not very far off”, and when the narrator is perplexed she responds: “You think it is a class conflict, or a conflict of interests, as social contests are with you in Europe. But it is not that at all. It is something quite different” (134). The narrator concedes the point to Natalia and interjects the following thought about Russian politics:

That propensity of lifting every problem from the plane of the understandable by means of some sort of mystic expression, is very Russian. I knew her well enough to have discovered her scorn for all the practical forms of political liberty known to the western world. I suppose one must be a Russian to understand Russian simplicity, a terrible corroding simplicity in which mystic phrases clothe a naive and hopeless cynicism.
(134)

Whether one wants to call the narrator’s discourse in this passage essentialist or racist it certainly turns on nationalist stereotypes and notions of cultural relativism which are all too common in contemporary identity politics. For our purposes, however, the narrator and Natalia share a perception of national identity with the anarchists and even Razumov: that there is a “Russian” national identity and so an identifiable Russian character and way of thinking. Moreover, this identity and ways of thinking is impenetrable or opaque to “western eyes”, hence the title. This is clearly the narrator’s position, even though it is articulated by several of the characters, and despite Razumov’s rejection of Haldin’s notion of the “bright Russian soul”, exemplified by the peasant Ziemanitch. Though Razumov rejects this “Russian” character, the basis of his rejection is by no means a repudiation of this way of understanding the nation and national identity. Indeed, it is a crucial aspect of Razumov’s self image that he represents the possibility of an alternative Russian character, the “rational being” in contrast to the irrational peasant or mystical martyr. This way of thinking about nationalism and the nation is reinforced over and over again by the narrator.

the “Englishman”, who persistently addresses his “western readers” and announces several times throughout the novel that “western readers” cannot hope to understand some parts of the novel or appreciate Razumov’s predicament, for this is all alien to our “western” ken.²⁵ Interestingly, the quintessential “Westerner” is, we finally realize, not a Frenchman or a German, but an Englishman.²⁶

This essentialist even racist notion of nation and nationalism (the discourse of what it is to be the progeny of a nation) is relevant to conspiracy and confession in two respects. In the first instance, according to this conception of nationalism one must be of the nation as of a social group in order to comprehend what the nation is about. In contemporary parlance, “it’s a Russian thing” which non-Russians cannot understand or even begin to discern. The nation and the discourse of nation, here, are not veiled though access to them, the ability to scrutinize and question the nation (and what it means to be Russian or German) certainly entails privilege and membership in a *cognoscenti*. As we established earlier conspiracy and confession turn on this notion that something is difficult to understand or discern, and this something is often the kin of the “truth” if not the “truth” itself.

Also, with conspiracy and confession social relations are necessarily reduced to the machinations of individuals, thereby precluding the kind of abstract understanding of nation or social relations which we find with any basic class analysis (and this does not necessarily entail Marx or Marxism). This conception of nation does exactly the same thing and actually functions to dismiss any kind of structural critique of the nation, such as a class analysis, and shrouds the result in mystery. Again, “but it is not that [class struggle] at all”.

As for the the “hopeless cynicism” to which the narrator refers in the passage above, this is by no means counter to the predominant notion of nation, and in fact

²⁵ This actually begins in the opening pages when the narrator notes that a young Englishman would never “find himself Razumov’s situation”.

²⁶ Several critics have commented on the references to “English” and “Englishman”, notably Frank Kermode. “English” is an identity for a certain alien if not queer (in a traditional sense of this word) position, outside the milieu.

buttresses the ever thickening atmosphere of conspiracy and confession.²⁷ A couple of scenes come to mind here, such as Natalia and the narrator's discussion of Razumov's itinerary through Stuttgart and his relationship with a well known and suspect anarchist in that city, one Father Zosim ("Calumny is a weapon of our government too [that of the Tsar]" (160).), and particularly the description of the anarchist leader and auteur, Peter Ivanovitch. Like Natalia, Peter is a Russian nationalist, and a mystical one at that, and one who also eschews class analysis of Russia's problems for his own brand of "feminism".²⁸ Peter is a "feminist" who believes that Russia is a classless society ruled by an autocratic Tsar and his "unclean bureaucracy"--Russia's salvation is the "Russian woman". Much of his feminism is laid out in his autobiography, titled The Chain, about his escape from the Tsar's prison, facilitated by a file given to whom by a woman whose own lover died in prison, and his subsequent travails and travels through forests and across many lands, ending on the shores of the Suez Canal (Conrad clearly has 19th century literary-political figures such as Lord Byron in mind here). This book is perhaps the best textual evidence of Conrad's thoughts about confession and its implications and potential as a political discourse, for it is "over the top" self promotion a kind of heroic picaresque tale and romance, where the hero is finally saved by the compassion and valor of a simple peasant woman and her honest husband, a blacksmith. In conjunction with the pamphleteering of the anarchist Julius Laspara, this is evidence of Conrad's suspicion of written professions of faith.

Of course Peter is a terrible tyrant towards the women in the novel for he bullies and takes advantage of his aristocratic sponsor in Geneva. Mme. S, and he is particularly

²⁷ The narrator is of course preoccupied with "cynicism" and politics and later spouts the well known passage about revolution and revolutionaries. The revolution is, in his view, often taken over from the idealists by "tyrannical hypocrites", which has led some, such as F.R. Leavis, to vaunt Conrad as an anti-Bolshevik before the fact (the Russian revolution). Whatever Lenin's faults, he has little in common with the model in mind, Peter Ivanovitch.

²⁸ Consider the following passage: "There are in his book whole pages of self-analysis whence emerges like a white figure from a dark confused sea the conviction of woman's spiritual superiority--his new faith confessed since in several volumes" (148).

abusive towards her servant woman, Tekla.²⁹ When Razumov meets Peter he has in an odd way also met his ideal, for Peter is the master double agent, and notably the intellectual of the very movement he undermines. The difference here is that Peter, like his predecessor Verloc in The Secret Agent, is aware and calculated in his actions whereas Razumov is not.

Razumov has already met his doppelganger in Haldin, and in the course of his conversations with the other anarchists, and subsequent to his encounter with Peter, he begins to assume his victim's identity. The doppelganger has an odd function for it is at once a kind of haunting and a kind of crutch, an "off the shelf" personality, a way out of a crisis of identity. Again, Razumov functions as a kind of cipher, and in these conversations with Tekla and (afterwards) with the other anarchist leader figure, Sophia, he retreats into the world and thought of his victim, the person and politics he apparently loathes. Sophia in particular pushes this change in Razumov's behavior even as she is perhaps the only character in the novel who has any real insight into his true identity, however misdirected she might be (in this insight). This is due in part to Razumov's recognition that she is both honest and intelligent, unlike the others, and because she mentions that she has received a letter from a fellow anarchist in St. Petersburg which notes that on the day in question Razumov attended his lectures and calmly took notes. This detail, the reference to Razumov's notebook and note taking obviously reminds him of his activity in Geneva, that is his role as a double agent, and more to the point, an informer. In a weird way he explains his actions on the day in question and begins to echo Haldin's own story and words: "I turned into a narrow side street, you understand, . . . I felt inclined to lie down and go to sleep" (253). This story refers to Haldin's escape narrative, and Razumov even adopts his description of his (Haldin's) entry into Razumov's building: "I went up like a shadow. It was a murky morning. The stairs were dark. I glided up like

²⁹ Mme. S is a parody of a late 19th and early 20th century aristocratic radical, whose shallow political analysis, tinged with scorn for the poor and anti-semitism, is only matched by her weird affinity for mysticism and soothsaying. It is shocking that critics of substance have spent so much time and ink explaining the politics of the anarchists who are, to this reader, caricatures, and a far cry from actual intellectual and revolutionary figures of the time.

a phantom. Fate? Luck? What do you think?" (253).³⁰

In addition to this doubling of Haldin's narrative (and language) at this juncture Razumov begins to speak in doubled language, to respond to Sophia's questions with ironic or irony tinged answers such as the following response to Sophia's conjecture about his political motivations: "I can't speak for the dead. As for myself, I can assure you that my conduct was dictated by necessity and by the sense of--well--retributive justice" (256). In a later moment Razumov even uses the same phrase which Haldin used to describe Ziemanitch, and then marvels at his own duplicity: "'The horses of Ziemanitch! The free soul of Ziemanitch!' Razumov took a savage delight in the loud utterance of that name, which had never before crossed his lips audibly" (266).

Of course Razumov's motivations were indeed those of retribution, and irrational and petty retribution at that, and Sophia's question (above) is guided by the sense that something is eating Razumov from the inside out, a bitterness which she noticed from the first when she comments that he must have been "bitten by something bitter in the cradle", the lack of a father, a comment which only nurtures Razumov's anger (he asks her if means Russia to which she replies that she does). Later Spohia comments that he is keeping something back, and not being forthright in his answers: "You are a silent man. Too silent perhaps. You are feeding on some bitterness of your own" (251). At this juncture Razumov has experience a change for he has internalized his bitterness and can only speak in ironic or doubled language. Irony is the speech of bad faith, the mode of those who fear open expression and revelation, and so hide in doubled and veiled language. As Sophia tells him, "Remember, Razumov, that women, children, and revolutionists hate irony, which is the negation of all saving instincts, of all faith, of all devotion, of all action" (270).

This doubled and ironic speech marks a shift in Razumov's character and the quality of the confession he writes. To return to the initial discussion about confession and interpellation, to this point the Razumov has moved from a confession of *exomologesis* where he has persisted in his attempts to externalize and enunciate his identity. The confession is a declaration directed towards others, as in "here I am, recognize me for what

³⁰ Also see Razumov's image of himself as imprisoned and martyred, on page 247.

I declare myself to be". His identity is of course that of the lonely and somewhat martyred "rational reed", surrounded and nearly overwhelmed by a nation of drunken, ignorant, and irrational peasants and so even as he demands that others recognize him, the terms of recognition are predicated on the diminishment of others. Moreover even as Razumov rants about his identity he also declares himself a victim, a tortured subject in much the same way he imagines Haldin to have suffered at the hands of the state inquisition and General T. The high point of this feverish arrogant rant is reached during the Mikulin interview, but as noted earlier at this juncture Razumov's confession undergoes a dramatic change, for he begins to internalize the principle for which he suffers. Simply put, whereas before Razumov acted to protect his interests in as much they were intertwined with the existing authorities, the Tsarist state, now he has merged his narrative of identity with that of the principles at stake in this debacle. The "rational reed" must protect the "truth" even if his only confidant is the odd Councillor Mikulin.

This internalization is odd in so far as the entity which he protects does not exist, that is, the state of Razumov's ideal is simply a list of simplistic declarations inscribed on a scrap of paper. As silly as this image is there is a certain insight here (on Conrad's part) into the political psychology of the modern state, for Razumov's actions, as stated earlier are motivated by the perception that his self interests are intertwined with welfare of the state and then, that the state, even a non-existent or ideal state (the "Russia" of Razumov's imagination) represents a higher principle, the "truth". The defense of the truth is a reactionary response (in a literal sense of reactionary), indeed a kind of visceral or felt response, and a particular form of interpellation. With Althusser's example the policeman calls out and so hails one as a citizen-subject: "This is the Law, I am the Law". Here, however, Razumov represents the law for himself, in way with which we are familiar today, as with the nosy neighbor who calls the police and invokes the law, or the everyday snitch who informs on some perceived wrong doing.

This internalization and the attendant conflation of one's individual fate with that of the nation/state is critical for some of the concluding points I want to make, though it also plays out in the narrative as Razumov's ever increasing tendency to speak ironically in "doubled" words and phrases. This tendency finally culminates with the secret diary, the

(declared) basis of the novel and the the secret notes about the anarchists, which he dutifully sends back to Mikulin (lest anyone think he has become a double agent, he is in many ways still the same lackey to authority we met at the beginning of the novel). The confessions to Natalia and the anarchists bring the narrative to a close, but the character of this closure is of course the basis of this paper and so these confessions merit some examination.

Actually Razumov makes two confessions to Natalia, one in person and the other in writing; that is, one is oral and the other is textual, a doubling of conspiracy-type in two senses, which I will explain by example. The oral confession comes about when he visits the two women, Haldin's sister and mother, and finds only the latter at home, for Natalia and the narrator, the teacher of languages, have been looking for him throughout Geneva. In their absence Razumov spoke with Haldin's mother about her son and informed her of his arrest and execution. When Natalia and the narrator arrive at the house they are surprised to find out that Razumov is there and await the end of his interview with Mrs. Haldin. Upon stepping from the drawing-room where he spoke with Mrs. Haldin, Razumov greeted only Natalia with (according to the narrator) a noticeable absence of affect.

‘It's you, Natalia Victorovna . . . Perhaps you are surprised . . . at this late hour. But, you see, I remembered our conversations in that garden. I thought really it was your wish that I should--without loss of time . . . so I came. No other reason. Simply to tell . . .’ (315).

The elipsises in the text here suggest the speech of Mikulin, the kind of manipulative and vague speech of one who desperately hopes that the listener will favorably fill the gaps or silences, the desperation of one who needs to announce something, but is afraid and ashamed to do so.

This remarkable passage also suggests Razumov's bad conscience, that is, his inability to say what he wants to say, to speak the truth, to be direct, to be honest. Razumov cannot be honest and cannot relate to others because he cannot grasp the significance of his actions outside of the most immediate and personal terms. Dialogue is not a dialectical activity here, in the most fundamental sense of this word as an interaction

between parties, and so this greeting marks a kind of further introversion of Razumov's character. We should also note that Razumov simply appeared at the house without forethought or plans—he does seem to be in control of his actions and simply drifts along, as though controlled by the ambivalences and contradictions with which his unconscious struggles. In an odd way Razumov is not in control of his body and mind and he seems to lack affect and to have adopted the mind set of his controller, Mikulin.

The ironic quality of Razumov's speech here and in the earlier conversation with the anarchist Sophia, as well as the aimlessness and lack of control bring to mind Josianne Paccaud's comments about the narrative form of the novel (see the earlier footnote on *free indirect discourse* and the *spaltung*), that the double narrator form of the novel (the teacher of languages and Razumov the writer of secret texts) enables a certain articulation of bad faith. That is, Razumov's doppelganger (his "evil" and secretive twin who spies on those who trust him) enables him to ventriloquize objectionable points of view, or to simply say and do objectionable things. The rationale or explanation for this behavior would be the well worn "I just wasn't myself".

In the following pages Razumov commences his confession to Natalia that he was responsible for Haldin's arrest and execution. This confession is preceded by a similar series of broken sentences, or "strangled phrases" as the narrator describes them, where Razumov informs Natalia that he has heard from the anarchist Sophia Antonova that Haldin was arrested and executed. She and the narrator already know this, of course, but this deferral and hesitancy, as well as the continuation of his function as a spy shows that Razumov is confused and at no moment premeditated his confession. Contributing to his confusion was the response of Haldin's mother to the news that her son was executed. She turned her head away from Razumov and did not say another word: "She had turned her head while he was speaking. The silence which had fallen on his last words had lasted for five minutes or more. What did it mean? Before its incomprehensible character he had become conscious of anger in his stern mood, the old anger against Haldin reawakened by the contemplation of Haldin's mother" (317). Clearly Razumov expected some words or even a motion which would suggest forgiveness or appreciation from Haldin's mother, but instead he is greeted by silence, a void which his depleted spirit simply cannot negotiate.

This expectation of forgiveness is a kind of transference (in the sense in which Freud uses this term), for he expects his love to be returned by the mother, who stands in as a kind of figure of the law, just as a priest might. She is, after all, the mother of Haldin, and so invested with a certain moral and ethical power. As with the earlier form of confession, this confession (such as it is) is a manifestation, a showing and revelation, an externalization of that which is antithetical to the "truth". The payoff here is forgiveness, a payment which is not forthcoming in this instance.

The anger Razumov feels towards Haldin seems to take over at this point, for this transference changes from the love of forgiveness to a certain sexual love which is now directed at Natalia, the sister of the betrayed. Razumov does not maintain a particularly pronounced sexual disposition towards Natalia and it is certainly inflected by the narrator's jealous report of their interaction during the dialogue. The hint of sexuality quickly turns into another form of desire, that is, anger, and this brings about the (oral) confession. Ostensibly Razumov is angry at the anarchists, but what he says refers back to his original political discussion with Haldin and is in turn inflected by the disappointment of this interview with the mother. Again, the confession "obscures", as Natalia remarks about his way of speaking, and is not premeditated, and it is not direct. Razumov cannot speak directly and relate what actually transpired, and though this is an attempt to "come clean" it has the double function which all confessions have, of hurting and upsetting the listener who is then expected to forgive:

'You [Natalia] yourself are like the very spirit of that future. Strange that it does not make it easier . . . No! But suppose that the real betrayer of your brother--Ziemanitch had a part in it too, but insignificant and quite involuntary--suppose that he was a young man, educated, and an intellectual worker, thoughtful, a man your brother might have trusted lightly, perhaps, but still--suppose . . . But there's a whole story here' (327).

Again, this is indirect and is a way of confessing without actually doing so. The fragmentary quality of the sentences and the vagueness of the information related only serves to bait Natalia's attention and brings her to ask more questions which result in his

confession. The narrator notes that Natalia simply repeats asking for “the story” as Razumov declares that he has come to her because he has “no -one-to-go-to”. And the confession is simply a matter of stating that the “story” ends “here” as he points to himself. Razumov cannot even confess to what he has done. He is a knot of resentment and rage, and his confession seems intended to redouble the grief of Haldin’s family, at least once he has determined that there is no expiation to be had from the mother.

Just prior to the beginning of Razumov’s written confession, in a preamble the narrator comments that the text at this juncture is incoherent and represents the mind of someone who is “baffled by the novelty and mysteriousness of that side of our emotional life to which his solitary existence had been a stranger” (330). The narrator also comments that “these passages” represent an attempt to grapple with a situation and discover a “profounder knowledge” through writing--this is the recourse of a “man who had read, thought, lived, pen in hand”. This brings to mind the irony that even as these confessions are acted out by Razumov, and, indeed, even as he is writing his secret diary/confession, he is all the while dutifully taking notes on the anarchists. One feverish note taking session takes place on the Ile de Rousseau underneath the statue of the philosopher and first citizen of Geneva, and certainly amounts to contemptuous joke on Conrad’s part. We should bear in mind that this conjunction of confession production represents the merger of the two forms of confession; on one hand the externalization of evil or wrong-doing, and on the other the increased internalization of the voice of “truth”, hence the increased secrecy and veiled quality of the confession as well as Razumov’s behavior.

Again, the written confession is the secret diary upon which the narrator has ostensibly based the text (of the novel). After Razumov confessed to Natalia in person, and after she left the room, he noticed her black veil on the floor, and unnoticed by the narrator he picked it up and took it with him when he left. The secret diary is finally delivered to Natalia wrapped in this veil which suggests several things, notably that this is a “veiled” diary and so a “veiled” truth is wrapped therein, and there is a very clear sexual overtone, where the veil is a kind of sexual fetish. The confession is of interest in that it is our text, but it is accompanied by a particularly curious preamble, a kind of verbal veil. It is apt to consider the confession a kind of veil for it obscures the import and substance of

Razumov's actions from his own conscience and consciousness. Simply put the confessions a kind of empty act of expiation, and it is in this same preamble that we see just how empty it actually is. In fact, the narrator notes that when Razumov returned to his apartment. He had an exchange with the shopkeeper downstairs who commented about the rain storm outside and how wet Razumov is, to which Razumov retorts, "Yes I am washed clean", a comment which suggests Pontius Pilate and many others who believe that a simple almost magical action will free them from the responsibility of social relations.

The emptiness of the act is also clear in Razumov's written explanation to Natalia of the motivations behind his visit and confession. He admits that his primary motivation was anger at her brother, an anger which was magnified by the mother's lack of affect and appreciation in response to his conversation and news (this moment is also tinged with jealousy for Razumov never met his mother). His vengeance was to "steal his [Haldin's] sister's soul", thus the sexual advances referred to above, advances which we can assume would involve seducing Natalia under false pretenses, and so amount to a second betrayal. This attempt to corrupt Natalia fails when he looks into their "trustful eyes", which he notes was the way Haldin described her, and instead of sexual desire he feels that his expiation will be realized through his love for her, a kind of redemption through love: "Suddenly you stood before me! You alone to whom I must confess. You fascinated me--you have freed me from the blindness of anger and hate--the truth shining in you drew the truth out of me" (333). This is another example of transference for it involves the investment of love in the person to whom the confession is directed. Moreover, in this example in particular we see the identification of the "truth" as a concept which stands above and distinct from the social relations and actions described in the novel. That is the truth is simply the actual sequence of events and has little or nothing, in this instance, to do with the ethics of the situation. This is, then, an act of bad faith, an empty act, and in its articulation, the confession is a certain form of martyr narrative. This last point is underscored by his declaration that he does not have the "soul of a slave" but is "independent", which reminds us of his earlier remarks to Mikulin that he is a rational man, a "thinking reed". If he is a lonely sufferer so he must also die, as he declares to Natalia: "I felt that I must tell you that I had ended by loving you. And to tell you that I must first confess. Confess, go out--and perish" (333).

Freedom here is a most inverted or self referential notion of liberty and is not freedom in an existential sense of this word.

After this fit of scribbling trails off the narrator aptly notes that Razumov was a “puppet of his past”, and details how he ran down the stairs and into the street, “as if confident that, by the power of destiny, the house door would fly open before the absolute necessity of his errand” (334). This scene is reminiscent of the way Razumov imagined Haldin slipping up and down his own staircase and out into the street (and the way Haldin described it for Razumov), to meet his “destiny”, and at the same time exhibits a change from the listless and almost unconscious state we just noted. Indeed, the “errand” he is pursuing here is his confession to the anarchists that he betrayed Haldin and has been spying on them. As he runs in the darkness of night the sky flashes with lightning lending the scene a kind of dramatic if not romantic quality, for we sense that for the first time Razumov will actually confess in good faith, if this can actually be done, and as though directed by Fate he runs to the house of Julius Laspara, the anarchist pamphleteer where the anarchists are gathered. The narrator, incidentally, suggests that the account of the following confession is derived from Laspara’s “summary”. Razumov wastes no time despite the edgy reception he receives, especially from Nikita Necator, the murderous double agent, and declares that the letter which Sophia Antonova has just received (she has departed from Geneva in the meantime) “calumniates a man of the people—a bright soul”, that is, Ziemantch the driver. This description of a “bright soul” (again) echoes Haldin as well as the anarchists’ political rhetoric, but the language of the remainder of the confession differs and is oddly that of Razumov (not borrowed phrases from Haldin or Mikulin). He comments that though Haldin was of a “generous heart” he was “unwise” to trust a “certain student of whose opinions he knew nothing”. In an odd echo of Brutus (Julius Caesar) he states that he is not there to “appreciate the actions of Victor Haldin” but to “tell ... of the feelings of that student” and “what he did”. Of course “what he did”, as he then relates, was to betray Haldin’s presence to General T.

So far, in this confession Razumov has referred to himself in the third person, “a certain student”, a feature of a paranoid consciousness which again suggests Paccauds argument about the bad faith form of the narrative. However, at this juncture, due to the

confusion of the anarchists he directly declares for the first time. "Haven't you all understood that I am that man?" In the scramble which follows, one of the anarchists shouts "But this is a confession", while another asks Razumov to stay where he is, to which he replies, "I came in voluntarily". One of Laspara's daughter's offers him a chair, and it appears for a moment that the anarchists are prepared to allow him the expiation he wants so desperately. He is denied however, though he meets his fate as a martyr when Nikita and several others jump on him outside the apartment, beat him, and burst his eardrums. Due to the loss of his hearing and temporary blindness Razumov stumbles into the streets of Geneva and is promptly run over by a street car, though he is not killed. He lives the rest of his life buried in an out of the way province of Russia, doted on by his new caretaker, the anarchist Tekla, and often visited by Sophia and the anarchists upon whom he spied. This is the absurd fate of a modern martyr.

Conclusion: Depoliticization and its Stakes

To conclude, I would like to return to the question of what this novel is "about". The central contention of this paper to this point has simply been that Under Western Eyes is organized around a conspiracy narrative and the twin discourses of confession and resentment (or abjection). All of this seems clear enough, but we have to answer finally what a close reading of the text adds up to. As stated in the introductory remarks the sum of the parts of the text adds up to Conrad's prescient insight into the nature of subjectivity of the liberal nation state, the internalization of social relations which are otherwise externalized as relations upheld by brute force. This internalization, which we linked to Althusser's notion of interpellation, is found in these two discourses.

This subjectivity is also marked by contradictions. While the liberal nation state is ostensibly organized around egalitarian principles, an "equivalence" between individuals, the subjects of this state (or proto-state in Razumov's case) experience extreme alienation from others. In that the state guarantees the "rights" of the individual, civil rights, the very term in play here, "I" also separates one from others or, put another way, the state hails one over and against an-other. Indeed this alienation is so severe, as with resentment, that others, the universal "we" of equal rights, are perceived to be a threatening and oppressive force. Conrad's novel works through the discourses of this state, the rhetoric of

confession and resentment, which are determined by conspiracy as a kind of catalytic force, and the novel also gestures towards the pitfalls or futility of political struggle which is grounded in these terms.

Wendy Brown is correct when she argues that a rhetoric of “recrimination and rancor” depoliticizes and misdirects struggle, that is, when politics and political discourse is reduced to the realm of the “personal”, of confession. This notion of depoliticization or misdirection is, however, as elusive as the self explanatory notion of politics pilloried earlier. One must ask what is depoliticization, what is depoliticized in the novel, and how is this depoliticization brought about?

Briefly put, depoliticization is the evasion of any direct engagement with the circumstances upon which a given situation is predicated. In a sense depoliticization is a kind of anti-dialectical thought. In the novel the terms and attendant circumstances which are depoliticized are nation and class under the aegis of capitalism, and Under Western Eyes examines the ways in which these social relations are debated and fought over by other means and in other words. This amounts to the “misdirection” which Brown has in mind.

With regard to nation, it is clear that the novel only offers conceptions of this term which are either ultra-nationalist, as with the anarchism of Haldin and the Geneva anarchists, or the “liberal” nationalism of Razumov’s proto-liberal nation state. There is no critical awareness and engagement with the formation of nations and nationalism, they simply exist as acts of God or Nature. The nation in fact, the Russia of the novel, is that of the Tsarist empire. A politicization of this term, nation, means that we think about the way in which this concept is formed, and the determinations which make it what it is at this (or that) moment. Much has been written about nationalism and the advent of the concept of nation, notably Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities and Eric Hobsbawm’s Age of Empire.³¹ For our purposes a simpler way of thinking about the politicization of nation lies with a comment Raymond Williams makes about modernism. The nation arose as a deliberate process of national myth making but it was reinforced, indeed hammered into the consciousness of newly national subjects, with the policing of national borders, the

³¹ See the “Waving Flags” chapter in the latter book.

protection of national markets, thus, with the development of nationalist formations of capitalism and its imperial expansion under national flags, and then with war against other European countries. A typical preoccupation of modernism, the aesthetic of this moment, is with the strangeness of language, its non-natural status, and the repetition of everyday life in the modern city. This is an aesthetic which is determined by this moment of borders and border crossing, and certainly an aesthetic at work in our novel. Of borders and national boundaries Williams writes: "The experience of visual and linguistic strangeness, the broken narrative of the journey and its inevitable accompaniment of transient encounters with characters whose self-presentation was bafflingly unfamiliar, raised to the level universal myth this intense, singular narrative of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished independence: the lonely writer gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment" (Politics 34). With these straightforward points in mind the recurrent references to "Holy Russia", "English" and "English man", as well as the "Western" way of thinking, "Western Eyes", as opposed to Russian mysticism, all seems like nationalist twaddle. If only it were so easily dismissed in fact.

With regard to the second term, class, we should return to Bernstein's downtrodden clerks, the figures of abjection. In so far as Razumov articulates a proto politics of the modern liberal nation state, he is also a representative of a "middle" class in formation. Here, class is simply a descriptive category which refers to the social position which people imagine they belong according to profession and their relationship to power. The frustration of the downtrodden clerks, and even the rancor of Wendy Brown's notion of identity politics comes about when class functions at a descriptive level such that a (putative) middle class imagines itself to occupy a certain proximity to power which is not realized in any meaningful way, and Razumov's realization that he is simply a "thinking reed" and not significant in any way in the face of Tsarist power, is an example of this degraded consciousness.

In another sense class refers to the social formations of capitalism and their relationship to the economic structure; the ruling class, the "middle" class who run the system in a direct way (bureaucracy) or in an ideological way (the university), and the working class, those who directly produce wealth by their labor. In this straightforward

sense Razumov is a would-be-middle class student who aspires to become a cog in the ideological bureaucracy (a “celebrated professor”) and nothing more. He has a common cause of sorts with Haldin and the anarchists as with all of his fellow students in this fundamental sense of class, but this is hopelessly obscured by the the way in which political discourse is inflected with personal animus to such an extent that the kind of abstract thought which a class analysis involves is impossible. To return to Brown’s thoughts on this, politics and social relations as such, are construed in terms which are hopelessly abstract or visceral to such an extent that social relations are not perceived to such at all.

As to how depoliticization works in the novel and in everyday life today, Althusser’s notions of ideology and interpellation go a long way to providing some insight into its function. It is one thing, however, to explain these terms conceptually and it is another matter to show them in action, to represent the pathologies of ideology, which is where Under Western Eyes is of value as Razumov’s “lived relations”, his personal crisis, is intertwined with a political discourse.

Actually, much of this depoliticization is present in the criticism of this novel as well as Conrad’s other work, as noted earlier. In The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence Raymond Williams aptly points out that much of the criticism of Conrad’s novels has focused on the themes of “Isolation and struggle. Man against Fate.” These critics range from the general points of Leavis’ treatment in The Great Tradition to the near-existentialist readings of Royal Roussel and C.B.Cox (this is my characterization of these critics).³² Though Williams agrees that there is “Man and Fate” in many of these novels, he smells a rat, a rat which belies the obvious, in this instance the political qualities and nature of Conrad’s work, where politics is understood in a self explanatory sense. Of Jim’s isolation and his betrayal of the passengers on *The Patna* (in Lord Jim) Williams writes. “His moral conflict is not the product of isolation, of the lack of a society and of shared beliefs. . . what is really being looked at is *conduct*, within an agreed set of values” (141). There is no existential dilemma when the criteria for judging such are finally determined on

³² The Metaphysics of Darkness and Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination respectively.

shore, in London, at a meeting of the company shareholders board. As for the responsibilities betrayed or upset, these are indeed bound up with the micro community of the ship, Williams points out, but these responsibilities also “begin and end on land” and so are finally determined elsewhere by owners and other mediations, “in a more complicated society” (142). And so it goes for Heart of Darkness, which is surely a representation of a complicated society where values are necessarily always determined elsewhere, and that seems to be the point Conrad drives home, and a point which is obscured by critical squabbling about whether Conrad was a racist or this is a racist novel.

In The Country and the City, perhaps Williams most acclaimed book, he introduces a critical phrase, “the knowable community”. Novels (and novelists), he argues, “show people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways” (165). The genius of Dickens, for example, “can only be realized when we see that for him, in the experience of the city, so much was important, and even decisive, could not be simply known or simply communicated, but, as I have said, to be revealed, to be forced into consciousness” (165). In this respect novels are ways of knowing or grasping experience or social relations which are otherwise elusive or ineluctable. With regard to Under Western Eyes, Conrad’s genius lies in the representation of a degraded consciousness, again, the consciousness of an informer who is also a petty and resentful student. If the world of Under Western Eyes seems stark then it is because Razumov is unwilling, and finally incapable of interacting with others. Moreover given that the diary form (upon which the text is based, as a kind of textual fiction) necessarily limits the scope of the narrative to the consciousness of a single isolated (alienated!) individual, the “thinking reed”. The “knowable community” here is a small, lonely, fearful and stark place. Indeed, given that we already dubbed Razumov an abject character, some of the initial comments about the “space” of abjection come to mind.

For Bernstein the world of abjection is construed as an infected wound, a painful and oozing “laceration”. Nietzsche, the “theorist” of resentment, states that the fetid swamp of resentment is the source of this disposition, and an apt metaphor to accompany Bernstein’s oozing wound. The point is that the “knowable community” of abjection or resentment is a nasty place, and community, here, is a decidedly impoverished word.

How, then, does resentment constitute a politics? The answer to this question is of course the project of this essay, and is twofold. That is, the novel form demonstrates how resentment is coupled with confession as a discourse by a conspiracy situation, and this textual brew forms a certain politics, from which we can extrapolate how this politics is in fact the basis of the modern liberal nation state. We have only to think again about Brown's comments about a politics which calls for "recognition", grounded in "recrimination and rancor" to understand the stakes.

With regard to this last point, there is a great deal of critical intolerance and poor reading of novels which attempt to represent pathological behavior, especially when the protagonist, the "hero" or "heroine" is pathological if not simply reprehensible. Dostoevsky is certainly excused in this regard, but with novels such as Heart of Darkness and Under Western Eyes, we have "heroes", Kurtz and Razumov, who are hardly admirable, and by no means represent an "official" and authorial point of view, that is Conrad himself. We can look back to Flaubert's Frederic Moreau and ahead to our own time to controversial novels such as American Psycho, Brett Easton Ellis' novel which was roundly condemned by NOW and many other groups and individuals as a sadistic and ultra violent screed against women. In literary criticism some of this moral rectitude might be traced to Lukacs' thoughts about modernism, the avant-garde, and the modern novel, and Williams seems to unfortunately follow him in this respect, at least to the extent that he does not have an eye or sense for Razumov's most modern pathological state of mind. Of Under Western Eyes and The Secret Agent he writes that in these novels there is not enough "created reality": "Conrad's anarchists, for all the stage dressing . . . are sensational figures in a radically simplified world . . ." (148). This is so, but that is just the point, for what kind of consciousness or "world", what evocation of community, can possibly emerge from a secret diary, the ramblings of an angry, frightened man, an informer. Degraded times are populated by degraded characters and it is the mark of a novel on the cutting edge which can represent and engage this degradation in a radically new way. Under Western Eyes is such a novel.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. Hopes and Impediments. New York: Anchor, 1988.
- Althusser, Louis. For Marx. trans. Ben Brewster. London: Verso, 1979.
- . Lenin and Philosophy. trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.
- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised edition. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Baines, Jocelyn. Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.
- Bernstein, Michael Andre. The Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject Hero. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Brown, Wendy. States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- . Lord Jim. New York: Bantam, 1981.
- . Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- . The Secret Agent. New York: Penguin, 1982.
- . A Set of Six. New York: Doubleday, 1925
- . Under Western Eyes. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Cox, C. B. Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination. London: Dent, 1974.
- Daleski, H. M. Joseph Conrad: The Way of Dispossession. London: Faber, 1977.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Notes from Underground. trans. Mirra Ginsburg. New York: Bantam, 1992.
- Fleishman, Avrom. Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1980.
- . The Politics of Truth. ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth. New York: Semiotexte(e), 1997.

- Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977. ed. and trans. by Colin Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- Freud, Sigmund. Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Guerard, Albert. Conrad the Novelist. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958.
- Hay, Eloise Knapp. The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study. Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1967.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. The Age of Empire 1875-1914. New York: Vintage, 1987.
- Howe, Irving. Politics and the Novel. New York: Fawcett, 1957.
- Jameson, Fredric. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- Kermode, Frank. "Secrets and Narrative Sequence". Critical Inquiry, no.7, Autumn, 1980: 83-101.
- "The Structures of Fiction". Modern Language Notes, 84 (1969), 891-915.
- Leavis, F. R. The Great Tradition. New York: New York UP, 1963.
- Mileham, James W. The Conspiracy Novel: Structure and Metaphor in Balzac's Comedie Humaine. Lexington (KY): French Forum, 1982.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. On the Genealogy of Morals. trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Paccaud, Josianne. "Conrad's Technique of Free Indirect Discourse in Under Western Eyes". Conradiana, vol. 22, no.1, 1990: 45-65.
- "The Name-of-the-Father in Conrad's Under Western Eyes". Conradiana, vol.18, no.3, 1986: 204-218.
- Roussel, Royal. The Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971.
- Tennant, Roger. Joseph Conrad. New York: Atheneum, 1981.
- Tonnies, Ferdinand. Community and Society. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988.
- Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.
- Culture and Society: 1780 to 1950. New York:

Columbia UP, 1983.

- The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. London:
Hogarth, 1984.
- The Long Revolution. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists. New York: Verso,
1989.

Conspiracy and Kafka's Aesthetic of Hopelessness

My interest in Kafka and the relevance of his work to this project lie with the "conspiratorial" qualities of his novels. By "conspiratorial" I refer to the haze which obscures the operation of power. Detritus, obscenity, and, what I dub "provisionality" necessarily shadow power, and as such form the conspiracy narrative as a kind of constellation of related phenomena. In Kafka's world detritus and filth, whether as encountered as objects or as live beings, obstruct his characters' quests, whether these be for justice or for a job. Obscenity and prostitution, with detritus and filth, seem to circulate around powerful figures as a ring of defense and as a hallmark of the function of power (as such), while these powerful figures are themselves hidden and thus inaccessible and who constitute an impenetrable social order. Further, this social order is maintained by provisional, ad-hoc institutions and is supported by provisional, ad-hoc employment.

Conspiracy narratives propose a certain knowledge of the modern subject and of modern subjectivity. They can, as with Conrad's use of confession and conspiracy, form the rhetorical basis of the novel and in turn comprise the basis of a certain abject subject formation, or with Kafka, offer what Theodor Adorno calls a "negative knowledge of reality," a conception of the role of art Adorno formulates when defending modern art from the imputation of solipsism and decadence. Art, according to Adorno's formulation here, becomes mediated knowledge, not because knowledge assumes concrete form in art, but because art expresses "what is concealed by the empirical form reality takes." Thus, Kafka does not merely reproduce a situation where struggle is hopeless, for, again, in his world power is often inaccessible and even imperceptible, but rather engages this assertion in his novels, as pathetic and abject as his characters might be. And so, "the assertion that the world is unknowable . . . can become a moment of knowledge, knowledge of the gulf between the overwhelming and unassimilable world of objects, on the one hand, and experience, which glances helplessly off that world, on the other" (*Extorted Reconciliation* 224-227). We could call Kafka's aesthetic of hopelessness such a negative knowledge of reality. The conspiracy shuts down all hope for escape, redemption or even comprehension; his heroes simply struggle in hopeless situations, in the most abject ways, as though they were bugs--and sometimes this is what they become. Again power is

unassailable; it lies beyond rational enquiry and interrogation, and its arbitrariness resists any remedies.

With this position in mind, Kafka's well known comment, that there is hope, "but not for us", takes on a different cast, while his request that his friend and biographer, Max Brod, should burn all of his work upon his death is not, in fact, the final gesture of a defeated consciousness. Kafka's reason for such a self annihilating action was that his work did not make any difference in the world, a standard he expected of all art. Yet, when we consider exactly what it is in his writing we appreciate, that which brings us to read and re-read his difficult texts, it has something to do with how well he grasped the complexities and contradictions of modern subjectivity. This grasping, I maintain, is the aesthetic of hopelessness, and conspiracy narratives are nothing if not the kind of (apparently) unassailable empirical reality which blocks or short circuits resistance and struggle. Kafka's hopelessness is, then, a radical hopelessness that jars us out of our complacency and disrupts self-satisfied routines.

In this chapter I will explore the relationship between the aesthetic of hopelessness and conspiracy in, primarily, Kafka's fragmentary and incomplete novel, The Castle (Das Schloss) and, briefly, in his novella, The Metamorphosis, (Die Verwandlung). I have selected these texts in particular because, again, the crux of the conspiracy narrative necessarily entails the attempt to reach and interact with hidden power and, here, it is entangled with a second theme, labor. Conspiracy and the working day combine to completely consume the consciousness of Kafka's characters, in ways which, again, offer no hope for redemption or escape, simply struggle in the most abject ways. Gregor Samsa hates his job, refuses to work, and becomes *lumpen*, while The Castle tracks K's interactions with shadowy and shabby figures who mediate and block his attempts to "claim" his job, his profession, as land surveyor for the village. Kafka recognizes and then attempts to render the role which labor plays in the formation and function of the subject and social relations. Bluntly put, Kafka attempts to render the importance of labor for individuals where labor structures the working day (time) and even how one thinks of oneself and others (income and profession). I say Kafka attempts to render labor's role as an ideology, where ideology is understood in a most complex sense. Labor is at once an

explicit and scrutable narrative, such as a discourse of profession and income, and it is also an ideology in that one's sense of self-worth is determined by the work one does, and this is sometimes beyond articulation and is inscrutable. Thus, the conspiratorial tone of the aesthetic of hopelessness.

The Problem: Looking for Power

One contention of this chapter, that power is necessarily hidden and/or inaccessible in a conspiracy narrative, is an often remarked upon aspect of Kafka's work. The parable, "Before the Law," excerpted from The Trial, is a notable example. This text has been endlessly tortured by religious interpreters, existentialists, and psychologists, and has its own "embedded" and misleading interpretation, namely that offered by the priest. None of these parties seem to understand the text, or rather there is a destructive need to *understand* it, to wring meaning from the text. To the contrary, the parable is an example of what I dubbed earlier, the aesthetic of hopelessness--the parable simply renders the constitutive function of power or the Law, a person or locus (castle, office, court. ...) who/which is inaccessible and/or hidden; this is a constitutive function in that power is a point of reference from which the subject is organized. Thus, the objective is not actually to reach the Law or power, but to want-to-want to reach the Law or power. This form of desire (the want to want) is where pleasure lies and where the subject realizes its form. Desire, of course, is understood in Freud's sense of (the German) *Wunsch*, and so concerns the unconscious rather than the instinctual, and, importantly, is both excentric and insatiable (and so is akin to fetishism).¹

The Castle is clearly an elaboration of this point, or, better, a rendering of it as a certain experience, for the castle of Count West West, and the count himself, are de facto inaccessible to K and to most of the villagers, yet the inaccessible presence of the count and his sign, the castle, are crucial to their everyday life. The count and the castle perform a constitutive function in that they represent the organizational basis of social relations in the village. As I will further elaborate, for K, in particular, wanting to reach the castle and wanting the recognition of Count West West is also critical to his existence--and it is

¹ For definitions of *desire* see the Translator's note to Écrits or the entry in Dylan Evans' An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis.

important to grasp that he is nothing *without this pursuit*. The novel in a simplistic sense merely tracks K's attempts to gain access and recognition, a limited notion of the purpose and scope of the novel as such.

Again, the constitutive function of the castle lies with its role as a point of reference or orientation (or origin) for the subject. Yet, the castle as origin or point of orientation is necessarily blocked from view and approach, as is apparent from the opening paragraph of the novel. Consider, for example, K's following "visions" or "glimpses" of power in The Castle, in particular the first "glimpse" which opens the novel:

Es war spät abend als K. ankam. Das Dorf lag in tiefem Schnee. Vom Schloßberg war nichts zu sehen, Nebel und Finsternis umgaben ihn, auch nicht schwächste Lichtschein deutete das große Schloß an. Lange stand K. auf der Holzbrücke die von der Landstraße zum Dorf fuhr und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor. (7)

[It was late in the evening when K. arrived. The village was deep in snow. The Castle was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show a castle was there. On the wooden bridge leading from the main road to the village, K. stood for a long time gazing into the illusory emptiness above him. (3)]

The first glimpse is significant for K does not even see the castle and there is nothing to suggest that the castle even exists, but that does not matter: "K stood for a long time gazing into the illusory emptiness". Though he does not see a castle, he nonetheless wants to see one and so when the son of the castellan (notably, not the castellan himself--more on this later) invokes the authority of the castle in order to challenge K.'s presence the latter readily engages in the discourse of the castle and the count: "Is there a castle here? . . . And must one have a permit to sleep here?" (4).

Since K wants to see a castle, he almost seems to imagine one or to fantasize that he sees one, for one eventually emerges, though not without "growing pains". And so, later in the first chapter, when K. manages to get a better look at the castle he scrutinizes (no more glimpses) it.

Die Augen auf das Schloß gerichtet, gieng K. weiter, nichts sonst kümmerte ihn. Aber im Näherkommen enttäuschte ihn das Schloß, es war doch nur ein recht elendes Städtchen, aus Dorf häusern zusammengetragen. ausgezeichnet nur dadurch, daß vielleicht alles aus Stein gebaut war, aber der Anstrich war längst abgefallen, und der Stein gebaut schein abzubröckeln. (14)

[With his eyes fixed on the Castle, K. went on farther, thinking of nothing else at all. But on approaching it he was disappointed in the Castle; it was after all only a wretched-looking town, a huddle of village houses, whose sole merit, if any, lay in being built of stone; but the plaster had flaked off and the stone seemed to be crumbling away. (11-12)]

K. goes on to compare this "so-called" castle to his native town, with its soaring church and tower. The tower of this castle-at-hand was "irregular" and its outlines seemed to have been designed by the "careless hand of a child", and it seemed as though it concealed a "melancholy-mad tenant". These features of the castle relate to the provisional character of Kafka's world--ad hoc structures which house ad hoc officials and meddling clerks. However, this skepticism does not lead K away from the castle, out of the village and on to another destination, but only seems to cement K.'s conviction that the castle is really "there", and that it is the locus of a power which will grant him recognition.

Thus, the previous passage is in contrast to another of K.'s glimpses and glances at the castle. In the eighth chapter he has changed his disposition towards the edifice and its occupant, the mysterious Count West West:

Wenn K. das Schloß ansah, so war ihm manchmal, als beobachte er jemanden, der ruhig dasitze und vor sich hinsehe, nicht etwa in Gedanken verloren und dadurch gegen alles abgeschlossen, sondern frei und unbekümmert; so als sei er allein und niemand beobachtete wurde, aber es rührte nicht im Geringsten an seine Ruhe und wirklich--man wüste nicht war es Ursache oder Folge--die Blicke des Beobachters konnten sich nicht festhalten und glitten ab. (107)

[When K. looked at the Castle, often it seemed to him as if he were observing someone who sat quietly there gazing in front of him, not lost in thought and so oblivious of everything, but free and untroubled, as if he were alone with nobody to observe him, and yet must notice that he was observed, and yet must notice that he were observed, and all the same remained with his calm not even slightly disturbed; and really--one did not know whether it was cause or effect--the gaze of the observer could not remain concentrated there, but slid away. (128)]

This last passage finally represents the core of conspiracy narratives: power is inaccessible. yet when one finally is able to scrutinize the powerful person this activity seems both impossible and irrelevant. You are not really able to perceive power, for one's gaze just "slides away", but it does not matter anyway. Power is finally inscrutable in ways more complex and will hardly reveal itself or yield to a series of glimpses.

As I stated above, hidden or inaccessible power (a person(s) or locus/site) is a necessary aspect of conspiracy narratives, in so far as the inability to have dialogue with power and its secretive absolute nature nurtures fantasy. In order to begin to unpack the significance of hidden or inaccessible power, a good place to turn is the work of Walter Benjamin. Much of this writer's and critic's brief though brilliant career was spent examining the form and function of hidden power, whether as the aura of a religious icon, or the aestheticization of politics under Fascism. In his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Benjamin seems to be on to this conjunction of mystification and hidden power, and the constitutive function of desire as a want-to-want. His comment on the development of cult value and ritual is particularly useful here:

The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. He did not expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was meant for the spirits. Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden. Certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain Madonnas remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible

to the spectator on ground level. (225)

In this passage Benjamin continues to elucidate the way in which social value which accrues or accumulates around objects, like a patina of experience. Benjamin's target is the commodity form as it develops in the late 19th century, that is, the objects in the shop window which seem to speak with jingles and price tags, luring the consumer, whose desire has now been commodified in its turn.² For our purposes, the key line above, that cult value today "demand[s] that the work of art remain hidden", is certainly relevant to conspiracy, for the significance and the guilty pleasure of the conspiracy narrative are nothing if power is out in the open and accessible. Dialogue and due process, a rational model of communication, are eschewed for these would negate the conspiracy narrative form-- with rational communication one can have face to face encounter with power in so far as power is understood and accepted as an abstraction, say, a legal concept, not a person ("individual"). Conspiracy by contrast involves a symptomatic articulation of power--instead of words, power offers a wink, and instead of a lucid sentence, there are only riddles and cryptograms.

Benjamin draws an analogy between the fetish of the commodity (modernity), accompanied by the advent of the modern bureaucracy and state, and the cult value and strategies of power and rule practiced by the medieval church. This analogy is important for readers of Kafka, for, again, his work is the subject of many religious or humanist interpretations. Both models of power require a mediating force, the priest, judge, or professor, that is, one who has privileged knowledge and thus access to hidden power. However, the difference lies with the significance of cult value. Today cult value is nurtured for the purposes of domination, a domination of consciousness, more total than anything offered by organized or established religion (the Church). As with Eugene Atget's photographs of shop windows, and Benjamin was a proponent of this photographer's work, the commodity directly appeals or calls to the consumer ("You need me!") and plays on the consumer's sense of deprivation ("You don't have me!").

And so, K. is told that "Official decisions are as shy as young girls", and this "observation" bears out both points I am making here. This comment is both cryptic

² See Benjamin's comments about the photographs of Eugene Atget as well this photographer's photos of storefronts, shop windows and the Paris arcades.

(rather than a rational explanation of how the bureaucracy works) and at the same time alludes to the fact that power is hidden, and deliberately so, for “shyness” is always an element of seduction and produces desire. Also, the aloofness of the powerful person is important for the purposes of domination, and also has an existential dimension (the death of God and other formulations). Consider again the last (cited) passage, where K thinks about the castle as a person who seems to ignore the gaze of the observer, and yet must know that he is being watched. This passage tells us a little about K’s thoughts about power, that power and the powerful never acknowledge others, those “below”, the dominated, though it finally provides a crucial insight into the constitutive function of the conspiracy structure. The passage ends, “the gaze of the observer could not remain concentrated there but slid away”. What this tells us is that power is hidden mostly because the observer cannot see it, the gaze “slides away”, and more important, does not want to see it! Scrutiny of power is not the answer, for scrutiny destroys the structure and, from our position, misses the point that this is a very particular model of desire, a want-to-want. The gaze of desire, as it is understood here, also takes us back to Benjamin’s notion of aura, especially in his essays on Baudelaire and modernity.

In his article, “The Caricature of Courtship” Kenneth Burke also makes much of the conjunction of religion and bureaucracy in Kafka’s work, particularly The Castle. Burke’s premise is that courtship, literally the codes of the court as expounded in The Courtier, are “manifested Expressionistically in fragments” in Kafka’s work. He continues: “It is there, because the theme is bureaucracy, communication between higher and lower orders, involving the mysteries of “reverence.” And since the ultimate of such courtship would be communion between lowly beings and “the highest,” Kafka goes to the very essence of his subject, seeing through social mystery to divine mystery” (24).

Burke correctly points out that the social mystery at stake here for Kafka was anti-Semitism: “The Jew in liberal, pre-Hitlerite Austria was never quite blackballed, never quite admitted” (24). Again, Burke is right about the mystery of reverence brought about the conflation of religion and bureaucracy, and his interest and analysis here is possibly influenced Max Weber and Siegfried Kracauer. Burke goes onto compare the Jew/Kafka’s experience and relationship with power to a “hazing” and this point is relevant to the

arguments I will make later about the “provisional” character of power. However, unlike Benjamin, Burke fails to recognize that there is something new here, that the God of the bureaucracy is not identical with God of old but entails a wholly new form of subjectivity, one which does not need priests and even bureaucrats. This new form of subjectivity lies in the form of desire we are trying to uncover and understand here, that is, the want-to-want.

As mentioned above, this notion of desire, the want-to want, is evident in K’s initial interactions with the villagers in the opening pages of the novel. Though he is not sure he has seen a castle, the castle becomes important to him when he is awakened by the son of the castellan from his abject sleeping situation on a rough bale of straw thrown on the floor of the inn. Again, K’s first retort to the son of the castellan is to ask, “Is there a castle here?” though the authority of the castle has just been invoked to justify waking him up: “This village belongs to the Castle”. K then asks about a permit to sleep, a question we might find odd or even sarcastic, as though such rude sleeping quarters were a matter of privilege, but this is not the case with K—in a sense he desires a privilege, even an odd and abject one. All of this leads up to the decisive declaration of the novel, “I am the land surveyor whom the Count is expecting. My assistants are coming tomorrow with the apparatus” (5). This declaration is related to the discussion of labor and consciousness which will follow, but for this discussion it sets up the phone calls from the count, especially the second one which reverses the initial repudiation of K.’s claim and which our protagonist interprets as a call of “recognition” from the Castle: “K. pricked up his ears. So the Castle had recognized him as the Land Surveyor” (7).

This “recognition” is clearly related to labor, for it is a professional “recognition”, but it is also related to the form of desire we are trying to pin down here for this “recognition” is by no means the satisfaction of a desire it is only the necessary first element, a minor privilege which K. does not want to cede. We have only to look ahead in the novel to see that in many ways K. is fascinated with the claim to access to the Castle, and his desire is to approximate proximity to the Castle, not to actually visit it and have a face to face encounter with power. This plays out in his relationship to Frieda, the mistress of Klamm, a representative of the Castle, and the “job” he takes as the unofficial school

janitor, and his relationship with Amalia's family, and their own attempts to court power.

The form of desire is very similar to Freud's and Lacan's understanding of the desire of the hysteric. Before we consider the psychoanalytic notion of hysteria, we should look at an example from the texts which suggests this as a form of desire. The example in the text is K.'s "love" for Frieda. Later I will address the "obscene" and "provisional" characteristics of K.'s love and love-making, but what seems relevant here are his motivations for pursuing Frieda. Consider, first, K.'s initial "encounter" with Frieda. He arrives at the Bridge Inn with Olga, with whom he has established a sexually tinged rapport, and they are both told by the landlord that the "land surveyor" must stay in the bar and away from the gentlemen guests. Prohibition of this sort inflames the senses--indeed prohibition produces desire--and K. is smitten by the barmaid, Frieda, and so he asks her if she knows the count's agent, Herr Klamm.³ First, Frieda allows K. to "view" Klamm through a peephole, though K. persists and asks again, how well she knows him. Frieda's response is notable here, for, after initially enduring Olga's derisive laughter, and when the latter is at a distance and while leaning over K. in a coquettish manner (and while fingering her blouse) she tells K., "I am his mistress" (48). Frieda expects the same derision but K. tells her that he believes she is a "highly respectable person". In K.'s view she is such because Frieda is "nearer" the source of power, as Klamm's mistress, and he follows with a telling question, "Have you ever been in the Castle?". Their banter continues and when K. seems to be seducing Frieda she asks him if he simply wants to take her away from Klamm, and this would suggest a form of mimetic desire which we have been attempting to work through so far. Though the text tells us that K. wearily responded, "You've seen through me" (51), it does not tell us that this was not K.'s motivation.

Later, in the thirteenth chapter, when the debacle of life in the schoolhouse (and we will return to this as another example of the obscene and provisional) has brought about a breach between K. and Frieda, the latter confronts him again when he decides he will leave

³ Kenneth Burke, following many other Kafka commentators, notes that many of the characters names entail interesting semantic overtones, and this starts with the title of the book, for *Schloss* also suggests internality and enclosure. *Klamm* means tight but also suggests close or enclosing, and brings to mind the "closed garden" of medieval thought (and this is in turn derived from Biblical sources), and even *Reklam*, advertisement, and *Kalamitat*, calamity (Burke 30).

with Barnabas, for he is a messenger from Klamm and “the fact that they [messages] come from Klamm gives them . . . value” (209). Frieda is angry because she believes that he has given up his desire for her, as a connection to Klamm, for the mother of a schoolboy. Frieda’s point does not disturb the structure of desire, for it is present even at the end of the novel when K. and Pepi discuss K.’s loss of Frieda. Interestingly, Pepi tells K. that Klamm’s relationship with Frieda, and his desire for her, were more genuine and forthright than that of K.. She notes, that K. lost interest in Frieda when he realized that though Klamm could not be reached, again the inaccessible power, Frieda was no nearer to him than K. himself (403) and now K. is in love with Frieda “because she has run away from you” (405).

Burke is right, however, about the reverence and mystery associated with any bureaucratic structure, and The Castle is at the very least an examination of this reverence. K. apparently lives to climb over social barriers, to reach the castle and Count West West, and we have only to consider the significance of his boyhood memory of finally climbing the church wall which had defied so many other boys, and the fact that he was reprimanded for doing so, to grasp how important, indeed constitutive this sort of struggle is for him. Yet, the point behind this examination of K.’s initial glimpses of the the castle and his relationship with Frieda is also to show how this is a desire which does not necessarily require consummation; K. is content, in fact, to settle for secondary desire, by which I refer to his substitution of Klamm for the Castle and the Count, and then, Frieda for Klamm. This secondary desire entails a metonymic substitution while the putative romance lies with the potential consummation of desire, and an approximation or near-proximity (but not a real encounter) to power, with only an oblique (keyhole!) view perhaps, offers the most pleasure.

Simply put, and as noted earlier, this is a form of hysteria as it is understood by both Freud and Lacan. In Freud’s early work comprising Studies in Hysteria, this neurosis is associated, for example, with patients who have epileptic convulsions, though they are not clinically epileptic (as Freud discerns), or who lose their sense of smell, or who repeatedly make certain noises (clacking...), and all of these responses are associated with or brought on by an external trigger or phenomenon (the smell of burning pudding--

Miss Lucy R.). Hysteria, in this early work, is finally a traumatic experience which cannot be admitted into consciousness, or, as Freud develops this idea, is admitted as a matter of the splitting of consciousness. Clearly, hysteria concerns repression; the trauma is repressed and resurfaces, metamorphosed, as the return of the repressed. In this early sense hysteria concerns us indirectly in that proximity, or a direct encounter with the point of trauma is not what is desired, but rather a mediated encounter. Thus, K. consciously asks for an audience with the Count, and he consciously wants to gain access to the Castle, but messengers and triangulated love affairs with the lovers of the mediators of power, such as Klamm, offer special pleasures.

By the time Freud concludes his seminal psychoanalytic case of Dora, or, "Fragment of analysis of a case of hysteria" (1905), he has realized that hysteria is a form of desire, where the desire is for the desire of the Other, while the desiring subject must never be the object of desire himself or herself. Dora, as Freud eventually unravels the case, desires Frau K., who she believes to be, in turn, the object of Dora's father's desire (hence the scratchy throat and coughing which Freud associates with her fantasies of oral sex), and so in her discourse (what she tells Freud) she identifies with Herr K. When she believes he has made advances towards her she is repulsed--she cannot be the object of desire. Lacan's contributions here are to move away from thinking about hysteria as a neurosis and rather thinking of it as a structure, a structure of desire and a structure of discourse (thus, the discourse of the hysteric). Indeed, for Lacan hysteria as desire is finally the model of desire as the Lacanian slogan. "Desire is the desire of the Other" suggests.⁴ There is no pure moment of desire, only the perceptions of what is desired by others. This helps us to think about K. in that he does not seem to want to "consummate" his desire, as stated many times here, but rather takes great pleasure in desiring what others want, notably Klamm and his love for Frieda. When K. feels that Frieda is no longer wanted, he no longer wants her, as both Frieda and Pepi tell him.

In the larger terms of social relations which are so crucial to any understanding of Kafka's work (especially this one), the relations towards bureaucracy and mediation plays out as a pleasure for management, a desire for process, endless meetings and middle men.

⁴ See part 2 of "Direction of treatment and principles of its power" in *Écrits* and in particular pg. 264.

But how is this new? The Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek provides some interesting insights into Kafka's work and the dimension we have focused on here, that is, the formation and function of power and the subject. The moment which Žižek offers as an example is the (afore mentioned) parable of the the doorkeeper, "Before the Law" ("*Vor dem Gesetz*"). The relevance of the following passage to the interpretation offered here is clear:

He [the man from the country] is confronted with the transcendent image of the Palace of the Law where, behind every door, there is another door hiding an unapproachable Secret, and whose representative (the doorkeeper) treats him with utter indifference and contempt. The crucial reversal takes place when the doorkeeper explains to the dying man that the Door was meant only for him from the very beginning--in other words, the Law that the man from the country viewed with awed respect, assuming automatically that it did not even notice his presence, had regarded him from the very beginning; precisely as excluded, he was always-already *taken into account*. (For they Know 90)

Žižek continues to extrapolate this point in Hegelian terms, and argues that the *In it self* is in it self, and unavailable to the subject in so far as this is the way the Law works. And in this way the Law or inaccessible power is then *for* the subject.⁵

Outside of psychoanalysis (proper) this notion of desire is a large part of the work Alexandre Kojève's work on Hegel. This seems an odd recourse, despite the clear ties of intellectual lineage, for Lacan, like many other intellectuals of his generation (Sartre, Merleau Ponty, and Kostas Axelos among others) was deeply influenced by this quirky Hegelian's lectures on The Phenomenology of Spirit. Indeed, these lectures were compiled and published as Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures in the Phenomenology of Spirit, and Kojève's exegesis of Hegelian Desire, and the Master-Slave dialectic (as he understands it!) offers some insight into Kafka's world, again, despite the quirkiness of his

⁵ Žižek examines the parable in For they know not what they do, The Sublime Object of Ideology, and Tarrying with the Negative. For many reasons, Kafka, and his understanding and representation of the Law are critical examples for Žižek.

terminology and conclusions.⁶

The origin of the “I” of Man, Kojève writes, is revealed in speech, and so Desire, with this declaration in mind necessarily concerns consciousness. Desire brings the being back from its contemplative stance towards the object world and so instantiates the subject in opposition to the object world. Importantly, Desire entails both a nurture and knowledge; the desiring subject must feed on the object world, but this action involves knowledge. Ultimately, for Kojève (and Hegel) Man’s Desire will be directed towards another Desire, and this distinguishes the human condition, and offers the first suggestion of the want-to-want discussed above. Thus, Kojève explains the distinction:

This I, which “feeds” on Desires, will itself be Desire in its very being, created in and by the satisfaction of its Desire. And since Desire is realized as action negating the given, the very being of this I will be action. This I will not, like the animal “I,” be “identity” or equality to itself, but “negating-negativity.” In other words, the very being of this I will be becoming, and the universal form of this being will be space, not time. (5)

The Desire for the Desire of the other (notably lower case here) involves a risk for this Desire requires recognition from this other: “Therefore, to speak of the “origin” of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for “recognition”. Let us reconsider K.’s thoughts about a powerful figure who is inscrutable, from whom the subject’s gaze simply slides away. In both the Lacanian terms of Žižek and the earlier Kojève, this slippery gaze is that of the slave, for the slave gains the form he seeks in this eschewal of recognition (a slave’s subjectivity) even as the master gains the sought after recognition, the gaze of the other.

All of this (above) also resonates with K.’s attempts to reach the Castle, to gain the recognition of Count West West, or even the vague bureaucratic entity represented as “The Castle”. Yet, as I have argued to this point, this recognition is not really, finally, desired-- K. is happy with the endless mediations and deferrals which block access to the Castle, and he is by no means so demanding as to suggest that he will “fight to the death” for an audience with the Law/power. Kojève offers us insight into the world of The Castle when

⁶ See Mark Poster’s Existential Marxism in Post-war France.

he rearticulates this notion of Desire in the terms of the Master-Slave dialectic. Briefly, when two consciousnesses meet there is a struggle for recognition, the fight to the death, and one wins. The vanquished is not murdered, however, but enslaved, and not even literally enslaved, for it is the consciousness of the vanquished that is at stake here. The Slave is one who acknowledges the Master, and so is critical to the Master's existence as such. Also, the Slave works for the Master--the Master does not work at all and relies upon the knowledge and skill of the Slave. Work, then, is critical, for it entails the ability to transform the world, the given, and this ability is ultimately the undoing of the Master. With this knowledge the Slave can overthrow the Master and so supersede his condition. but the Master has not response-- he is dependent upon the Slave.

The fight to the death and Kojève's understanding of the Master-Slave dialectic clearly functioned (as it does now) as an allegory of capitalism. The working class has the ability to transform the given, and to supersede its condition, while the ruling class/bourgeoisie are completely dependent (this is an admittedly crude explanation, but useful). What is critical is, of course consciousness, and Kojève, like many others, does not understand the appeal and pleasures of the Slave's condition. By this I mean the erotics and the satisfaction of the endless repetition of the want-to-want. Why, after all, should the Slave overthrow the Master when there is a certain comfort to be found in a known situation. Moreover, there is an assumption that the consciousness of the Slave is so easily changed as though this only involved a change of mind. As K. and the villagers demonstrate, the working class and the lumpenproletariat are not necessarily the bearers of radical consciousness, and in this instance they are in fact the vanguard of reaction. K. and the villagers do not want to burn the Castle and execute the Count. In fact they do not even want to meet him. They want his laws (the Law) and the comforts of submission; the satisfaction of "knowing one's place". Better than any other, Kafka understands the ruses of consciousness and the pleasures of subjection.⁷ Moreover, the pleasure of subjection and its relationship to conspiracy narratives remind us of the paranoid pleasures of Zola's miners.

⁷ Walter Sokel makes some similar points but misses the crux of Freud's notion of the desire of the hysteric, the desire to want. See page 65 in his article, "The Wolfman and The Castle".

The Obscene and the Provisional

The return to Kojève for insight into Kafka is largely due to the obvious, and a crucial assumption of this chapter; Kafka is not making religious or proto-existential comments about *fin de siècle* Prague, and thus “Man’s condition”, but rather offering insights on the culture and consciousness of his time, and our time, that of modernity. These insights are found actions and behavior of his characters, actions and behavior which rightly “earthy” and vulgar and concern that which we commonly consider obscene. Obscenity, as a feature of contemporary social relations and consciousness is a large part of Kafka’s work. Returning to The Trial, an example which stands out is the peasant woman’s cry of lovemaking which interrupts the proceedings, and it is unclear if it is consensual or rape, just as Josef K is about to finally “have his day in court”. Moreover, Josef K.’s relationship with his young female neighbor is tinged by a certain “sleazy” suggestion that she is a prostitute and his interest in her is less than honorable. And in Amerika Karl Rossman’s (forced) role as a servant to a servant, Robinson, who in turn serves his friend Delamarche and the latter’s mistress, the failed (and generally filthy) diva, Brunelda, is obscene in that it involves these unorthodox relations (of service) which support a “sleazy” relationship (Delamarche and Robinson take money from the diva who is repaid with their “services”).

Before reviewing other moments in The Castle we should grasp that the trick here is to untangle or understand the relationship between the Law and its excess, often construed as obscene. By obscene I am referring specifically to sexual relations or sexual behavior which the text suggests are inappropriate or unusual. Obscenity, here, is by no means, however, a moral category, but rather marks the limits and areas of the Law. The obscene moments cited above are by no means examples of Kafka’s moral judgment--indeed, if there is any judgment here it lies with non-sexual motivations (money and status) rather than the pleasure of sex as such.

With these thoughts about obscenity in mind, we now turn to relevant moments in The Castle. The primary example which stands out was cited earlier; K.’s sexual encounter with Frieda on the floor of the bar. Again, K. has only just arrived in the village and Olga has led him to the bar in the Herrenhof to get some beer (to drink with the family meal).

The two are met by the landlord and his wife who instruct Olga that K. is not allowed anywhere other than the bar. As noted prior, this restriction, or prohibition, only incites K., especially when he learns that it is because one of the “gentlemen”, Herr Klamm, a representative of the Castle, is in residence for the evening. This incites K. to such an extent that from the first his interaction with the barmaid, Frieda, is tinged by her connection to Klamm. A passage which Kafka deleted emphasizes K.’s desire: “K was thinking more of Klamm than of her” (432). Yet K. makes love to Frieda, after they have eluded the suspicious landlord who looks around the bar for K. who is in fact lying on the floor under the bar, concealed by Frieda. Moreover, the landlord’s hunt for K. and his suspicion fits with the paradigm of desire outlined so far. The lovemaking scene is clearly obscene in the sense we have used this word, but it is also funny, and we should not forget that Kafka’s work is often inflected by his dark or bleak humor:

Er konnte das Zimmer noch gar nicht verlassen haben, schon hatte Frieda das elektrische Licht ausgedreht und war bei K. unter dem Pult, “Mein Leibling! Mein süßer Leibling” flüsterte sie, aber rührte K. gar nicht an, wie ohnmächtig vor Liebe lag sie auf dem Rücken und breitete die Arme aus, die Zeit war wohl unendlich vor ihrer glücklichen Liebe, sie seufzte mehr als sie sang irgendein kleines Lied. . . . [S]ie umfaßten einander, der kleiner Körper brannte in K.’s Händen, sie rollten in einer Besinnungslosigkeit, aus der sich K. fortwährend aber vergeblich zu retten suchte, paar Schritte weit, schlugen dumpf an Klamms Tür und lagen dann in den kleinen Pfützen Bieres und dem sonstigen Unrat, von dem der Boden bedeckt war. (48)

[He could hardly have left the room before Frieda had turned out the electric light and was under the counter beside K. “My darling! My darling!” she whispered, but she did not touch him. As if swooning with love, she lay on her back and stretched out her arms; time must have seemed endless to her in the prospect of her happiness, and she sighed rather than sang some little song or other. . . . [T]hey embraced each other, her little body burned

in K.'s hands, in a state of unconsciousness which K. tried again and again but in vain to master they rolled a little way, landing with a thud on Klamm's door, where they lay among the small puddles of beer and other refuse scattered on the floor. (53-54)

In another selected passage they tear at each other's clothes emphasizing the animal and near-violent quality of this sex scene, as though it were indeed the fight to the death (433). This scene is obscene in so far as it is an illicit sexual act which takes place in an inappropriate situation, on the dirty floor of the bar where Frieda works, and the scene is entirely mediated by the fact that Klamm is in his room while they are copulating (and next to his door!). Finally, when Klamm calls out for Frieda, she answers, telling him that she is with the Land surveyor, and thereby dispelling some of the illicit and "dirty" aspects of their act. And Frieda's declaration disappoints K. for the reasons noted earlier, and because he must now follow through with a romance narrative which he does not desire.

The centerpiece of the novel, the chapters or sections titled "Amalia's Secret", "Amalia's Punishment", and "Petitions" are the best examples of obscenity as we understand it here. I will detail how this is so, but what is remarkable about this moment is that the obscene moment is never delineated, as in the passage above--there are no puddles of beer, torn clothing, and love cries. Amalia's narrative, as recounted by her sister, Olga (and Amalia's silence is certainly an important detail), begins with a celebration of a new engine for the village fire brigade. Amalia's and Olga's father, the village cobbler is also a member of the fire brigade and so the family turns out for the event.⁸ Amalia is particularly resplendent, as Olga notes, and attracts much attention. The high official on hand, Sortini (not Sordini--a Kafka joke of confusion which suggests "sordid" officials, from the Latin, *sordere*, to be dirty), mostly hides in the background near the engine, as though he does not want to mix with the villagers, and this behavior certainly fits with the exercise of power as we have noted. He hangs in the shadows until he sees Amalia and her family, and he approaches them, and her specifically: "At the sight of her he leaped over the shaft to get nearer to her; we misunderstood him at first and began to approach him, Father

⁸ Cobblers are certainly an overdetermined group of tradesmen, as they figure largely in much of philosophical and political thought, ranging from Plato to Marx and Heidegger (and then Merleau Ponty and Derrida!). This implication of this reference is not lost on Kafka.

leading the way, but he held us off with uplifted hand and then waved us away" (248). That evening a messenger delivered a note to Amalia, a love letter. The letter demanded Amalia's presence at the Herrenhof where Sortini was awaiting her, though he was scheduled to leave for the Castle shortly. Also, as Olga tells K., "The letter was couched in the vilest language such as I had ever heard" (250). We can infer that the letter demanded that Amalia provide sexual services to Sortini on short notice, and, as Olga notes, the Castle officials expected such services of the village women (255), though everyone is "supposed to belong to the Castle" with no "gulf" (class difference and power inequality) between them. This is an interesting insight which K. does not address.

From our position Amalia's actions seem noble, for she defends her integrity, and Olga, at least, recognizes the situation as such. This is not so for the rest of the family, particularly her father, who sends his son, Barnabas out to catch the messenger and beseech Sortini. he is unsuccessful, and the following events are significant. First, the villagers settle their accounts with the Father's shoe shop and he is also gently removed from his position on the fire brigade. Then his assistant leaves and sets up his own cobbling business leaving the family bereft of income other than their savings. The village, as Olga notes, punishes the entire family, not just Amalia, for Amalia's refusal. Interestingly, however, the villagers do not actually know the details, they simply know that Sortini sent a message and was rebuffed--given Olga's comments about the sexual relations between Castle officials and the village women, the villagers do not need to know specifics.⁹

Also, of note, as explained in the "Petitions" section, Olga's father sets out to win over the Castle by waiting by the roadside, hoping that an official will stop the carriage. take pity on him and relieve his guilty burden for the family now carries Amalia's refusal as heavy sense of guilt. This "petition" of the Father entails holding onto any perceived glance from a carriage, or any form of recognition, and finally reaches its pathetic conclusion when he can no wait in the cold and must stay at home, a sickly man. Instead, his son, Barnabas worms his way into the Castle precinct and presents himself as an ad hoc messenger, hoping to gain the Castle's favor, and a job, and also win favorable recognition

⁹ For an interpretation of Amalia's Secret which completely misconstrues this episode, see Foulkes' chapter (pages 164-165) on The Castle.

for the family, and for his new friend, K., the land surveyor.

Barnabas' ad hoc job concerns the second issue I want to address, the provisional character of social relations, or rather, official and work related relations. Provisionality is by no means separate from obscenity and in fact in several scenes they are necessarily linked. The moments which come to mind are all "sleeping" scenes, that is, they entail sleeping arrangements which are both provisional and obscene. By provisional I refer to circumstances and social relations (again, official relations) which are ad hoc and very temporary due to contingency, yet seem to nonetheless be the de facto permanent condition. I will elucidate this notion at length but consider a moment early in the novel. for example. when K. and Frieda "elope" they initially sleep in the maids quarters in the Herrenhof, an arrangement which suggests something illicit if only because it is never clear that the maids have entirely vacated the room. Indeed the room is known as a hot and stuffy space, which certainly suggests many other things. and K. is relieved to leave when they are ejected by the landlord and his wife.

The second moment where the provisional and the obscene converge is the schoolhouse scene. As with the the sex scenes there is a good deal of humor here. for K. who has arrived in town and announced that he is a land surveyor and thus of some social position. has agreed to serve as the unofficial janitor of the village school. I will return to his provisional job shortly, but the "perks" include the teacher's agreement allowing K. and Frieda and the two assistants to sleep in the schoolhouse. The scene is funny in that there is a strong suggestion that Frieda and one of the assistants, Jeremiah, are having sex while K. sleeps in their ad hoc bed (they sleep on a bundle of straw and when he is awakened by a noise Frieda blames the disruption on an animal), and also that they eventually wake up to find the school children assembled in the room looking at them. Some commentators have linked this scene to Kafka's interest in children, such as the child hero of Amerika, Karl Rossman, but in conjunction with everything which has preceded it this scene seems obscene, suggesting something inappropriate; incest and molestation--maybe more! Again, this is not an example of Kafka's moralism for the situation arises from necessity. but provisionality and obscenity are apt partners here.

Moreover, K.'s job is provisional. Though the teacher tells him that he has

negotiated this situation with the village authorities there is the suggestion that it is a situation which should not entail any formal recognition. Thus, though they sleep in the schoolroom they must vacate before the children arrive and remain unseen, and though they serve as janitors and must keep the building clean and safe they do not have keys to the wood shed and cannot keep warm at night. When K. breaks down the door to get wood for the fire he is reprimanded sharply (and the female teacher, Gisa, even scratches him!!) for having exceeded his authority. This working situation, like so much of social relations under capitalism (and this will be addressed in the following section of this chapter) turns on the dirty secret: everyone knows K. is the janitor but he must remain invisible. He will be known by his labor but this will not bring him the Castle's recognition.

Provisionality as the *de facto* permanent condition of official relations is a constant feature of Kafka's thought about modern society and especially modern bureaucracy. In many ways this permanent impermanence, this social paradox, defines modernity or at least the modern experience as Kafka understands it. Specifically, we see this in the courts which Josef K. finds at odd hours and in decidedly unofficial places while the officers of the Law, the judges and bureaucrats and even the police figures who finally execute Josef K. in The Trial, are not "properly" dressed as though they are ad hoc officials. not the "real thing". Their uniforms are dirty and their orders vague and arbitrary.

And so it goes with The Castle. As noted above, we never meet Count West West and we never visit the Castle, and after all this seems to be the point. As both Kenneth Burke and Slavoj Zizek comment, this scene as such owes much to the tradition of courtly love, or, following Freud and Lacan, *anamorphosis*, followed by *sublimation*, where the object of desire is encircled and cast as an unapproachable and unattainable ideal. As Zizek notes, Luis Bunuel works through the same point in his film That Obscure Object of Desire.¹⁰

With Bunuel, then, we should not overlook the humorous aspect of these scenes of "provisionality" as I have dubbed them. Indeed when K. visits the mayor's office early in the novel, in order to find the papers which will certify his official status as "land surveyor"

¹⁰ For these references see the Burke essay mentioned earlier and the "Courtly Love, or, Woman as Thing" chapter in Zizek's Metastases of Enjoyment.

the search is particularly silly albeit close to the reality of many municipal offices. The office is a mess, and there is no staff, only the mayor and his wife, and the cabinets which house the records are overflowing and completely disorganized: "The cabinet was crammed full of papers. When it was opened two large packages of papers rolled out, tied in round bundles, as one usually binds firewood; the woman sprang back in alarm" (78). K.'s demand for his paperwork has the overtones of a challenge to the system to meet its standards and ideal form, that is, to document and follow due process, as well as an entirely inappropriate response to the situation. How could one expect order to emerge from such a context. After a search which only exacerbates the messy situation the papers must be "re-filed": "They [the assistants] had laid the cabinet on its back on the floor, crammed all the documents in, then along with Mizzi had knelt on the cabinet door and were trying now in this way to get it shut" (91). This scene is not only funny in a familiar way (as a satire of contemporary bureaucracies) but also demonstrates exactly what is meant by provisional here; on the one hand there is an insistence on documentation and authentic signatures, and on the other the documentation is treated as so much mess to be stuffed into containers, as though its retention were a matter of reluctant retention. Perhaps it is too easy a point, but Freud's thoughts about the anal stage and retention or resistance thereof seem relevant.

From this early encounter with the "real" bureaucracy of the village we next turn to the late encounter with secretary Burgel. Some initial points to note; after the passage of most of the novel K. seems on the verge of realizing his quest and finally having an official response to his queries when he is called for an interview with the Castle official Erlanger. The interview, however, is held at the Herrenhof and is at midnight. When K. arrives at the pub he meets others who are also waiting for a midnight interview with one of the secretaries. K. is led through the hallways of the Herrenhof to Erlanger's door: "At last they stopped before a door, which was not in any way different from the others and yet behind which, so the servant informed them, was Erlanger. The servant got K. to lift him onto his shoulders and has a look into the room through the open space at the top. . . . 'I fancy all the same that he's asleep. . . . We'll have to wait'" (315). Readers of Kafka are familiar with these funny scenes, where in somewhat formal circumstances people act in a

childish manner or otherwise inappropriately, but this particular scene is reminiscent of Frieda and K. peeping at Klamm in the beginning of the novel. Moreover, the point to remember here is that petty Castle officials, secretaries, begrudgingly meet with village petitioners (it is explained that they do not have to do so!), after midnight in the Herrenhof, which is little more than a contemporary pub or lodging house. These meetings are provisional and inappropriate in character—maybe it is finally appropriate to spy on officials while they sleep.

K. is lost in the Herrenhof passageways, eventually meets Frieda for the final encounter mentioned earlier, and afterwards tries to retrace his steps and arbitrarily picks a door and opens it:

Aber nun empfing ihn ein leichter Schrei. Es war ein kleines Zimmer, von einem breiten Bett mehr als zur Hälfte ausgefüllt, auf dem Nachttischen brannte die elektrische Lampe, neben ihr war eine Reisehandtasche. . . . [D]er Mann im Bett zog ein wenig die Decke vom Gesicht, aber ängstlich, bereit sich gleich wieder ganz zu bedecken, wenn draußen etwas nicht stimmen sollte. Dann aber schlug er die Decke ohne Bedenken zurück und setzte sich aufrecht. Erlanger war es gewiß nicht. Es war ein kleiner, wohl aussehender Herr, dessen Gesicht dadurch einen gewissen Widerspruch in sich trug, daß die Wangen Kindlich rund, die Augen kindlich fröhlich waren, aber die hohe Stirn, die spitze Nase, der schmale Mund, dessen Lippen kaum zusammenhalten wollten, das sich fast verflüchtigende Kinn gar nicht kindlich waren, sondern überlegenes Denken verreiten. (276)

[H]e was met with a faint scream. It was a small room, more than half filled by a wide bed, on the night table the electric light was burning, beside it was a travelling bag. . . . [T]he man in the bed pulled the quilt a little off his face, anxiously ready, however, to cover himself up again completely if something was not quite all right out there. But then he flung back the quilt without qualms and sat up. It was certainly not Erlanger. It was a small, good looking gentleman whose face had a certain contradictoriness in it in

that the cheeks were chubby as a child's and the eyes merry as a child's, but that the high forehead, the pointed nose, the narrow mouth, the lips of which would scarcely remain closed, the almost vanishing chin, were not like a child's at all, but revealed a superior intellect (333).

This is Burgel, the secretary of Friedrich (an official unknown to K.). In the following exchange between K. and Burgel, the former sits on the bed of Burgel who lectures him about the significance of the midnight interrogations and the ways of secretaries. K. slowly falls asleep and has a dream about assaulting a naked secretary, who looks like a statue of a Greek god, and manages to kick him in his "unguarded parts", producing squeaks, "like a girl being tickled". When K. wakes up Burgel is still talking about how a petitioner might successfully catch a secretary unawares during one of these midnight interviews and so gain his petition. Some commentators have argued that this scene offers K. a solution but he ignores it, for he is not looking for an answer to his quest and he is too arrogant to listen to others. This interpretation seems silly and overlooks the situation which determines the entire exchange. It is midnight, they are talking on a bed, the secretary is described as an effete yet attractive man, and he makes girlish noises. K. falls asleep and dreams about attacking him in a sexual way! This is the perfect combination of the provisional and the obscene, and whatever truths of K.'s character might lie here, they are irrelevant to this representation of village authority in action.

Dirty Work

From the discussion of encounter with power and the Law, and the relationship between obscenity and the ad-hoc or provisional and subject formation, we now turn to the prevalence and role of work related themes in Kafka's texts, particularly the novella, The Metamorphosis, and the novel at hand, The Castle. Power, the Law, the obscene and work all comprise the modern experience as Kafka understands it, and lie at the crux of the aesthetic with which he engages the modern world.

Thus, despite Kafka's (deserved) reputation as one of the modernist avant garde writers, the prevalence of work-related themes in his novels (albeit fragmented), Amerika, The Trial, and The Castle, as well as his short fiction, parables, and in the diary, is striking; it is striking because work, literally the working day and its humdrum

striking; it is striking because work, literally the working day and its humdrum associations, seems hardly the material for a stylistically elliptical and somewhat obscure writer, and rather seems rather the province of various “realisms” and attempts to render the nitty gritty of everyday life. Amerika, for example, is a kind of anti-bildungsroman which documents the downward spiral of a young man, Karl Rossman who arrives in the United States as an educated child of the German middle class. Yet after a series of misadventures he must take a job at a hotel as a bellhop, and due to mishaps and the usual workplace resentments, he is fired and becomes the captive of two lumpen proletariats who have attached themselves to a grossly overweight retired diva. One is her lover and the other her assistant, while Karl is the group’s slave. The novel ends with his being employed in the circus, *The Natural Theatre of Oklahoma*, for which “no experience is necessary”.

And so, while The Trial is centered around a specious court case and judicial system, and the discourse thereof, it seems to me that the primary feature of the novel is the fact that Josef K.’s everyday life has been disrupted by the appearance of gendarmes and vague accusations. In so far as Josef K.’s everyday life is determined by his work, the rhythm of the office, and this rhythm entails the stability of his life and self perception, once this rhythm is upset or disrupted, he is also upset and disrupted in a (fundamental) psychic sense as well.

The Castle , the second text I address here, also documents the travails of a similarly educated man looking for a promised job as land surveyor at the castle of Count West West. Like Rossman, K. is a professional, a land surveyor, but must take a quasi-official job as a school janitor, and is fired for his troubles. The downward spiral continues as K. attempts to regain some of his paltry pleasures, namely his relationship with the barmaid Frieda, and at the end seems reconciled to his abject and unemployed situation. Advancement in a profession cannot be realized and this is underlined by the similarly unemployed or quasi-employed (again, the provisional) characters with whom he interacts.

Max Brod comments in his biography of Kafka that he and the author often discussed the ideal job, to be distinguished from their actual jobs, which would both provide for their needs and leave enough time for writing and related activities. The kinds

of jobs they both had and even what they idealized, what we would recognize as back office professional work, were not determined according to class prestige but were simply a means to an end. And they both were aware of the grinding labor and its implications for the bodies and the consciousness of the working class. Consider the following passage: The years I spent as an official in the post office, and during which I wrote, among other things, in the afternoons and evening, my Tycho Brahe, remain so dimly in my memory that I can hardly see a single detail any more. It has all been crammed in the maw of the subconscious. . . . What remains is a direct sympathy for the almost unrealizable suffering that weighs on the working classes--that weighs on all who do work that does not interest them. Suffering that has been raised to a degree that one can only describe as fantastic by the "Taylor System" and the "conveyor belt." How can such suffering be borne at all? Perhaps we are all only dreaming that it is borne--this almost unimaginable suffering--because in reality it surpasses the limits of human powers of resistance, and of what is unfortunately the same thing in this case, of the possibilities of human degradation. (81)

Brod follows this lengthy note with Kafka's own comment that in his work in the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute, he was always amazed at the humble dispositions of his worker clientele: "How modest these men are. . . . They come to us and beg. Instead of storming the institute and smashing it to little pieces, they come and beg." (82) Thus, Kafka notes the mangled bodies and minds of the working class: "They come to us and beg".

Kafka's achievement is to reveal these fantasies of labor, or literally how one imagines oneself as a worker and the attendant social relations, not qua fantasies but as reality, what is. The link with conspiracy lies with the form of this way of thinking about jobs. the form, I argue, is that of disavowal. By disavowal I refer to Freud's notion of a disavowed "castration" of the mother, where children "disavow (*leugnen*) the fact and believe that they do see a penis, all the same" (Pontalis 118). This is the familiar "yes. I know but ..." phrase with which any external reality is fended off or dismissed. The crucial characteristic of disavowal is that it allows for the coexistence of two divergent fantasies.

Consider, for example, the familiar labor scenario upon which so much of capitalism as an everyday experience hinges; the worker takes his body, his labor to the

market and sells it to the highest bidder like a baseball free agent or a famous academic. This is the fantasy Marx mocked in his well known quip, "The worker takes his hide to the market and gets a hiding." Of course, nobody actually believes that this is what most of us actually do, but, nonetheless, it is the operative fantasy which underlies and enables our working lives. As Lukács makes clear from the outset in his "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" chapter (of History and Class Consciousness), capitalism turns on abstract labor power, particularly the commodification of labor power and this fact runs counter to the fantasy of the labor marketplace. The particularities of my body, your body, anybody's body are irrelevant. And so, as Lukács emphasizes, capitalism is marked by the moment when "[T]he worker too, must present himself as the 'owner' of his labour-power, as if it were a commodity. His specific situation is defined by the fact that his labour-power is his only possession" (History 92).

These points, I argue, are played out in Kafka's work, and are integral to what I dubbed earlier his aesthetic of hopelessness. I will focus initially, however, upon his novella, The Metamorphosis, and very briefly address Kafka's short story, "The Hunger Artist", and finally link these arguments to the The Castle and the preceding comments.

"The Hunger Artist" is obviously about work and the body: the work involves the artist's fasting, and the consequent emaciation of the body. As a job it is not working in the traditional sense, for the Hunger Artist is a carnival worker, an act, a spectacle. Kafka has an extraordinary ear for a discourse of work. The hunger artist has pride and work ethic which comes out when faced with groupies who want to feed him on the sly. Kafka's merciless representation of this discourse carries through to the end when the nearly dead and forgotten hunger artist is found by a carnival worker and explains that he never ate because he could not find any food that he liked, and if he had, he would have "stuffed himself like everyone else". The points we should derive from this are that the hunger artist perceives himself as a professional, though his profession does not produce anything tangible nor is it socially recognized. His labor is simply useless and to this extent he has fallen out of the middle class. His work turns on a constitutive disavowal, a disavowal of hunger, and a disavowal of his body, but this disavowal is in turn derived from the mundane fact that he could not find any food he liked.

While The Castle does not continue to develop the relationship between work, or labor, and what I have identified as the psychoanalytic notion of disavowal in the same way as The Hunger Artist, I maintain that, in conjunction with the search for power, and the obscene and the provisional, this same interest in the internalization of external relations, work and the working day, is evident and an important element of Kafka's aesthetic of hopelessness. We have only to consider that this novel is largely centered around a search for work, a search which is inextricable from a search for an encounter with power/authority. Again, we should turn to the opening scene of the novel and remember that out here, K., is a man without fortune, aristocratic title, contacts in the village, and he does not even seem to be a physical presence or threat. The villagers and the lower level castle officials are uniformly rude and disrespectful, and this incites K.'s statement with which the novel is launched: "Let me tell you that I am the Land Surveyor who the Count is expecting. My assistants are coming tomorrow in a carriage with the apparatus. . . . That is all I have to say. Good night, gentlemen" (5). This declaration is clearly that of a man who has nothing and is groping for a way in, a way to situate himself within a strange community, and this is a community in the organic sense of a *Gemeinschaft*, for one's position is clearly determined by a relationship which is neither legal, nor even textual.¹¹ The village of Count West West is not ruled by laws, or the Law in any traditional liberal sense. The rule of Count West West, as I have explained earlier is a rule of The Law, but not in the sense that it countenances and recognizes citizen-subjects. If this were a traditional liberal democracy then K.'s entrance would hardly have evoked the same response and he would not have to grope for an excuse or justification for his presence in the village, in public space. More to the point, this is a semi-feudal community, and we know this simply because there is a castle, a count, and the rule of the castle/count is absolute. It is a feudal community but it is by no means non-modern, for there are telephones and fire-engines and other modern products.

With these points in mind, I find it hard to understand why so many Kafka critics have spent so much effort defending K.'s professional status (see Ronald Gray) or denouncing him as an impostor. Indeed the denunciation is particularly bizarre but,

¹¹ See Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society for an exhaustive and definitive definition of these terms, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

denouncing him as an impostor. Indeed the denunciation is particularly bizarre but, perhaps, fitting, for it “fits” the ethos of the village of Count West West, where all credentials must be challenged and approved. This, Erwin R. Steinberg declares, “An examination of The Castle indicates that there is little evidence to support K.’s claim either that he is a land-surveyor or that he was hired by the Castle. And there is a good bit of evidence to the contrary” (25). I cite this passage in order to show how so many readers entirely miss the point, and how what I have dubbed Kafka’s aesthetic of hopelessness is largely invisible to these same readers. The point is not that K. is or is not a land surveyor, but that he chooses this as a means to enter the community.

So, what is the significance of a land-surveyor? First, for K., a land surveyor is a professional. A land surveyor is someone who has a particular training, skill, and knowledge, and, most important, a proper place in modern society. A critical element of any definition of modernity is the rationalization of Nature, and a land surveyor is a consummate modern figure in this sense. He is a professional and a rationalizer of space-- he brings order to chaos or the unknown or unintelligible. K. reaches out for a title, and he chooses this one, and some readers, such as Speirs and Sandberg, understand this putative title as a challenge.

If K. has come here looking for a fight with a hierarchically organized society, has he come to the right kind of place? Practically everyone he meets is certainly well aware of hierarchical relationships, and most seem to be respectful of them. . . . Although he casts himself in the role of the challenger, K.’s attitude to this complicated hierarchy is not one of simple opposition or rejection. he is neither Messiah nor a revolutionary. On a later occasion, having just criticized Olga, Barnabas and others for their excessive reverence (‘*Ehrfurcht*’) towards the authorities, K. goes on to contradict himself flatly: ‘ “If an authority is good, why should one not feel reverence for it?” ’ K., the self styled challenger of established power, is apparently quite capable of venerating authority and relishing the subservience of others. (109-110)

Speirs and Sandberg are correct in their reading to this extent, for K. is in fact

threatened, or he feels nullified by his initial reception in the village, and this particular title, land surveyor, offers him both a cover and a riposte. As a land surveyor, K. effectively declares, "I am somebody, and more to the point, I am here to bring some order, some definition, at the request of your Count." Yet, this is a semi-feudal community, and what does a land surveyor do in such circumstances? After all, the count's claim to power and land is hereditary and finally based on an irrational principle, divine right; God gave me this land. But K. enters the village with his pronouncements about his apparatus and his assistants, apparently ready to rationalize the land, to bring order to chaos. We know from the following chapters that K. is not a land surveyor, and this is evident in several ambiguous comments, and is easily ascertained from his subsequent actions and behavior. Even Pepi, at the end of the novel tells K.:

[E]s ist ein Jammer seine Lage anzusehn. Er ist ein Landvermesser, das ist vielleicht etwas er hat also etwas gelernt, aber wenn man nichts damit anzufangen weiß, ist es doch auch wieder nichts. Und dabei stellt er Ansprüche; ohne den geringsten Rückhalt zu haben . . . das ist doch aufreizend. Ob er denn wisse, daß such sogar ein Zimmermädchen etwas vergibt, wenn sie länger mit ihm spricht. (317)

[I]t was heart rending to see his situation. He was a Land-Surveyor, that was perhaps something, so he had learned something, but if one didn't know what to do with it, then again it was nothing after all. And at the same time he made demands, without having the slightest backing . . . and that was, after all, infuriating. Did he know that even a chambermaid was lowering herself if she talked to him for any length of time? (388)

We also have to consider the jobs of the other characters in the novel. First, there are no other professionals in the sense we use this word: there are no lawyers or doctors, and there is only a teacher and his wife (Gisa, who is also a teacher), but this hardly

constitutes a fully professionalized job at this historical juncture.¹² Even the officials of the Castle, or at least those we encounter (one way or another) in the novel, are an irregular group, or ad-hoc and provisional as we have dubbed them, meeting at odd hours and in odd unprofessional places, and often depicted in weird poses, in bed and/or asleep or otherwise ill-disposed. The characters with whom K. interacts are also an odd irregular bunch, without a permanent secure place in the division of labor in the village. Barnabas is a semi-official messenger who is merely tolerated by the Castle and who does not appear to make a regular salary from his work. while Olga and Amalia do not seem to do anything at all. And we know that their father is the ostracized cobbler of the village, and is in ill health. Pepi is only a part-time barmaid who “rises” from her job as a chamber maid when K. elopes with her predecessor, Frieda, and the latter only holds her job because she is Klamm’s mistress, and this is her real job. As Erlanger finally explains to K., Frieda must return to the bar in order to return to her duties as a mistress, for Klamm’s pleasure, and by extension the stability of the community, depends upon the return of affairs prior to our anti-hero’s arrival.

A job, in this village is both labor, a job, and a lived relationship to power and this is why the previous discussion of power and the obscene and provisional is relevant here. Kafka recognizes, and this is the basis of his aesthetic of hopelessness, that in many complex and unarticulated ways we are attached to social structures such as that of the village. Indeed, with K., we, even today, derive pleasure from the struggle to get closer to power, which is not to claim that the lower reaches do not also offer pleasures. The perversity of this social conundrum, for it is just this, if not the obstruction which any social movement must consider, is evident in K.’s final comment to Pepi:

Ich will nicht sagen, daß die Stelle für Dich zu hoch ist, es ist ja keine so außerordentliche Stelle, vielleicht ist sie, wenn man genau zusieht, etwas ehrenvoller als Deine frühere Stelle, im ganzen aber ist der Unterschied nicht groß, beide sind eher zum Verwechseln einander ähnlich, ja man

¹² I feel safe in making this statement for one only has to consider that in the early 20th century in the U.S., for example, the feminization of the profession was simultaneous with the crushing of union movements and collective demands for better wages and work conditions. Also, Marx and Matthew Arnold offer criticisms of factory and public education and ill-trained teachers in Capital (vol.1) and Culture and Anarchy respectively.

könnte fast behaupten, daß Zimmermädchen-sein dem Ausschank vorzuziehen wäre, denn dort ist man immer unter Sekretären, hier dagegen muß man, wenn man auch in den Gastzimmern die Vorgesetzten der Sekretäre bedienen darf, doch auch mit ganz niedrigem Volk sich abgeben. z.B. mit mir; ich darf ja von Rechts wegen gar nicht anderswo mich aufhalten, als eben hier im Ausschank und die Möglichkeit mit mir zu verkehren, sollte so über all Maßen ehrenvoll sein. (327)

[I am not going to say that the job is too grand for you; it is, after all, not a very splendid job; perhaps, if one regards it closely, it is somewhat more honorable than your previous job; on the whole, however, the difference is not great, both are indeed so similar that one can hardly distinguish between them; indeed, one might almost assert that being a chambermaid is preferable to the taproom, for there one is always among secretaries, here, on the other hand, even though one is allowed to serve the secretaries' chiefs in the private rooms, still one also has to have a lot to do with quite common people, for instance with me; actually I am not really supposed to sit about anywhere but right here in the taproom--and is it such a great and glorious honor to associate with me? (402)]

Perhaps one can simply dismiss K. and declare that he loves his oppression and his oppressors, and this does begin to capture the weird inversions of Kafka's portrait of modernity. I think there is more, however, and that ultimately K.'s situation is that of all of us who live in a capitalist society where social relations are finally determined by class. It is not enough to simply state that one day one comes to one's senses and recognizes the world and society for what it is, and revolution is then only around the corner. In Kafka's estimation this moment might never arrive, for finally there is no moment of dissatisfaction and when there is this is turned inwards. We blame ourselves.

As stated earlier in this section, this dilemma concerns Freud's notion of disavowal and its relationship to class and class ideology lies at the core of K.'s anti-*Bildung* in The Castle. Yet, I think this point might be clearer if we also examine Kafka's novella, The

Metamorphosis for here we see exactly how and to what degree dissatisfaction is turned inwards, how class consciousness is hardly around the corner.

The Metamorphosis has been interpreted in many ways, notably by psychoanalytic critics who have focused on the significance of the father and Gregor's interactions, and the resonance with biographical details from Kafka's life. In almost every critical article about this text the author will invariably cite and ponder the opening sentence: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (2). This sentence has rightly drawn much commentary for it almost blandly sets into motion a story about a shocking transformation of a man into a gigantic bug and "documents" his subsequent interactions with his boss and his family, interactions which lead to his exile in his room and then his death.

The story is divided into 3 sections, each marked by a roman numeral, and which account for definitive shifts in the narrative. In the first section Gregor is transformed into an *Ungeziefer*, refuses to leave his room until his boss arrives and forces a face to face encounter (as it were!). The boss flees, the family is horrified and Gregor's father shoos him into his room with a newspaper, a scene which brings to mind the way we swat at flies, insects or unruly pets--Gregor is the *other* in the sense that he is now treated by the family, or at least by its patriarch, as a threat and not-of-the-family. The second section follows Gregor's adaptation to his new body, the highlight being the moment when his sister finds him sleeping while dangling from the ceiling, and marks a kind of resignation to his life as a bug. It ends however, with another sally forth from the room, a shocking encounter with his mother, and his father again driving him back into the room this time by throwing apples at him, one of which lodges in his back. The third section is the denouement in that Gregor is a defeated soul here, at least until he hears his sister playing the violin and makes his last attempt to visit the family. One of the family boarders sees him and denounces the filth of the Samsa family, they announce they will leave the next day, and in a rage Gregor's father drives him back into the room with a stick. The family then confers, and the sister, who has to this point been the only family member who shows him any empathy, provides the rationale for getting rid of him: her brother is no longer a person, er or he in German, but is an it, es. Gregor is de facto dead and the thing must be

removed. Hearing this Gregor dies by the next morning and the family charwoman proudly announces that she has disposed of the body. She is fired for her efforts, and the story ends with a scene of reconciliation, for the sister will be married and the family's financial woes seem to have eased.

Only one of Kafka's many critics and readers (and I will address the relevant text shortly), to my knowledge, has made much of the conjunction of the following crucial details: first, that Gregor awakes one morning to find that he is an *ungeheuren Ungeziefer*, an enormous bug, *after having overslept* (my italics). Gregor fears he will be late for work. Of course many have commented on the kind of bug Gregor has become, and it is important to note that he is a vermin, not a cockroach or a specific bug. Adorno even cites a purportedly well known German phrase about commercial travellers or travelling salesmen as we know them: "These travelling salesmen are like bugs" (255). But, in conjunction with Gregor's tardiness for work, he also thinks at length about how he will explain having overslept to his boss and other supervisors. Again, having overslept. Gregor fears for his job--he fears that if he loses his job he will be unemployed, and, we can infer, and this is not a stretch, so he will fall out of the comfort of the middle class into the filth of the *lumpen proletariat*.

Marx makes many comments about the *Lumpen proletariat* or *Wandervolk* in scattered locations but the following passage from *Capital* (volume 1) seems relevant here. "Nomad labor", Marx proclaims, are "the light infantry of capital" akin to the reserve army of the unemployed which he links to the law of capitalist accumulation. Moreover, "nomad labor" is "A flying column of pestilence it carries into the places it pitches its camp, small-pox, typhus, cholera, etc." (Marx 728-733). Though there is some (factual) substance here, the link between pestilence and a poor transient work force (and there are associations of vermin here), this passage on the *Wandervolk* or *Lumpen proletariat* is a description with an analytic intent, that is, to show the structural link between the *lumpen* and the law of accumulation.

Again, we cannot say the same for Gregor who lives in terror of falling out of the middle class and into the insect world. As Gregor comments to himself earlier, upon the chief clerk's arrival at the house, "What a fate, to be condemned to work for a firm where

the smallest omission at once gave rise to the gravest suspicion! Were all employees in a body nothing but scoundrels . . .” (21). This last word in the German text is *lumpen*. And though this fear eventually overwhelms in so far as he is entirely preoccupied with his condition as a bug, only a few paragraphs after the opening scene, Gregor does not seem to be concerned about his bodily state. “Oh God, he thought, what an exhausting job I’ve picked on! Travelling about day in and day out. . . . The devil take it” (9). I suggest here that we catch a glimpse of Gregor’s resentment, a resentment which in a psychic sense accounts for why he is a bug.

This is clearer later on when Gregor attempts to explain himself to the chief clerk, to assure him that he will leave for work shortly. This attempt is to no avail for Gregor speaks in bug language and the chief clerk cannot understand him. Notably, what we see here is that the chief clerk and the company maintain work discipline by making the employees feel guilty, and he insinuates that Gregor is refusing to leave for work because he has stolen some cash entrusted to him. The chief clerk’s representation of the work relationship is as a moral one, a gentlemanly deal between the boss and the individual employee, a kind of code of honor which Gregor has violated by oversleeping. Finally, this is a relationship founded on guilt—you, the employee, owe us, your employers something, and in a way Gregor has already decided to defy his guilt, and so he simply cannot speak this guilt discourse anymore and so the chief clerk cannot understand him despite Gregor’s obsequious pleadings. “Well”, said Gregor, knowing perfectly well that he was the only one who had retained any composure, “I’ll put my clothes on at once, pack up my samples and start off. Will you only let me go? You see, sir, I’m not obstinate, and I’m willing to work; travelling is a hard life, but I couldn’t live without it”. This humble pie rhetoric is all too familiar to most of us.

Actually, guilt drives the entire narrative in a couple of ways. First, Gregor must work in order to help the family pay a debt owed by the father. In an early moment, while grousing about his job and lying in bed, Gregor thinks to himself, “If I didn’t have to hold my hand because of my parents I’d have to give notice long ago, I’d have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him. That would knock him endways from his desk! It’s a queer way of doing, too, this sitting on high at a desk and talking down to

employees, especially when they have to come quite near because the chief is hard of hearing. Well, there's still hope; once I've saved enough money to pay my parent's debt's to him--that should take another five or six years--I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself loose then. For the moment though, I'd better get up, since my train goes at five" (11).

As the story develops we learn that the payment of the debt is apparently dependent upon Gregor's labor--now that his body has undergone this metamorphosis, he is useless and the debt must be paid somehow. Much of the remainder of the story turns on the consequences for the family of Gregor's bodily change. Gregor has forced the family to make adjustments which destabilize it. The family can no longer interact with each other in the same way, a certain familial symmetry has been upset, and, worst of all in their minds, the financial consequence is that they must all work. The text notes that the first charwoman and the family cook quit, and so this middle class fantasy begins to crack as the amenities of privilege leave the job. By the second section Gregor's father has taken a job as a bank messenger, surely a class demotion, and by the third section his sister has taken a job as a salesgirl while Gregor's beloved mother is a seamstress for a fine underwear manufacturer. We learn that Gregor's father continually wears his bank uniform at home, as though it were a status symbol, and he were ever ready "at the beck and call of his superior", though with continual wear it only begins to look dirty.

To return to guilt, Gregor's act, such as it is (apparently unintended) is construed as a fundamental violation and the text underscores this with the apple throwing scene, which has obvious Biblical associations. In a way, this scene suggests that Gregor is the original sin, for having been born, and his father a kind of resentful Adam. The family's pseudo-Eden depended upon Gregor's labor, but as a vermin he is useless.

We must return, however, to the image of Gregor's father proudly wearing his shabby uniform. Shabbiness is, obviously, a large part of this story, for it is equated with filth, *lumpen*. After all, Gregor is a vermin, a specimen who lives in shabbiness and relishes it. Gregor's room, however, becomes shabby not through his doing, but through his sister's neglect--though she initially tenderly looks after him and shields him, eventually she ceases to clean the room and in the second section simply throws his food into the room, served on a newspaper. Those of you familiar with Kafka's other work know that

shabbiness is prevalent in almost all of his work and in particular in The Trial, in the irregular and shabby appearance of the police who arrest K, and the irregular and filthy appearance of the courts and their administrators. This is not simply a neurotic characteristic of Kafka's but adds up to a significant political insight. Walter Benjamin argues that for Kafka the "world of fathers and the courts are the same to Kafka", and that "Filth is the element of officials", and "Uncleanness is so much the attribute of officials that one could almost regard them as enormous parasites", the father lying on top of his son", sucking the life out of him (114). The following breathtaking passage from Adorno's essay, "Notes on Kafka", an essay I will consider again shortly, however, drives home the point I want to make about shabbiness and politics: "It [shabbiness and parasites] describes a social whole in which those whom society holds in its grip and through whom it maintains itself become superfluous. But the shabbiness in Kafka goes further. It is the cryptogram of capitalism's highly polished late phase, which he excludes in order to define it all the more precisely in its negative. Kafka scrutinizes the smudges left behind in the deluxe edition of the book of life by the fingers of power. No world could be more homogeneous than the stifling one which he compresses to a totality by means of petty bourgeois dread: it is logically airtight and empty of meaning like every system" (256).

Adorno goes even further, linking shabbiness to fascism, as noted in the passage cited above. Again: "'State and Party'--they meet in attics, live in taverns, like Hitler and Goebbels in the Kaiserhof, a band of conspirators installed as the police. Their usurpation reveals that inherent in the myth of power. . . . Acts of unbridled violence are performed by figures in subordinate positions, types such as noncommissioned officers, prisoners of war, and concierges. They are all declasses, caught up in the collapse of the organized collective and permitted to survive, like Gregor Samsa's father" (259). Shabbiness, and acts of violence performed by irregular and shabby representatives of the state are familiar to us. These are the disheveled police officers who arrest Josef K, and the "rogue" cops (contemporary parlance) who brutalize people, beat them in backrooms, and carry out acts of unspeakable violence. To the contrary, these representatives of the law are not rogues but are expressions of the Law, of capitalism itself. Their voice is one of disavowal, as in the "apologies" which the police offer K when they arrest him in The Trial, promising him they

will not harm him and the charges will be dropped. And it is disavowal when mayors, commissioners and investigatory commissions proclaim that police brutality does not exist, only rogue cops committing crimes.

Disavowal is the voice of liberalism which justifies economic violence in moral terms of free trade and “the right to work”. Disavowal is bad faith and disavowal lies at the heart of The Metamorphosis. It is a disavowal of Gregor’s rage at the abuse he must endure at home and at work, this double expropriation which perpetuates an apparently comfortable family life and a middle class fantasy; it is disavowal which is underpinned by guilt with which the boss terrifies Gregor and makes him feel bad; it is disavowal by means of which the family finally decides that Gregor must go, that he is “other”, and “it” and no longer human. And this last act of disavowal is mouthed by his loving sister.

Many of the points I have made above are also found in an interesting article “From Marx to Myth: The Structure and Function of Self-Alienation in Kafka’s Metamorphosis”, by the eminent Kafka scholar, Walter H. Sokel. This critic rightly emphasizes that this is a text about labor, though the conclusions he draws out are poor readings of Kafka and Marx. Sokel rightly argues that the most important element of the story lies with the guilt which binds Gregor to his job. For Sokel Gregor is a representative of the proletariat, and his father is responsible for the extraction of surplus value. Gregor’s dissatisfaction, for Sokel, lies with the alienation he feels at his work and Gregor’s death is finally the scapegoating of the proletariat, a “sacrificial death for the family of which he thinks ‘with tenderness and love’ ” (11). Sokel misses the point in so far as overlooks the critical opening passage, Gregor’s first refusal to work; Gregor overslept. This refusal is closely followed by his second refusal couched in angry resentful thoughts about his supervisor, and this is in turn followed by his metamorphosis. The point here is that class is not a term which is immanent to the text, and this is deliberately so. Gregor cannot conceive of his situation outside of the most immediate relations, his immediate workplace, and so has no access to the kind of theoretical language which would allow him to articulate a class analysis. He is simply resentful and this is the bitter trap he has set for himself. The other point we must consider here is that class analysis is replaced by an aestheticization--when one experiences declassement one falls into “filth”, or, in Gregor’s case, one becomes filth,

a *lumpen* bug. The significance is not only the displacement or, better, foreclosure of class analysis, but also the foreclosure of metaphor. The Metamorphosis is not an allegory of work and class consciousness (or false consciousness), because there is no pure moment of consciousness which would allow for this--again, Gregor does not compare himself to a bug, he is a bug. So, if there is a disavowal narrative here, the conscious narrative, the "truth" of Gregor's situation, drops away and is replaced by the aestheticization of declassament, the aesthetic of hopelessness.

Conclusion: No Trip to Spain and No Way Out

In his essay, "The Ideology of the Modern", Lukács complains that in Kafka, "We become acquainted with a repellent host of subordinate authorities; brutal, corrupt, pedantic--and, at the same time, unreliable and irresponsible" (Realism 44). Though he grants that Kafka's novels (The Trial and The Castle) provide a portrait of Prague, to an extent, they are finally "allegorical" while the characters are "impotent victims, not concrete and realistic". The detail of this reading of The Castle provides both a rebuttal to Lukács poor grasp of Kafka's work, and demonstrates how in fact Kafka's work is engaged with the concrete and the real, as they are *experienced* by the various Ks. Thus, we can learn from Kafka about the nascent fascist state, specifically from his "portrait" of the Austro-Hungarian state. Kafka's state functions through and with obscenity, and social relations and identity (subjectivity) is influenced, or actually determined as a result. There are dark paradoxes here which few have explored and fewer seem to grasp, especially where these paradoxes defy neat resolution and moral order.

In many ways the following passage from Theodor Adorno's tour de force essay on Kafka (collected in Prisms) summarizes the points made above. In this essay Adorno concurs with Klaus Mann's comment that Kafka's world was that of the Third Reich because, in his novel's "ambiguity and obscurity are attributed not exclusively to the Other as such but to human beings and to the conditions in which they live". This comment seems elusive or perhaps cryptic until we read the following:

Kafka's method was verified when the obsolete liberal traits that he surveyed, stemming from the anarchy of commodity production, changed into forms of fascist organization . . . 'State and Party'--they meet in attics, live in taverns, like Hitler and

Goebbels in the Kaiserhof, a band of conspirators installed as the police. Their usurpation reveals that inherent in the myth of power. In The Castle the officials wear a special uniform, as the SS did--one which any pariah can make himself if need be. In fascism, too, the elites are self appointed. Arrest is assault, judgment violence. The Party always allowed its potential victims a dubious, corrupt chance to bargain and negotiate, as do Kafka's inaccessible functionaries; he could have invented the expression 'protective custody', had it not already become current during the First World War. . . . Acts of unbridled violence are performed by figures in subordinate positions, types such as non-commissioned officers, prisoners of way, concierges. They are all *declasses*, caught up in the collapse of the organized collective and permitted to survive, like Gregor Samsa's father. As in the era of defective capitalism, the burden of guilt is shifted from the sphere of production to the agents of circulation or to those who provide services, travelling salesmen, bank employees, waiters. The unemployed--in The Castle--and emigrants--in America--are dressed and preserved like fossils of the process of declassment. (259-260)

The keyword above is "fossils", for it suggests that labor in so far as it concerns a human activity with an ontological dimension, as well as the consciousness of the working class, now "reified" in Lukács' sense of this word.¹³ Class consciousness and labor as activity stands over and against the worker as something dead and extraneous.

While all the elements of my own argument about Kafka's work are present in Adorno's comments above, particularly the notion that the orders are displaced onto part-time semi officials of the state who then commit atrocities in the name of the state, only to be denied, there is something missing. For Adorno the working class are zombies, the living dead who have survived an epochal crisis, and continue to act with no capacity to reflect upon their condition and then change it. Perhaps this is a contentious reading of Adorno, but here I certainly side with Lukács position, that art must be actively engaged in its times (questions about representation and technique are another matter!) and some of the biographical detail cited here about Kafka's feelings for the working class certainly indicate his sympathies, understanding, and concern.

Still, as I have stated throughout this chapter, Kafka develops what I have dubbed

¹³ See the "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" chapter of History and Class Consciousness.

Still, as I have stated throughout this chapter, Kafka develops what I have dubbed an aesthetic of hopelessness (following from Benjamin), but this does not suggest that there is no hope and struggle, collective struggle, is futile. Indeed, as Benjamin notes in his essay on Kafka (“On the 10th Anniversary of his Death”) he responded to a statement of this ilk, that “We are nihilistic thoughts, suicidal thoughts that came into God’s head....[There is] plenty of hope, and infinite amount of hope—but not for us” (cited in Benjamin 116). Benjamin seems to purchase into this defeatism and to counter this we have only to remember Kafka’s exasperated comment that the poor disfigured and mauled workers who visited his office did not come to burn down the building and rise in revolt but to beg. The aesthetic of hopelessness and the conspiratorial qualities of his work hinge on the way he represents and so engages this subordination. This is what Adorno means by “negative mediation”. Revisiting the section of this chapter on hidden power, much of the subordination of subject of the modern state, the working class, has to do with a modern form of desire. To this point Žizek writes that this paradox concerns a “splitting of the public law and its underside, the ‘unwritten’/, obscene secret code”. He maintains that this splitting stems from the “the incomplete, non-all character of the public Law: explicit, public rules do not suffice, so they have to be supplemented by a clandestine ‘unwritten’ code aimed at those who, although they violate no public rules, maintain a kind of inner distance and do not truly identify with the ‘spirit of community’ ”(The Metastases 54-55). Exactly what Žizek has identified here is, in sweeping terms, the contradiction of any modern capitalist state which must simultaneously uphold and protect the consolidation and power of private wealth, which is increasingly masked by a corporate visage, even as it is premised on a notion of public wealth and the public weal, however diminished this reference might actually be. Kafka is intrigued, and saddened, I believe, by the quester for justice who simultaneously speaks in the name of the public but is the loving servant to the private. Thus, the pleasures of justice, “just for you”, and the special deals which the Land surveyor might strike (or might have struck) with petty castle officials at a midnight “interrogation”.

In his argument with Frieda about their problems in the village and their poor relationship (when K. leaves the schoolhouse and his job as a janitor), she asks why he has

not simply taken her way to “the south of France or Spain”. It is a funny comment, for there does not really seem to be a world outside of the village, and such as there is, it consists largely of K.’s fuzzy childhood memories. Moreover, the point is that one cannot simply leave the village if only because there is no will, and in fact there is no desire to leave—desire lies with staying put. Many critics such as Henri Daniel-Rops have foundered here, and without Benjamin’s nuance and dialectical reading, have proclaimed Kafka to be the author of despair (Daniel-Rops 20-21) without understanding how this is in fact the point where Kafka’s aesthetic is realized. Indeed, in Kafka’s village, there is never a way out. We simply wither and die in our cages and bedrooms, unnoticed and unloved. I argue that this kind of pronouncement, despite its prevalence, is wrong, for it misses the point I have been making about Kafka’s understanding of desire, the want-to-want. The pleasure lies in the pain, in captivity and oppression, and this is an ugly and sometimes unmentionable and unrepresentable reality of modernity. Moreover, the want-to-want of desire explains why conspiracy is both a dead end against which the true believer is doomed to crash. The partial and cryptic form of conspiracy theory finally bolsters the very forms of power which it sets out to subvert, and the conspiracy theorist will never fully unmask and defeat the hidden power and that is, after all the point. Conspiracy narratives are seductive in this sense—they promise answers and conclusions though they leave us where we began, ready to begin again. There is no way out of a conspiracy.

In a well known passage in his Theory of the Novel, Georg Lukács declares that the characters of the *Bildungsroman* are seekers, the *Unheimlichen* of modernity. Kafka has taken this idea literally, and represents a world where there is no struggle, where the search and the repetitions which prolong it are precisely the objective—Kafka’s novels are an Odyssey with no *Telemachia*. And so, it is not enough to call for a consciousness which will reawaken a putative sleeping giant, for these forms of paralyzing and invasive forms of consciousness, such as conspiracy narratives, must be engaged as Kafka does in his (albeit) fragmentary novels. Finally, I think much of the difficulty here is reflected in Kafka’s own disappointment with his work, and with his orders that it be destroyed after his death; it made no difference in the world. I believe this reading of The Castle provides evidence to the contrary.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor. Notes to Literature (vol. 1). Rolf Tiedeman ed. and Sherry Weber NicholSEN , trans. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Prisms. Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1992.
- Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Hannah Arendt ed. and Harry Zohn trans. New York: Schocken, 1968.
- Breuer, Joseph, and Sigmund Freud. Studies in Hysteria. James Strachey, trans. New York: Basic Books.
- Brod, Max. Franz Kafka: A Biography. Roberts and Winston, trans. New York: Da Capo, 1995.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The Caricature of Courtship". Franz Kafka's *The Castle* (Modern Critical Interpretations). Harold Bloom ed. New York: Chelsea House, 1988.
- Daniel-Rops, Henri. "The Castle of Despair". Twentieth Century Interpretations of *The Castle*. Peter F. Neumeyer, ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Evans, Dylan. An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Foulkes. A. P. The Reluctant Pessimist: A Study of Franz Kafka. The Hague: Mouton, 1967.
- Freud, Sigmund. Collected Papers (vol. 3). Strachey trans. New York: Basic Books, 1959.
- Kafka, Franz. Amerika. Edwin Muir, trans. New York: New Directions, 1946.
- The Castle. Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. New York: Schocken, 1992.
- The Complete Stories. Nahum Glatzer ed. New York: Schocken, 1971.
- Das Schloß. Frankfurt am Main: Reclam, 1982.
- The Diaries. Max Brod ed. New York: Schocken, 1976.
- The Trial. Willa and Edwin Muir trans. New York: Schocken, 1984.
- Kojève, Alexandre. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Allan Bloom ed. and James H. Nichols, Jr., trans. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

- Lacan, Jacques. Écrits: A Selection. Alan Sheridan, trans. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Laplanche, J. and J.-B. Pontalis. The Language of Psycho-Analysis. Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Lukács, Georg. History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics. Rodney Livingstone, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1979.
- Realism in our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle. John and Necke Mander. trans. New York: Harper, 1971.
- The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great literature. Anna Bostock, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1982.
- Marx, Karl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (vol. 1).. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. New York: Charles H. Kerr, 1906.
- Poster, Mark. Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975.
- Sokel, Walter H. "From Marx to Myth: The Structure and Function of Self-Alienation in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*". The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness and Creativity. Moshe Lazar and Ronald Gottesman, eds. Malibu: Undena, 1987.
- "The Wolfman and The Castle". Journal of the Kafka Society of America, June/December 1988 (nos.1/2). 64-68.
- Speirs, Ronald and Betrice Sandberg. Modern Novelists: Franz Kafka. New York: St. Martin's.
- Zizek, Slavoj. For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor. New York: Verso, 1991.
- The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality. New York: Verso, 1994.
- The Sublime Object of Ideology. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

Conclusion

In concluding this dissertation I will briefly summarize the achievements of this effort and then address aspects which I have deliberately avoided as well as tangents which might have been explored. The latter (tangents) concern the causes or impetus for this project which I briefly discussed in the introduction, that is, conspiracy today. In general, like Zola's miners of Montsou and their attempt to understand their circumstances and to change their world for the better, this effort attempts to understand what I believe to be a fallen form of consciousness which has decisively substituted for radical and expansive forms of analysis. This fallen form of consciousness is conspiracy, of course, while radical and expansive forms of analysis is any analysis which synthesizes the concrete and the theoretical and is not beholden to simplistic paradigms, and, most importantly, it is an analysis whose premise and objective are socialist solidarities and consciousness. Yet, you do not need to be a socialist to share the concerns of this dissertation. For conspiracy as a form of social analysis is dangerous, and is, as I argued in the first and last chapters, closely linked to paranoia. Following Hofstadter and many analysts of fascism, we are painfully aware of the virulent forms of class consciousness which paranoia and conspiracy nurtures. Indeed, my interest in Razumov's interpellation (In Under Western Eyes), the call to action which he heeds, touches on this fear. As abject and alienated as many of the haters in hate groups are, the basis of their beliefs can always be sanitized and passed off necessity and good sense.

I will return to this matter, conspiracy today, in a brief response to a recent book by Mark Fenster, Conspiracy Theories, but there are some structural and technical concerns which must be addressed. First, the keyword here, conspiracy, brings a tangle of problems which lead to an inexactness of reference which haunts any interpretive endeavor. Bluntly put, there is little scholarship around conspiracy, and so there is nothing to lean on, no authorities to cite. This problem is exacerbated in this instance, however, for conspiracy is explored in the context of three canonical novels, and it is discussed as a literary device of sorts. With this in mind, I have been groping in the dark, and, perhaps, this is plain to any reader. There are many clumsy moments and there is a certain repetitiveness as I

attempt to pin down how conspiracy works in the respective novels, and how I understand it for the broader purposes of the dissertation. Indeed, this groping is joined by a hesitation or deliberateness due to a fear of the term recoiling and either biting back or sucking the argument into a hermeneutic vortex, or simply spinning out of control in its reference. If I can cite a model here, this is somewhat apparent in the more deliberate moments of Richard Hofstadter's essay, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," which I cite in the chapter on Zola.

This concern for the fascist tendencies which lie behind any conspiratorial analysis of social relations is not intended as a, ironically, a form of conspiratorial prophecy. No, in fact, if I have demonstrated anything here, it is that conspiracy lies behind the everyday, particularly the conformism and complacency which have triumphed in the late twentieth century. I am finally referring to the movements of identity which, though rooted in the new left of the 1960s, finally bolstered the very establishment they initially opposed. What this means is that there are now corporate notions of identity and multiculturalism which synthesize the "equal opportunity" of the capitalist market with that of the civil rights movement. This is hardly the class politics which brought Martin Luther King to Memphis to support striking sanitation workers, and, finally, in a cruel ruse of reason, it is a conception of identity which has been adopted by the right wing in this country, specifically the identity politics of David Duke's National Association for the Advancement of White People and the virulent Christian Identity movement. My point is that paranoids and conspiracy theorists are actually mainstream in this general sense, looking for points of origin and solidarity in terms and paradigms which diminish the possibility of broader coalitions while disavowing class.

On this very point, Slavoi Zizek recently wrote in The New Left Review (#225/1997)

The true horror does not reside in the particular content hidden beneath the universality of global Capital, but rather in the fact that Capital is effectively an anonymous global machine blindly running its course, that there is no particular Secret Agent who animates it. The horror is not the (particular

living) ghost in the (dead universal) machine, but the (dead universal) machine in the very heart of each (particular living) ghost.

The conclusion to be drawn is thus that the problematic of multiculturalism—the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-worlds—which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as universal world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of the contemporary world. . . . So we are fighting our PC battles for the rights of ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians, of different life styles, and so on, while capitalism pursues its triumphant march—and today’s critical theory, in the guise of ‘cultural studies’, is doing the ultimate service to the unrestrained development of capitalism by actively participating in the ideological effort to render its presence invisible: in a typical postmodern ‘cultural criticism’, the very mention of capitalism as world system tends to give rise to the accusation of ‘essentialism’, ‘fundamentalism’, and other crimes. (45-46)

Following, or rather moving backwards from Zizek’s argument, with whom I am in agreement, this dissertation not only seeks to tie conspiracy to the mainstream, to common and everyday ways of thinking about the world, but to also suggest that this way of thinking necessarily accompanies finance capitalism. This last statement is intended only as a tentative conjecture, and I will explore it further here, but if this project lacks any overt political thrust or commitment then this is where it lies.

Again, though there are political or extra-textual motivations behind this dissertation, it is nonetheless a symptomatic reading of the novels at hand. By symptom I mean that conspiracy is not an or narrative construct which is brought in from outside the text but is rather the manifest aspect of the given narrative. And though the novels by Zola and Kafka do not share conspiratorial plot structures with Conrad’s Under Western Eyes, they are easily diagnosed as conspiracy novels (which I am careful to do). It seems appropriate, then, that such caution, perhaps paranoia, could only lead to an interpretive effort where the attempt to focus the reference of conspiracy, to control its definition.

finally produces a text that is largely symptomatic in its treatment of the three novels: Germinal, Under Western Eyes, and The Castle. I have selected these three novels because of their content--again, the conspiratorial qualities of each selection are obvious-- though they are finally of interest to me because of the formal problems they present as conspiratorial texts, and this necessitates a symptomatic reading.

Also, a symptomatic reading, as I understand it here, is one which is textual--again, the manifest aspects of the narrative--and so avoids the baggage which accompanies conspiracy, in an attempt to understand how this form of consciousness works, particularly how it obviates or forecloses what I dub "synthetic" forms of social analysis. Complexity gets in the way, however, as I argue with respect to conspiracy in Zola's Germinal. My interest in Zola's novels stems from his won fascination with modernity and the modern, that is, with the causes and effects. Thus, the Rougon Macquart series concerns railroads (La bête humaine), the stock market (L'argent), as well as alcoholism (L'assommoir), prostitution (Nana), and even shopping (La bonheur des dames). Germinal fits this paradigm, for it is the mining novel, and Étienne Lantier is derived from the Rougon family. All of this is important, and as a novelist Zola ensures that we are drawn into the plot by these connections to all of the other novels. This is itself testimony to the commodification of the word, if nothing else, but Germinal does indeed achieve a good deal more, and so it stands out from the other novels. I say this simply because I find it a compelling read, but this also concerns why it is compelling--it is compelling because it draws us into league with a group of people, the miners of Montsou, who are not traditional allies of readers of the 19th century novel. Like many British industrial novels, Dickens' Hard Times and Gaskell's The North and the South are two examples, this novel is a portrait of class, and this is where it fits with the overall project. It is unique, and it stands out, however, as I contend with others (again, Irving Howe), as a novel about the coming to class consciousness of the working class, and this is a crucial moment in the history of the novel. Germinal, I contend, asks the question, can there be a working class *Bildungsroman*. Dickens and others certainly never took up this question and there are many reasons for this, but Zola did, and he offered an equally startling answer to his

question: NO! This novel tracks the attempt by the miners to educate themselves, specifically they attempt to understand their own circumstances, their role in a capitalist world system. Despite outside assistance from the International (Marx' group!) and we should not forget that Étienne is also an outsider of sorts, they fail. In this chapter I tracked their attempts at self-education, and I argued that their analysis is finally paranoid, a conspiratorial understanding of capitalism. Knowledge only contributes to their impotent rage, culminating with Maigrat's castration. And when the novel ends, the community is shattered, many of the miners are dead and the leader, the self-educated revolutionary Étienne, is on the road, on the way to making a career of agitation. This is both cynical and brilliant insight on Zola's part. Assuming that it is not cynical, and there is a good deal of sympathy with the miners struggle, the brilliance of his position lies in the hard statement that not all consciousness is good consciousness, even when couched in radical language, and all of the knowledge and analysis the miners and their supporters can muster does not lead to progressive ends. Knowledge is finally conspiratorial.

Yet there is more. The moments when the conspiratorial characterization of capitalism first appears and then reappears are often moments of indirect free discourse. It is not clear that this is what the miners actually think, that these are the words which Zola the writer puts in their mouths, the terms which frame their analysis. The significance of this is that this brilliant insight is disavowed. Finally, conspiracy narratives are black holes which suck one in, and any analysis of capitalism, as Žižek points out in the passage above, is especially prone to the terms of conspiracy.

So, this reading of Germinal is symptomatic in a first sense of immanence, what we find in the text, and in a second sense of reading through the contradictions of the text. The moment Zola engages this conspiratorial analysis of capitalism he is doomed, and this is partially due to his own notion of evolution. The working class cannot have a Bildungsroman because class, for Zola, is a congenital condition, borne out by his obsession with their sexuality, and the manner in which sexual women become the standard bearers of the movement. Also, his own evolutionary ideology, masking what we now know as liberal politics, as we see in the final scene and the hope that the miners' deaths

will be avenged through the law and legal formations, does nothing, oddly, except bolster this point of view. Evolution and not revolution, is finally a conspiratorial slogan, a surrender to the abstractions of the the economic machine.

With Conrad's Under Western Eyes I explored the conjunction of informing and confessing, derived as they are from guilt. My interest in Razumov as an informer does not simply concern informing as a literary genre, though this is by no means an incidental phenomena, but rather with the more complex question; why do people inform. It is not enough to explain the informer as a betrayer, and with Conrad this is a red herring given the role of betrayal in so many of his novels (e.g. Lord Jim and Nostromo). Razumov is an informer, but the impetus to do so, to inform, comes from an obscure place and in many ways the novel traces his attempt to find and reveal it. Moreover, the act of informing on Haldin and bringing about his arrest allows Razumov to assume some elements of the former's identity, initially the support of the St. Petersburg anarchists, then the Geneva anarchists, and importantly, the trust of the anarchist's sister and mother. And even more interesting, from the beginning Razumov somehow feels guilty about the assassination itself, as though he were Haldin.

With this novel Conrad is following in a rich tradition exemplified by the angry clerks and resentful underground men of Gogol and Dostoevsky, and we cannot forget that Razumov is a student and aspires to the professorate, the civil service. Haldin's appearance decisively upsets these plans. Also, as with the clerks and angry men of this abject tradition, Razumov confesses, but it is here, I maintain, that Conrad parts ways with his literary predecessors, and it is here that we find the brilliance of the novel. The warp Conrad brings is found in the series of confessions which Razumov feels compelled to offer up. The first confession is in the company of his father, a fact he is not aware of, yet the confession, made to the mild mannered and soothing Councillor Mikulin, is clearly related to the problem of paternity. One of Razumov's objections to Haldin is the anarchist's claim to paternity and so to a Russian identity. Paternity and nationalism are inseparable in Razumov's imagination, and so the flexibility of the policeman Mikulin, a new representative of the state, promises a new father-state, a new identity. Following

Lacanian psychoanalysis and the Josianne Paccaud's interpretation of this novel Mikulin is the symbolic father while the brutal General T is the primordial father. And so the act of confession in the presence Mikulin is a profound act of obeisance and faith, or, better, a re-interpellation to the state. When Conrad brings together confession and interpellation here he has created something new, a new political subject.

The dissolution of this new subject and his (Razumov's) strong residual ties to the tradition of abjection are apparent in the continued series of confessions. There are, as I stated in the earlier chapter, at least six discrete confession scenes, and after the sequence in St. Petersburg Razumov spies on the Geneva anarchists and worms his way into the confidence of Haldin's sister, two acts for which there is some basis for his subsequent guilt. Yet, this guilt only feeds a new set of confessions: Razumov writes of his betrayals in his secret diary and then arranges for it to be made public (thus the delivery to Natalia), he confesses to Natalia (herself), and then he confesses to the anarchists. The instability of Razumov's identity has, finally, not been stabilized by Mikulin and the state, for there is a certain pleasure attached to the act of confession. The point of reference or the anchoring point for the subject turns ever inward, away from a peripheral social reference towards (spiraling inwards) to a sovereign subject.

What I have highlighted in Under Western Eyes, then, is the pleasure that accompanies confession, and the relationship between confession and subject formation. The subject, or identity, is present in Razumov in its most diminished form, solipsism, and in a putatively expansive form, liberal nationalism, and their coexistence and the tension thereof are the key insights which Conrad offers in this novel.

Still, the pleasure of confession is one which never finally satisfied, and in so far as it is related to their identity, the stability of the latter term must be endlessly shored up or reinforced by this pleasurable activity, confession. The endless necessity for confession is clearly a structure of desire— a desire for desire, the desire of the hysteric. Indeed this interpretation of Kafka's aesthetic, an aesthetic of hopelessness, hinges on this notion of desire, for I contend it lies at the centre of two of his major works, The Castle and The Metamorphosis (and others, particularly the The Trial). Moreover, this insight is a more

complex continuation of the ideas I find in Under Western Eyes, especially the relationship between this structure of desire and a certain abject subject formation and the political-social implications thereof. The relationship to the larger project, conspiracy narratives, is fairly clear--the conspiracy always entails the object of desire, either as that which must be exposed and defeated, or simply because it obscures the object of desire, or even both of these. The conspiracy structure must be exposed, and this is the object of desire.

In The Castle the object of desire, the chimera towards which K looks from the opening passages, is the the castle of Count West West. The object is both this edifice, as much as it actually appears as a ramshackle collection of buildings and a shadowy structure just beyond clear perception, and the power which it encompasses. The castle is the object and it house the object, power. Access to the this castle is blocked by the conspiracy which is both space, conceived as a literal space, the space from the village to the castle, and as a psychological space, the space between K and his betters. those who must be courted carefully. Also, there are people who block one from power, the bureaucracy which blocks with procedure and law. Yet, contrary to many readings of Kafka's work, I maintain that his interest in the violation of due process and dignity does not stem from a liberal sense of justice-violated, but rather his understanding of the process of subject formation in modern times. After all, as I noted, in his comments to Max Brod, Kafka was alarmed at the submissiveness of the maimed workers who come to his office to make their insurance claims.

Again, conspiracy is relevant here--the power of the castle, and access to authority has a conspiratorial function, and this is exactly how everyone wants the situation to remain, including K. In Kafka's world this is how his characters always related to power, in these conspiratorial forms and ways. If power is blocked or arbitrary (without recourse) then the subject alternately defines himself against this outrage and also holds out for the exception. This is the guard's secret outside the door, in the parable extracted from The Trial ("Vor dem Gesetz").

Thus, in The Castle K experiences pleasure along the way to his stated encounter with power and the deferral of this encounter only feeds the pleasure taken in a perverse

form of interpellation. After all the pleasure is sexual pleasure but it is taken in frustrated and dirty or obscene circumstances, on barroom floors, and in school rooms, and K's lover is the mistress of a castle official.

The aspect of Kafka's conspiratorial notion of power and the structure of desire which necessarily accompanies it, which I have emphasized in this chapter is the relationship to labor. In both the novel and the novella at hand the conspiratorial understanding of power is intertwined with a narrative of labor, for his characters are either looking for work (the interview with Count West West is the encounter with power) or have just lost their job or quit (Gregor does not want to return--his transformation is the result of his bad faith rebellion, for he is now the vermin his boss believes him to be). In short, these are narratives of *declassément* where social relations are construed in these increasingly moralistic terms, thus the bodily references. The fall in class, and the fear of the fall in class is construed in these paranoid, moralistic terms which leave Kafka's characters as beetles or dessicated hunger artists.

All of the comments above are directed towards what I have written here, though. again, there is another project which looms over this one. The three novels are at hand were written in the period from 1880 to 1924 (the last date is Kafka's death--The Castle was published posthumously) and they are all safely ensconced in the canon of the modern novel. Though I have made some points which are provocative, and maybe even new and radical in their way, these novels are not new or undiscovered, and so the pressure to make a a new and interesting statement about literature, modernism, the novel, and cultural theory must lie with the interpretation. As I stated several times earlier, I selected these novels because of their conspiratorial structure, but equally important, for this reader/writer, is the period of their production. I will address this momentarily, but for now, the 1880-1924 period is why I selected them, as well as the fact that they are canonical modern novels. With regard to the latter point, I will state for the moment that I wanted to rescue them from their canonicity, to restore some of their provocative qualities, and also to locate conspiracy within the purview of modernism--thus, the modern novel--and modernity. I have successfully achieved the former through exhaustive, if not

excessive close readings of the three novels, and the latter is one direction which was not taken, and so must be addressed here. Again, I will address this shortly.

First, one direction which I might have taken with this project lies with what I dubbed the impetus for the project; conspiracy in America today. I have the reasons I have enumerated and which I will elaborate further, but for now, let me simply state that there is a recent book on just this topic whose achievements and shortcomings I will discuss in order to suggest how I might have handled this project, as well as begin to explain why I stayed with the turn of the century European modernists. The book is titled Conspiracy Theories and is by Mark Fenster, a media and communications critic (with no academic affiliation at the moment--though he should be hired--and, perhaps, this is a telling detail about the fate of those who write about this topic). Conspiracy Theories is completely dedicated to conspiracy theories as political-cultural phenomena in the United States since the second world war. Fenster is an adept reader and researcher of conspiracy theories, as slippery and abject as they are in this current environment, and he looks to examples in contemporary politics ("The Clinton Chronicles"), the academy (a brilliant chapter on Richard Hofstadter's essay "The paranoid style in American politics", a text which figures in this project), as well as Christian millenarianism, science fiction, and the Danny Casolaro conspiracy theories on the internet (as theorist and, due to his mysterious death, a conspiracy subject himself). The book concludes with an interesting chapter on conspiracy and play, as well as an afterword on conspiracy and cultural studies which focuses on the work of John Fiske in counterpoint to the virulently racist conspiratorial novel, The Turner Diaries.

After reading this book I have little to add, and though I am an avid listener to one of the conspiratorial venues he cites, WBAI, and I have read Covert Action News and followed the Iran Contra hearings closely, I admire the depth and sweep of the research he has brought together here. I admire this effort because conspiracy theory study is, again, difficult due to its abject associations, and in the academy many of those likely to study it are from the left, and so subject to the backlash of conspiracy as a gibe. You are a conspiracy theorist the moment you take it seriously as a form of consciousness worthy of

concern and effort. Or so it goes. Yet Fenster has turned over and examined every odd source from the electronic media (The X Files and other TV shows), radio shows (again, WBAI is one source), to films (Parallax View, Three Days of the Condor, The Gemstone Files and others), to the traditional printed media of pamphlets and limited production books passed around amongst the cognoscenti and those among the counter conspiracy. In the latter category are The Turner Diaries and the ironic avant garde novel Illuminatus! trilogy by Robert Anton Wilson. With regard to the former novel, notably, he fails to mention the scandal around its distribution, the refusal of many outlets to stock it, and the earlier, pre-Oklahoma City bombing, refusal of the National Alliance, the right wing umbrella "node", to distribute it through traditional book sellers. Indeed, the left-associated Ramparts Press finally published it as a matter of principle, and this is how many have read it since the McVeigh trial. Also, its author's name, Andrew MacDonald, is a pseudonym for the right wing theorist and principle organizer behind the National Alliance, William Pierce, a former physics professor.

In the Afterword Fenster offers the following concluding comment about conspiracy theories:

In its apocalyptic narrative vision and semiotic apparatus, conspiracy theory assumes the coming end of a moment cursed by secret power and a (never-to-arrive) ne beginning where secrecy vanishes and power is transparent and utilized by good people for the good of all.

.....
Beyond its shortcomings as a universal theory of power and an approach to historical and political research, however, conspiracy theory ultimately fails as a political cultural practice. It not only fails to inform us how to move from the end of the uncovered plot to the beginning of a political movement; it is also unable to locate a material position at which we can begin to organize people in a world divided by complex divisions based on class, race, gender, sexuality, and other social antagonisms. (225-226)

I completely agree with this statement, and I appreciate Fenster's somewhat dialectical

relationship to conspiracy theories, avoiding, as he does, a certain condescension and attendant celebration or rejection (where conspiracy is presented as the authentic speech of the black experience, or it is the speech of stupid working class people). The problems I have with this book concern his method—I find this book descriptive, and not analytic, and this is its charm and achievement and its primary flaw. There are stabs at analysis, but these are overwhelmed by descriptive passages, and maybe this is simply a fault the subject brings along. But, I feel, there is more. Fenster is obviously well-read and there are many references to cultural and political theorists from the academy, from Marx to Lacan and even John Fiske, and I can see he is of the left. But there is a certain messiness here, better than name dropping, but too pat in usage, which suggests that his own position is unstable. I suggest then, that this he does not clearly come from a Marxist position, and I will explain why I believe this is important, but some of the sloppiness in his references is simply due to his discipline. He is not a film studies person and so there is little on production values, and he writes about novels, yet there is little about the function of narrative and the tradition of the novel. For this reader, the fact that The Turner Diaries is comprised of diary entries, and its representation as a found text is crucial for any reading of the text at hand as well as insights to the form and function of conspiracies as social consciousness. Also, though he is intent on examining conspiracy theories as forms of consciousness, and he has some background in psychoanalysis, there is little detailed attention to this aspect, and for this reader this is also crucial. Conspiracy theories are a form of desire, of course, a desire which shall not be satisfied, but such statements are not sufficient, and the attention to Kafka in this project is an answer to this sort of deficiency.

As for Marxism, Fenster is absolutely correct when he admonishes Fiske for the gaps in the latter's analysis of conspiracy theories. Fiske, he points out, celebrates a certain paranoia which haunts many African-American analyses of history (and, I add, this is generally addressed by Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth), and overlooks the anti-semitism and racism of many such tracts, as well as the class arrogance (liberalism!) of its dismissal of working class conspiracy theories (hence, The Turner Diaries).

At this juncture I must explain the relations between this project, conspiracy and the

modern novel, and capitalism, particularly finance capitalism. I have pursued this conjunction for three reasons. First, and this position turns on a hopeless idealization and generalization of the novel form, but the novel as the form of bourgeois consciousness, the aesthetic form of capitalism par excellence, is always about social relations under capitalism. This is a bland statement, but the “about” here concerns a certain tension for on the one hand the novel as such is never in concert with capitalism as the mouthpiece of bourgeois triumphalism, and more often is the form which attempts to come to terms with the confusions and brutality which capitalism brings to the nature and its inhabitants. Again, this reconciliation might finally be recuperative, but there are always attendant contradictions which even the most artful plot cannot hide.

Conspiracy is related to the second position which concerns consciousness. The attempt to represent a world and social relations which are otherwise obscured is necessarily a project of consciousness where the obscured situation can only induce a fallen or regressive consciousness which the novel attempts to defeat and replace with something better. In this instance, a better consciousness is one which grasps the totality of social relations, re-cementing the world which has been shattered and scattered by the capitalist forces of production. Again, looking back to the introduction, the image Dickens offers us of the hand of God-the novelist in his Dombey and Son is an example of the alternative consciousness which the novel can, and according to many of its practitioners, should entail. Conspiracy, in my estimation, is a regressive and necessarily limited form of consciousness, one which postulates a diminished world-view and a limited set of possibilities. Solidarities over and against divisions of race and gender, for example, are an impossibility according to the structure of conspiracy theory for a radical consciousness is not, finally, a goal, or even a possibility. Conspiracy, in an odd way, is fatalistic and paranoid, and antithetical to any expansive conception of society, and certainly to any humanistic notion of culture and social relations.

The third position directly concerns Marx and marxism, particularly the work of Georg Lukács. With regard to the struggle for consciousness and its relationship to the novel, this position is clearly derived from Lukács' The Theory of the Novel and History

and Class Consciousness, a debt which I acknowledged in the introduction. Yet this project, as I stated at the outset of this conclusion, has been largely symptomatic without little room for political economy or structural parallels thereof. Moreover, though Lukács certainly wrote about two for the three novelists addressed in this project, he was hardly complementary, and, in the case of Kafka, his reading is poor and dismissive. The debt, then, is finally comprised of general objectives and these concern his role as the preeminent marxist theorist of cultural critique and the role he countenances for cultural commitment as commitment. As I commented in the introduction, there are many traps and obstacles associated with this statement, but I state again that I look to Lukács for his steadfast struggle against reified consciousness and the barbarism of capitalism, and his appreciation of the novel form in this struggle. In some ways Sartre might seem a more appropriate influence, but, again I cite class as a crucial term for my argument and my interest in conspiracy narrative. The distortions of consciousness which accompany the thought of class or the fear of being declassed in the novels, and the relationship to conspiracy thereof, are not important to Sartre, at least in texts such as *What is Literature* or *Search for a Method*. While Lukács and Sartre might find points of convergence between their respective notions of committed writing or literature *engagé*, they diverge in their dealings with abject subjects. While Lukács simply rejects these anti-heroes, Sartre is almost contemptuous (and here lies one aspect of his problem with Flaubert).

In many ways I have been influenced in this regard by Ferenc Feher's incisive essay on Lukács and the novel, "Is the novel problematic?". As Feher explains, for Lukács,

The novel is the epic of a time for which totality (and, therefore, the dominant homogeneity of the world, as well as human substantiality, and the substantial relation between man and his products) has become only a problem and an aspiration. The novel is thus problematic in a double sense: first, it expresses the problematic character of both the structures and the man of its age; secondly, and as a result, its mode of expression, its whole construction is full of unaccomplished (unaccomplishable, according to

Lukács) tasks or problems. (24)

I align my own position on Lukács with that of Feher, who explains that Lukács' achievement in The Theory of the Novel was to make "explicit bourgeois civilization's latent bad faith concerning an artistic phenomenon which is itself the fruit of bourgeois society" (24). This bad faith lies with the principle actor of the novel, the bourgeois individual, and his relations with the world, that is, Nature and Others. The individual, Feher argues, is derived from civil society, and does not exist outside of such social relations, but, the novel, nonetheless, is "born in a society without community. . . . It [the world of the novel] is dominated by the *duality of the self and the external world*" (28). This duality leads to the reifications of consciousness which Lukács was later to engage in History and Class Consciousness ("the 'natural' tendency of the hero . . . to construct his own universe"), while the best exponent is Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, who even reproduces his own English prejudices in his diary entries. This duality, Feher continues, will eventually lead to insurmountable problems for the novel. As he tracks this duality through the family and community, where the hero is increasingly isolated from the family and the family name (and this concerns Conrad's Razumov, as well as Kafka's Gregor Samsa, or, the man with no name and only fuzzy memories of family, K), eviscerated as it is (assuming the ideal existed) by social relations under capitalism: "Within capitalism, the family was first and foremost an economic unit of distribution and not of production" (35). The attempt by the novel to render the situation otherwise only led to parochialism, or to the brutal realization that "For the hero of the novel, on the other hand, the house, and later the apartment, is really a fortress that isolates him from his neighbor" (37).

Near the conclusion of his essay, Feher comments that with regard to education in particular, that is the *Bildungsroman* and Lukács' example, Frédéric Moreau of Flaubert's L'éducation sentimentale, and our own example, Germinal, the novel can only point to bourgeois illusions, and so finally falters in its representative project: "Increasingly fetishized bourgeois society is harder to understand, and for some it becomes totally incomprehensible. Dickens' best characters are precisely those extravagant ones who grope in the dark and whose timid pathos comes from their total lack of understanding and

their ignorance or the world around them. . . . This is a fact to which the world of 'restricted accomplishment' must resign itself, since its equilibrium and harmony are based precisely on its inability to go beyond the sphere of life" (48).

Feher adds that though the novel winds up with a new vision of disillusionment this is still a "struggle against the reified world", a point which, is both Lukácsian and contra Lukács, and we have only to turn to his work on Zola and Kafka to understand the truth behind this comment. The more important point, however, is that the novel, for Feher and Lukács, is life affirming at its best, and so he concludes that the "novel very clearly shows the limits to which humanization can go in this society and this is for the understanding reader the most salutary sort of catharsis" (58).

Still, though, borrowing from Lucien Goldmann, Feher tracks the development of the novel as a homology of capitalism, this point lacks the sort of acuity which is useful to this project. An explicit aspect of this project is that conspiracy is a narrative form of consciousness in the modern novel, and this can only come about with the advent of finance capitalism. This might appear to be a crude point, but it entails conspiracy as it is understood here, and the fact is that the paranoia of the miners or Montsou, though set in the early years of the nineteenth century is unimaginable without the rising power of the Paris stock exchange. Zola knows this of course and so he wrote another novel about the stock exchange, a useful companion for Germinal, L'argent. Feher points out that money, the form of universalized values, the mark of the triumph of the commodity, is nonetheless antithetical to the novel, for it lead to the destruction of "the very possibility of the 'living' representation" and to reified relations between men, which the novel must necessarily "decompose" (42). In the novels I have treated here, conspiracy narratives replace this representation, for, as I have argued, Zola, Conrad, and Kafka, engage the problems associated with even conceiving of the world which capitalism has rendered.

As I stated initially (in this conclusion), this is a symptomatic reading, for a number of reasons, one of which concerns a parallelism between conspiracy as a large scale form of (social) paranoia and the advent of finance capitalism. This parallelism, or analogy is tempting, despite the cries of "economic determinism" which haunt such positions, and

Feher even hints at his own thoughts when he refers to Lucien Goldmann's "structural homology" between the novel and the economic. Also, from the outset I announced that this project relies on Ernest Mandel's periodization of capitalism (as cited by Frederic Jameson--these novels lie in the second phase, finance capitalism, as also outlined by Hilferding). Indeed, from Ian Watt's The Rise of the Novel to contemporary political (literary) criticism (and much of this is not Marxist or even left-wing, and that is my point!), and in the tradition of the European novel itself, there is an allure to make these kinds of statements. The problem, as I understand it, does not lie with the truth of determinism, for in a crude way such thinking is always "true", and finance capitalism certainly changed the way people thought about themselves, the point is how this thought is structured, and why, though finally destructive, these ways of thinking are so resilient. Thus, with Flaubert's Emma Bovary to Gogol's angry clerks and Dostoevsky's resentful students, to the abject and introverted characters of the modern novel at its peak at the fin de siècle, the point is not that their condition is due to the economic, for this is never in doubt, it is, rather, that these characters know as much but in a perverse way desire their own abject condition. Even Emma Bovary has such moments of clarity!

In Signs taken for Wonders Franco Moretti offers a reading of Joyce's Ulysses which is suggestive of the direction a more political-economic treatment of conspiracy narrative and finance capitalism might have taken. He writes that the literary crisis and the economic crisis have common roots in the pre war period, and following Karl Polanyi's Origins of our Time: The Great Transformation, he makes the following points:

This ["the definitive decline of the self regulating market"], in turn, entails the decline of the liberal form of bourgeois society, to which the free market guaranteed rational functioning, automatically regulating its conflictual, irrational, and private foundations. Although fleetingly, Asor Rosa perceived the cultural dimension of the problem in writing of the 'discovery . . . that the real is not rational. And by the real, one means exactly the capitalist real to which this culture directly refers itself and which, in order to retrieve a form of co-ordination, regulation and participation for

intellectual activity, requires the use of a more formal universe of concepts and values than in the past, and such as to contain the within the itself the - capacity for rational ordering which proves capable of "arranging" something which instead manifests itself in its substance as disjointed, random, and often unjustifiably unjust'. (183)

What I derive from Moretti's argument, here, is, first, that horrific discovery of modernism and writers engaged with the modernity and the modern experience as such is that the very terms with which one might distinguish oneself and so circumscribe a zone of removal or innocence, are themselves comprised. The crisis is a very fundamental crisis of articulation and complicity. Also, and this is Moretti's real point, the very notion of crisis is suspect: "This means that crisis had become a permanent feature of capitalist society as it then was known. In Joyce, the typical phenomena of the crisis are no longer sudden or exceptional catastrophes: rather, they are the ordinary conditions of social relationships" (185). The frustration of art and culture, in this dilemma, in this "crisis", leads to a "postulation of radical autonomy", a radical formalism.

Moretti's comments on Leopold Bloom of Joyce's Ulysses are instructive for the position taken on Kafka's characters here, as well as (in general) the relationship which I have argued lies between abjection and the desire of the slave, and conspiracy. Of Bloom Moretti notes the obvious (which is overlooked and overshadowed by so much in the 181 of the Joyce industry), that he is an advertising agent, part of an industry which is intrinsic the crisis and the new economy of supply and demand. Yet advertising does not provide Bloom with a subject position or even a *metier*, for Bloom has "no future": "Bloom's life is suspended between these two deaths: by now he is an accident, a historical relic. And his is indeed an ethic of pure and simple survival: the balance between debit and credit, at the end of the day, is perfectly even" (199). Aptly, Moretti comments that Bloom is the "relentless parody of 'the spirit of capitalism' of a Benjamin Franklin" (203).

Finally, this project brings together the novel and conspiracy and this is an appropriate pairing in many historical and formal ways. I have not explored any of these here, and this is certainly another angle to pursue later, but it is worth noting, however

briefly, that the current rise of conspiracy has been accompanied by a rejection of modernism as an aesthetic, thus demise of the modern novel, and all has been supplanted by pseudo epic action figures. As I noted with respect to *The Turner Diaries*, complicated narrative forms have been replaced by seemingly fundamental forms of narrative, the diary. These last points are all anecdotal and open to dispute, but I will state in conclusion that I believe in the modern novel, as problematic as it might be, and conclude by concurring with the following comment by Ferenc Feher: "As a form, the novel very clearly shows the limits to which humanization can go in this society and this is for the understanding reader the most salutary sort of catharsis" (58).

Works Cited

- Feher, Ferenc. "Is the Novel Problematic? A Contribution to the Theory of the Novel".
Reconstructing Aesthetics: Writings of the Budapest School. Agnes Heller and
Ferenc Feher, eds. New York: Blackwell, 1986.
- Fenster, Mark. Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture.
Minneapolis: U Minn. Press, 1999.
- Moretti, Franco. Signs Taken for Wonders. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Zizek, Slavoj. "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism".
New Left Review, #225 28-51.

Bibliography

- Achebe, Chinua. Hopes and Impediments. New York: Anchor, 1988.
- Adorno, Theodor. Notes to Literature (vol. 1). Rolf Tiedeman ed. and Sherry Weber
Nicholsen, trans. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- Prisms. Samuel and Sherry Weber, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1992.
- Althusser, Louis. For Marx. trans. Ben Brewster. London:
Verso, 1979.
- Lenin and Philosophy. trans. Ben Brewster. New York:
Monthly Review, 1971.
- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of
Nationalism, revised edition. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Baguley, David. Critical Essays on Émile Zola. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.
- Baines, Jocelyn. Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.
- Balzac, Honoré de. Les Illusions Perdues. Paris: Garniers frères, 1961.
- Le Père Goriot. Paris: Garniers frères, 1963.
- Lost Illusions. Herbert J. Hunt, trans. New York: Penguin, 1971.
- Baudelaire, Charles. The Painter of Modern Life and other essays. New York: Da Capo.
- Bell, David F. Models of Power: Politics and Economics in Zola's Rougon Macquart.
Lincoln: U Nebraska, 1988.
- Benjamin, Walter. Charles Baudelaire: The Lyric Poet of High Capitalism. Harry Zohn
trans. London: Verso, 1983.
- Illuminations. Hannah Arendt ed. and Harry Zohn trans. New York:
Schocken, 1968.
- Bernstein, Michael Andre. The Bitter Carnival: Ressentiment and the Abject Hero.
Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.
- Breuer, Joseph, and Sigmund Freud. Studies in Hysteria. James Strachey, trans. New
York: Basic Books.
- Brod, Max. Franz Kafka: A Biography. Roberts and Winston, trans. New York: Da
Capo, 1995.

- Brown, Wendy. States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The Caricature of Courtship". Franz Kafka's *The Castle* (Modern Critical Interpretations). Harold Bloom ed. New York: Chelsea House, 1988.
- Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- Lord Jim. New York: Bantam, 1981.
- Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard. New York: Penguin, 1981.
- The Secret Agent. New York: Penguin, 1982.
- A Set of Six. New York: Doubleday, 1925
- Under Western Eyes. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Cox, C. B. Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination. London: Dent, 1974.
- Daleski, H. M. Joseph Conrad: The Way of Dispossession. London: Faber, 1977.
- Daniel-Rops, Henri. "The Castle of Despair". Twentieth Century Interpretations of *The Castle*. Peter F. Neumeyer, ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Dickens, Charles. Dombey and Son. London: Mandarin, 1991.
- Great Expectations. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Hard Times. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Notes from Underground. trans. Mirra Ginsburg. New York: Bantam, 1992.
- Evans, Dylan. An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Feher, Ferenc. "Is the Novel Problematic? A Contribution to the Theory of the Novel". Reconstructing Aesthetics: Writings of the Budapest School. Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, eds. New York: Blackwell, 1986.
- Fenster, Mark. Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture. Minneapolis: U Minn. Press, 1999.
- Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. Paris: Flammarion, 1983.
- L'éducation sentimentale. Paris: Flammarion, 1985.

- Fleishman, Avrom. Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1980.
- The Politics of Truth. ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth. New York: Semiotexte(e), 1997.
- Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977. ed. and trans. by Colin Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- Foulkes, A. P. The Reluctant Pessimist: A Study of Franz Kafka. The Hague: Mouton, 1967.
- Freud, Sigmund. Collected Papers (vol. 3). Strachey trans. New York: Basic Books, 1959.
- General Psychological Theory. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. New York: Norton, 1959.
- The Interpretation of Dreams. Strachey, trans. New York: Avon, 1965.
- Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Three Case Histories. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- Guerard, Albert. Conrad the Novelist. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958.
- Hay, Eloise Knapp. The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study. Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1967.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. The Age of Empire 1875-1914. New York: Vintage, 1987.
- Hofstadter, Richard. The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.
- Howe, Irving. Howe, Irving. Politics and the Novel. New York: Fawcett, 1957.
- Jameson, Fredric. Marxism and Form. Princeton (NJ): Princeton UP, 1971.
- The Political Unconscious. Ithaca (NY): Cornell UP, 1981.
- Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.

- Jameson, Fredric (ed.). Aesthetics and Politics. London: Verso, 1980.
- Kafka, Franz. Amerika. Edwin Muir, trans. New York: New Directions, 1946.
- The Castle. Willa and Edwin Muir, trans. New York: Schocken, 1992.
- The Complete Stories. Nahum Glatzer ed. New York: Schocken, 1971.
- Das Schloß. Frankfurt am Main: Reclam, 1982.
- The Diaries. Max Brod ed. New York: Schocken, 1976.
- The Trial. Willa and Edwin Muir trans. New York: Schocken, 1984.
- Kermode, Frank. "Secrets and Narrative Sequence". Critical Inquiry, no.7, Autumn, 1980: 83-101.
- "The Structures of Fiction". Modern Language Notes, 84 (1969), 891-915.
- Kojève, Alexandre. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. . Allan Bloom ed. and James H. Nichols, Jr., trans. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.
- Lacan, Jacques. De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1932.
- Écrits. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1966.
- Écrits: A Selection. Alan Sheridan, trans. New York: Norton, 1977.
- Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1973.
- Le Séminaire livre III. Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981.
- Laplanche, J. and J.-B. Pontalis. The Language of Psycho-Analysis. Donald Nicholson-Smith, trans. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Leavis, F. R. The Great Tradition. New York: New York UP, 1963.
- Le Bon, Gustave. Psychologie des foules. Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1998.
- Lukács, Georg. The Historical Novel. trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. Lincoln (NB): U Nebraska, 1983.
- History and Class Consciousness. trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge (MA): MIT, 1971.
- Realism in our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle. John and Necke Mander,

- trans. New York: Harper, 1971.
- Studies in European Realism. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964.
- The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great literature. Anna Bostock, trans. Cambridge: MIT, 1982.
- Writer and Critic and other Essays. A.D. Kahn, trans. & ed. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. The Postmodern Condition. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, trans. Minneapolis: U Minnesota, 1984.
- MacDonald, Andrew [William Pierce]. The Turner Diaries. Washington (DC): National Alliance, 1980.
- Mandel, Ernest. Late Capitalism. London: Verso, 1978.
- Marx, Karl. Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (vol. 1)., Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans. New York: Charles H. Kerr, 1906.
- The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Martin Milligan trans. New York: International, 1986.
- The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. New York: International, 1987.
- The German Ideology. New York: International, 1978.
- Mileham, James W. The Conspiracy Novel: Structure and Metaphor in Balzac's Comedie Humaine. Lexington (KY): French Forum, 1982.
- Mitterand, Henri. "Ideology and Myth: Germinal and the Fantasies of Revolt" Baguley 124-130.
- Moretti, Franco. Signs taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Forms. Fisher, Forgacs, and Miller, trans. New York: Verso, 1997.
- The Way of the World. London: Verso, 1987.
- Nelson, Brian. Zola and the Bourgeoisie: A Study of the Themes and Techniques in Les Rougon-Macquart. Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1983.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. On the Genealogy of Morals. trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1989.

- Paccaud, Josianne. "Conrad's Technique of Free Indirect Discourse in Under Western Eyes". Conradiana, vol. 22, no.1, 1990: 45-65.
- "The Name-of-the-Father in Conrad's Under Western Eyes". Conradiana, vol.18, no.3, 1986: 204-218.
- Petrey, Sandy. Realism and Revolution: Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, and the Performances of History. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Poster, Mark. Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975.
- Pynchon, Thomas. The Crying of Lot 49. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Roussel, Royal. The Metaphysics of Darkness: A Study in the Unity and Development of Conrad's Fiction. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971.
- Rudé, George. The Crowd in the French Revolution. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Qu'est ce que la littérature". Situations II. Paris: Gallimard, 1948.
- Schor, Naomi. "Zola: from window to window". Yale French Studies #42, 1969, 38-51.
- Zola's Crowds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- Sokel, Walter H. "From Marx to Myth: The Structure and Function of Self-Alienation in Kafka's Metamorphosis". in The Dove and the Mole: Kafka's Journey into Darkness and Creativity. Moshe Lazar and Ronald Gottesman, eds. Malibu: Undena, 1987.
- "The Wolfman and The Castle". Journal of the Kafka Society of America, June/December 1988 (nos.1/2). 64-68.
- Speirs, Ronald and Betrice Sandberg. Modern Novelists: Franz Kafka. New York: St. Martin's.
- Tennant, Roger. Joseph Conrad. New York: Atheneum, 1981.
- Tonnies, Ferdinand. Community and Society. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988.
- Walker, Philip. "The mirror, the window, and the eye in Zola's fiction". Yale French Studies #42, 1969, 52-67.
- Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

- Culture and Society: 1780 to 1950. New York: Columbia UP, 1983.
- The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence. London: Hogarth, 1984.
- The Long Revolution. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.
- The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists. New York: Verso, 1989.
- Zizek, Slavoj. For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor. New York: Verso, 1991.
- The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality. New York: Verso, 1994.
- "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism". New Left Review, #225 28-51.
- The Sublime Object of Ideology. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.
- Zola, Émile. The Experimental Novel and Other Essays. Belle M. Sherman, trans. New York: Haskell House, 1964.
- Germinal. Paris: Livre de poche, 1955
- Germinal. Stanley and Eleanor Hochman, trans. New York: Signet, 1981.