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Difficult Work: The Politics Of Counter-Professionalism In Post-1945 Transnational American Fiction

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Difficult Work: The Politics Of Counter-Professionalism In Post-1945 Transnational American Fiction

Abstract

This dissertation reads American and Asian American fictions that instigate feelings of discontent about American work. While literary scholars of white-collar work have examined anti-work sentiment as an unquestionably American phenomenon, they have yet to acknowledge the continuing global repercussions of the postwar American economy. I read transnational figures of work that query the ideology of American professionalism by mixing anti-work and anti-imperial feeling into the performance of white-collar work. Drawing from four forms of the novel that address a crisis of American domesticity—the postwar crime novel, the middlebrow travel novel, the multi-ethnic bildungsroman, and the post-9/11 finance novel—the dissertation reads low-grade, ambient affects, like anxiety or hesitation, to find a sideways reappraisal of a national work ethic. Minor feeling opens a new tendency in transnational American writing that I theorize as "counter-professionalism," where the prefix "counter" produces multiple forms of resistance: Bartlebyian refusal, dilettantism, strategic negotiation, and reluctant conscription. This dissertation brings together sociological discourses of work, affect theory, and transnational American literature to hypothesize the rise of American Anglophone culture. The postwar crime novels of Raymond Chandler and Patricia Highsmith provide a genealogical origin for the decline of the welfare state through the deviant work of the hard-boiled detective or the international conman. Meanwhile, rejecting American triumphalism for dilettantism and espiocracy, the internationalism of Richard Yates and Paul Bowles enters downward states of depression and acedia that disrupt the suburban novel. The turn to internationalism necessitates a consideration of the centripetal movement of Cold War immigration. The contemporary novels of Susan Choi and Jhumpa Lahiri reappraise the ignored case of postwar Asian American knowledge workers, where political feelings of evasion and willfulness unsettle the sociological trope of the model minority. The case of the foreign student reveals that the immigrant body is shunted into racialized forms of both manual and reproductive labor under the pretext of knowledge work. Finally, post-9/11 finance novels of Pakistani writers Mohsin Hamid and H.M Naqvi harken back to postwar criminality by confronting the accusation of terroristic subjectivity through feelings of regret, precipitating a comprehensive exit from American work.

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Kalyan Nadiminti

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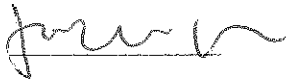
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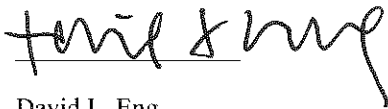
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for my parents,

Lakshmi Ramakrishna Srinivas and Srinivas Koundinya Nadiminti

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ABSTRACT

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ethnic bildungsroman, and the post-9/11 finance novel—the dissertation reads low-grade,

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rejecting American triumphalism for dilettantism and espiocracy, the internationalism of Richard Yates and Paul Bowles enters downward states of depression and acedia that disrupt the suburban novel. The turn to internationalism necessitates a consideration of the centripetal movement of Cold War immigration. The contemporary novels of Susan Choi and Jhumpa Lahiri reappraise the ignored case of postwar Asian American knowledge workers, where political feelings of evasion and willfulness unsettle the sociological trope of the model minority. The case of the foreign student reveals that the immigrant body is shunted into racialized forms of both manual and reproductive labor under the pretext of knowledge work. Finally, post-9/11 finance novels of Pakistani writers Mohsin Hamid and H.M Naqvi harken back to postwar criminality by confronting the accusation of terroristic subjectivity through feelings of regret, precipitating a comprehensive exit from American work.

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Introduction

Professionalism and its Discontents

No discussion of anti-work politics is complete without the ghostly figure of Bartleby. *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (1853) is an inaugural story about the white-collar worker. It narrates the brief life of a copier in a nineteenth century law firm who seems, at first, to be a model employee. When asked to perform simple tasks. Bartleby proves himself a highly efficient and systematized worker. In fact, his work ethic is so strong that the unnamed narrator tells us that he did an extraordinary quantity of writing, "famishing for something to copy" (Melville 24), so much that he seemed to gorge himself on the documents. But his flawless work is marred by one peculiar flaw: the narrator laments that Bartleby conducted his work "silently, palely, mechanically" (Melville 24). When he is assigned another piece of work soon after, he responds with the now-iconic phrase "I would prefer not to." He manifests an increasingly erratic refusal to work, a refusal that transforms him into an enigmatic figure of anti-work politics. The terse phrase has almost no purchase on the stakes of his refusal. It emerges without comment and with little context, catching the narrator off-guard with its polite firmness.

Yet, Bartleby's refusal is not a clear stance against work; the utterance emerges from within the space of the office. Nor is it a refusal of *all* work, especially since the narrator describes him as "famished" for it. The use of the word "prefer" signals an agential subject, whose refusal to work is not an outright refusal to participate in the legal profession. While scholars have read Bartleby as the universal subject of the alienated worker, Bartleby, in fact, does do his work. As it becomes evident from the rest of the

narrative, he refuses to do the "trivial," the unexpected, or the uncontracted. His job as a copier is sacred to him—he is a professional not in the sense of a vocation but in the sense of its primary meaning, that of a "calling." He refuses to give up ownership of his agency within work, but crucially, neither does he attempt to incite the other workers to revolution. His emphasis remains on the word "prefer," deactivating an aggressive or a major scale of resistance and invoking the minor scale of "passive resistance." While Bartleby has certainly proved to be a seductive figure for anti-work politics, he is also an unmistakably spectral figure in a tale that has shades of the Gothic.[1] In other words, Bartleby could be considered an otherworldly apparition whose "utterly unsurmised appearance" (Melville 32) in the parable signals a rupture in the otherwise-genial hierarchy of the workplace.

In the post-1945 period, Bartleby's apparition suggests a neglected, literal counterpart, not merely an alienated worker but, in fact, an *alien* immaterial worker. While literary scholars have paid attention to the alienated worker in representations of white-collar work, little attention has been paid to the foreign worker, classified as either a "resident alien" or "non-resident alien" in the language of immigration law. This dissertation asks, what happens if we connect the alienated worker with the "alien" worker in American professionalism? The operating premise in studies of professionalism and American literature has been that the problem of work is eventually resolved through a restructured American social totality. I connect the domestic and the foreign, the national and the global, to question American professionalism's projection of

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[1] See also Naomi C. Reed. "The Specter of Wall Street: 'Bartleby, the Scrivener' and the Language of Commodities." *American Literature*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2004, pp. 247-273.

post-industrial organization first as a national social ideal and then as a developmentalist ideal onto the postcolonial immigrant.

"Difficult Work" complicates the spectral parable of Bartlebyian passive resistance in American work by examining modes of bad feeling that are disinterested in reconstituting the American social through work. The subject of white-collar work emerges as a low-grade but stable preoccupation in twentieth and twenty-first century American literature. I argue that the post-1945 transnational American novel actuates feelings of discontent within narratives of white-collar work in both national and global contexts. Minor or "useless" feelings are the driving force behind a new, non-revolutionary refusal to adhere to the spirit of professionalism. This project addresses the concept of anti-work politics in late capitalism, often ignored in the case of white-collar work or invoked exclusively in the context of low-wage and working class populations. Little has been said about the relevance of minor feeling to anti-work politics in the twentieth and twenty-first century, especially against the historical backdrop of robust movements like the 1968 protests and contemporary Occupy movements.

What kind of traction does a minor resistance provide in critiquing systemic inequities of work? My project suggests that affect studies provides a crucial aesthetic and political link in parsing the discontent of professionalism and the performance of work. While affect studies has often critiqued for not having enough material investment by Marxist scholars, I contend that minor affect offers an important lens to read discontent about work.[2] In the post-Cold war period, there is strong evidence that the American work ethic has successfully reproduced itself as the fount of neoliberal empire

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[2] Frederic Jameson, one of the most vocal detractors of affect studies, recently conceded its aesthetic and formal significance in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013).

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and globalization: whether we consider the influx of international knowledge workers into the American economy in the twentieth century, or the rapid liberalization of Global South economies in the post-Cold War period, the principles of American professionalism have emerged as the engine of a global knowledge economy. Revisiting anti-work politics in a distinctly non-revolutionary register addresses the tenuous position of the isolated white-collar worker, who exists in a nebulous zone between laboring body and expert mind. Without the political framework of unions and collective organizations, the white-collar worker is caught between the polarizations of collective bargaining and organizational ideological apparatuses. This dissertation tracks evolving figures of American professionalism that are alive to the possibilities and ambiguities engendered by anti-work politics. I find a new tendency across twentieth and twenty-first century American transnational writing that explores failure as a counterforce to the mythic promise of American success. Turning to static or uneven development, the dissertation interrogates the inimical effects of white-collar work in fiction and, in the process, explores deviations from the hegemony of a universalized American work ethic.

The dissertation tracks the ascendancy of professionalism first as national work ethic in the period following the Second World War, and then, as an internationalized standard of work in the post-1965 period of immigration reform through networks of feeling. Minor feeling—in the form of negative, low-grade discontent--creates an affective surplus that cannot be absorbed into the ideology of American professionalism. While literary scholars have mapped the political shifts of the postwar period through an interaction of sociological and literary analyses, my dissertation delineates a literary theorization of work through cultural and political theories of affect— "ugly feelings"

(Sianne Ngai), "affective mapping" (Jonathan Flatley), "political depression" (Ann Cvetkovich), and "willfulness" (Sara Ahmed). Bringing these concepts in conversation with discourses of work spotlights the condition of discontented participation in a white-collar economy.

The rise of the professional-managerial class in the mid-twentieth century created a new order of middle-class expertise to secure a rising postwar economy. A distinct style of writing emerged that questioned the viability of the professional as a stable marker of class identity; bad feelings about the discourse of professional work highlight oppressive conditions underlying the narrative of success. Such discontent is discernible in two distinct ways: through "ugly feelings" like melancholy, shame, and paranoia in the post-1945 period, and abstract political feelings, like evasion, willfulness, and reluctance in the contemporary period. While the post-1945 novel articulates the class dilemma of the marginal middle-class, the multi-ethnic bildungsroman confronts the problem of race and ethnicity of the model minority. Both sets of minor feelings explore distinctly non-revolutionary politics, resisting conscription into a performance of white-collar work but simultaneously bound to the production of capital. Whether at the level of the domestic middle-class professional or the immigrant professional, the dissertation tells the story of "counter-professionalism" through American novels that question the performance of work as good feeling. The study meditates on the rapid transformation of professionalism from social ideology within postwar American totality to the contemporary globalization of the American economy. The project delineates the longevity of professionalism by connecting postwar American writing with contemporary multi-ethnic American and global Anglophone writing. This expansive approach, mixing genres and geographies,

contends that a literary study of post-industrial work must attend to the resonance between the post-1945 and post-9/11 period.

A Brief History of Midcentury American Professionalism

Professionalism has morphed from its ecumenical use to its current evolving definition as a class of salaried workers. Daniel Babcock gestures towards "an etymological ambiguity" of "*profession…* [where] the term was derived primarily not from a notion of employment but from the act of formally dedicating one's life to an activity (originally a religious order). Through one's professional activity, one not only supports oneself but also assumes an identity, a form of life."[3] It was only in the late eighteenth century that the word shifted towards its more "restricted meaning, naming a specialized, elite class, distinct from the wage laborer." Thus, Babcock concludes, "the concept of the professional [remains divided between] a particular class status and an existential identity" (Babcock 891).

The inextricable relationship between feeling and work has been a well-established precedent in writing about American professionalism in the nineteenth century. Brian Sweeney contends, "nineteenth-century fiction imagined the professional as defined less by what she knows than by how she *feels* about what she knows about her work. In this respect, professionalism can be seen as the proper heir to sentimentalism, 'making good' on its unfulfilled promise while making the profession, rather than the family and the nation, the privileged context for the formation of bourgeois subjectivity."[4]

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[3] David Babcock. "Professional Subjectivity and the Attenuation of Character in J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K.*" *PMLA*, vol. 127, no.4, 2012, 891.
[4] Brian Sweeney. *Professional Sentiments: Professionalism, Affect, and American Literature, 1830–1910*. 9. Dissertation.

Nineteenth-century writing believes in professionalism's ability "to insulate individuals, communities and professions from the corrosive forces of an impersonal marketplace, while at the same time promoting greater social equality and mobility across lines of race, class, gender and region"(Sweeney 10). Similarly, Stephen Schryer argues that nineteen-thirties New Deal America encouraged a model of "social trustee professionalism" that espoused the transcendence of professionalism from "purely pecuniary motives of the capital-owning bourgeoisie" (Schryer 2), This was achieved through the figure of "the social trustee professional [who] was a technically qualified expert dedicated to the public good" (Schryer 30), a model that also continued in the postwar period.

Since professionalism in these crucial instances relies so heavily upon the logic of an abstract collective, I pay attention to what British sociologist Harold Perkins calls the "social ideal" of professionalism, i.e. a work ethic that imbues social life with the ideal of expertise. The ideal creates its own stratified vocabulary as per its specific field of expertise or a "vertical hierarchy" (Perkins 27). In the case of American professionalism, the social ideal creates a cultural ideal of white-collar work around which postwar American society gathers to define overt models of good citizenship. As scholarship from what Keith MacDonald calls "the sociology of the professions" makes clear, the professions offered a succinct methodology for sustaining postwar economic life through the social and cultural production of expertise.[5] If British professionalism cultivated an educational model of good subjects, American professionalism cultivated experts based on an ideal of knowledge and information work.

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[5] See Keith M. Macdonald. *The Sociology of the Professions* (1995).

Key works of midcentury sociology attest to an undeniable link created by the paradigm of performance between the organization of American economic and social life. Both C Wright Mills and David Riesman diagnose the postwar condition as beset by a new and sometimes crippling impersonality. Mills treats this as a systemic shift in the very production of material life: "[t]he major shifts in occupation since the Civil War have assumed this industrial trend: as a proportion of the labor force, fewer individuals manipulate *things*, more handle *people* and *symbols*" (Mills 65, emphasis in original). To put it another way, even as "things" were replaced with "people and symbols," people became more akin to things. Mills refines this change in more social terms, suggesting that the new middle class was "expert at dealing with people *transiently* and *impersonally*; they are the masters of the commercial, professional, and technical relationship... they live off the social machineries that organize and coordinate the people who do make things" (Mills 65, emphasis mine). Such transience and impersonality strongly suggests an eviction of the social out of workplace interactions in favor of a disciplinary ethos where the push for productivity creates unstable and unjust networks of the social. Mills characterizes this new category of work as inherently parasitic and relying on a strangely antisocial manipulation. The social aspect of work was in danger of being abstracted into mere instrumentality, where the estrangement of labor, not unlike the industrial worker, would become intensified by a crippling distance from the means of production. The expertness cultivated in such a schema of labor relations ultimately leads, for Mills at least, to a set of empty, automatized relationships and a passive enactment of power, one that threatens to disenfranchise even the stirring of political consciousness.

In the widely popular *The Lonely Crowd* (1955), sociologist David Riesman traces the now-famous distinction between "inner-directed" and "other-directed" Americans where the latter emerges as a ubiquitous set in the postwar period. Like Mills, Riesman attributes the rise of managerial work and "communication" as instrumental in bringing about a "change in American character." For Riesman, this change is predicated on the shifting landscape of labor, particularly the move from a model of small businessmen possessing the frontier spirit to the employee of large corporations working in the spirit of cooperative enterprise. However, unlike Mills, Riesman sees the potential of the other-directed individual in configuring a more equitable relationship to work: "[t]he other-directed youth of today often asks more of a job than that it satisfy conventional status and pecuniary requirements… not content with the authoritative rankings of earlier generations" (Riesman 139). But this spirit of freedom is immediately hampered by the method involved in orienting oneself towards others: "[o]bliged to conciliate or manipulate a variety of people, the other-directed person handles all men as customers who are always right…[becoming] a mere succession of roles and encounters" (Riesman 139). The malleability and plasticity of the white-collar worker in the face of possible contradiction forces the other-directed employee to adopt a "multi-face policy" where he stores away some part of his self in "secrecy" and instead "varies [himself] with each class of encounters" (Riesman 139). Riesman finesses Mills's characterization of "impersonality and transience" as a problem with role-playing and false interaction that denies the necessity for interiority.

The depersonalization of professionalism is already indicated in Mills' description of white-collar work, in which most of the salaried workers have vague professional

designations. The category of "schoolteachers" yields some occupational specificity, but the rest seem to form an amorphous crowd of "office workers" or "salespeople" with no fixed specialization or occupational description. Mills unwittingly reproduces the effacement of the individual as a symptom of the new social order: the more he describes them, the more abstracted and depersonalized they become. Both Mills and Reisman identify a change in the relationship between work and the individual. They circle around the problem of the white-collar worker's alienation from his own work through an abandonment of the individual towards the social. The white-collar worker seems to undergo, following Marx, a peculiar kind of "self-estrangement" with the category of work. The difference here is that such alienation arises not from the distance from means of production, but from a collapse between the performance of work and the white-collar worker. The work of the professional detaches itself from occupational specificity and becomes abstracted into a homogenized sense of sociality. Both Riesman and Mills worry about the loss of sincerity in the workplace.[6]

The changes in conditions of postwar American work signal that social interaction itself has become a condition of labor.[7] Amplifying the interactionist approach, Barbara

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[6] Both sociologists base their observations less on empirical fact and more on the cultural ramifications of a postwar economy. In fact, the interactions arising out of executive behavior were rarely studied by either sociologist. It was not until as late as 1964 that Robert Dubin and S Lee Spray examined workplace behavior in "Executive Behavior and Interaction." The study shows that the material manifestation of executive work amounted to a disproportionate amount of "face to face interactions" and conversations on the telephone. The authors furthermore find that these interactions are inherently "unequal," in that the executives spend more time in minding subordinates and communicating with peers. They suggest that the "reasons for such inequality lies in the possibility that working associates are not only linked by the sociological bonds of a peer relationship but also are involved in a technological division of labor…which *requires* an inequality of initiated interactions" (108, emphasis in original). The "inequality" leads to a sedimentation of "technological determinism of working behavior", a trait that Herbert Marcuse diagnoses around the same time as ultimately leading to "one-dimensional" behavior.

[7] The postwar period also saw the emergence of industrial sociology. Theodore Caplow's *The Sociology of Work* (1954) provides a useful framing device for the role and well-being of the worker in industrial settings. Caplow observes that the human element in workplaces were often relegated to objective marketplace solutions and sets out to concentrate less on the industrial and more on the social aspect of

and John Ehrenreich's famous theorization of the "professional-managerial class"

highlights the social disenfranchisement at the heart of white-collar work. They

characterize the PMC as largely comprised of "salaried mental workers who do not own

the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be

described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations."[8]

Simultaneously, they argue that this proximity to ruling capitalist elites also encourages

opposition to capitalist class relations. Others, like Frank Olin Wright, conceive of a

professionalized middle class as an inherently contradictory set of positions animated by

multiple, sometimes conflicting concerns.[9]

Exacerbating the problem of definition, professionalism operates in the realm of

intangible products and services, where, as Magali Larson notes in *The Rise of*

Professionalism (1979), professionals—agents exemplifying professionalism—first had

to be actively produced to begin the process of professional production. Professionalism

was not merely the creation of conditions for work, but the "fictitious" production of

work, complete with the "personality" of the producer.[10] Scholarly appraisals of

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work life. Caplow makes a case for the dynamics of social interaction as integral to understanding work life and institutionality: "the sociology of work will be treated as *those social roles that arise from the classification of men by the work they do*" (6, emphasis in original). Most importantly, Caplow is one of the first sociologists to note that the rise of human relations management cants the structure of industrial sociology towards producing biased institutional solutions. Instead, he connects the social aspects of life to work than the other way around, remaining interested in "associations such as labor unions and professional associations," "social roles" that arise out of occupational differences and the occupation of "women and children" (Caplow 8).

[8] Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class." *Between Labor and Capital*, 12.
[9] Both theoretical positions are key concepts for Derek Nystrom's examination of American class in *Hard Hats, Red Necks, and Macho Men: Class in 1970s American Cinema*. Nystrom notes that "middle-class identity is frequently understood and articulated through the signifiers of its class others, as the middle class's shifting antagonisms and alliances encourage various imagined connections with other classes and class fractions…. these middle-class fractions operate per differently inflected notions of occupational autonomy, endogenously determined workplace standards and ethics, and other key markers of professional and managerial authority." (Nystrom 11). While Nystrom focuses his attention on working-class cinematic representations, his account of these theoretical models provides crucial insight into the inherently "weak" class position of the middle-class.
[10] See Magali Larsson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (1979).

professionalism in the seventies evaded the question of discontent with professionalism by recasting the idea along the lines of a "new professionalism" that developed a non-ideological method of approaching the subject. Elliot Freidson championed the role of professionalism from the seventies to the nineties as a structuring agent of economic and cultural progress.[11] As an economic formation, the status of the profession had become an indispensable part of American life: the rise of a post-industrial society and the regime of service work and knowledge work gained steady ground in corporations and universities.

While midcentury sociologists like Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills allude to professionalism as primarily white-collar work, literary scholars of class suggest that the workplace changed from a site of employment to a scene of social hierarchization. Heather Hicks observes in *The Culture of Soft Work* (2008) that the postwar period sees the introduction of "human relations management" as an organizational method. Hicks demonstrates that the nineteen-forties sees a rise in employee interviews within workplace settings that attended to the affective dimension of employee life to shepherd their feelings of well-being into late capitalist work. At companies like General Electric, workers were encouraged to treat their jobs as consumers, implicating workers' desire and social persona into their narratives of productivity.[12] Andrew Hoberek's *Twilight of the Middle-Class* (2009) rewrites the story of the American middle class by suggesting that its decline begins in the nineteen-fifties through the organizational dispossession

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[11] See Eliot Friedson. *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (2001).
[12] Hicks introduces the term "soft work" as an indicator of changing work conditions in late capitalism. She argues that "[w]hile the term 'hard work' is equated with industrial machinery, hard bodies, and a no-nonsense, command-and-control style of management, soft work is performed in an economy sustained by software, soft bodies, and soft management techniques. Representations of soft work in novels and films, as well as a host of popular arts and sociological, political, and corporate publications, suggest that this new socioeconomic formation has realigned the signifiers of economic production with those of femininity. Soft work collapses the boundaries between worker and consumer, rationality and emotion, publicity and privacy, the real and unreal, the American and "un-American," and the managerial and magical."

experienced by white-collar workers. Hoberek suggests that the middle-class benefited

the most from the rise of professionalism as ideology in the midcentury, a development

that writers and artists troubled through the nurturing of counter-culture movements.

Stephen Schryer argues that postwar American writers and critics took on a pedagogical

task of addressing a new professional class to influence American bourgeois life from

within even as they acknowledged the limits of attaining the utopia of an enlightened

expert class. Schryer notes that writers like Ralph Ellison, Mary McCarthy, and Saul

Bellow tackled the contradictions of capitalism with an almost missionary zeal. These

accounts point to the ways in which the ideology of professionalism and bourgeois

materiality, even when challenged by postwar minds, looked to resolve these

contradictions in the hope for the emergence of a more just post-industrial society.

Challenges to professionalism have involved an ameliorative model that attempts a

course correction rather than an overhaul of existing work structures.

In contrast, the sprawl of writers and theorists in "Difficult Work" offer a range of

affective positions about work. My methodological approach is in line with what Ann

Cvetkovich calls "the affective turn" inaugurated around 2001 where feminist and queer

scholars challenged the conventional wisdom of ideology critique. Cvetkovich notes that

the affective turn has moved well beyond psychoanalytic, feminist and queer studies to

"encompass a range of geopolitical histories, including those connected to slavery,

colonization, genocide, and multiple diasporas, and hence many different areas of ethnic

studies and transnational studies." She notes that the turn rethinks "the relation between

the psychic and the social without the orthodoxies of psychoanalysis but with its

sophisticated appreciation for the complexities of psychic life. It is also marked by

renewed interest in phenomenology and the everyday experience of sensation and embodiment as ways of tracking this intersection of the social and the psychic" (*Political Emotions* 5).

While the novels I consider stand united in their desire to politicize the resonance of individual negative feelings around American work, we must tread cautiously lest we mistake affective discontent for strident political action. Most of the negative feelings in the study do not participate in anti-work collective action, but they do ask an important question about what happens in the absence of political organization. Can individual discontent align with more public forms of anti-work politics? Can it offer a different mode of attentiveness to relegated, useless emotions? Can we carve out a political space between critique and ideological participation? The study explores counter-professionalism for these thorny, ambivalent political positions between the collective and the individual, the public and the private, action and inaction, resistance and conscription.

The rampant inequality of work has led political theorists, particularly Kathi Weeks, to suggest that American work has successfully reversed the axiom of working for a living.[13] While work has been organized as an inherently private relationship, she argues that the organization of work as a non-political activity needs to be challenged to broaden the horizon of political agency. The naturalization of the work ethic and the disciplinary morality around the concept prevents the connection between professional and political life, thus reproducing the mystification of capital production. Following Weeks's call to rethink the relationalities structured by labor hierarchies, "Difficult

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[13] See Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (2011).

Work" argues that transnational American novelists question the seductive fiction of professionalism is produced not only as a means of work but also as a form of social organization. The second half of the dissertation demands that we pay attention to the dilemma of the immigrant professional who is ushered into the idealization of professionalism through the famous Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.[14] The case of the immigrant professional reminds us that twentieth century American economy has operated on a nationalist distinction between domestic and foreign workers. The legibility of alien workers depends on their ability to inhabit the realm of American work. The immigrant professional, even as s/he is indoctrinated into a post-industrial economy, is not a rights-bearing worker. The Bartlebyian notion of passive resistance undergoes strategic changes in the expression of discontent as the alien/immigrant worker has limited access to the energies of the counter-cultural movements of the postwar period that were predicated on full political participation.

Towards a Politics of Counter-Professionalism

Why counter-professionalism? What is the valence of the prefix "counter" in relation to professionalism and how does it conjure the political? While countercultural movements have called attention to large-scale matters of social injustice, little attention has been paid how representations of white-collar work complicate the evolution of an American work ethic. Rather than following an inexorable, cumulative march towards a fully-realized post-industrial society, the project pauses to consider postwar and

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[14] And yet, the immigrant professional has a crucial precedent in the nineteenth century alien worker of the Chinese railroad whose presence in the country was forged by a specific industrial shortage of labor. Once the railroad was completed, the Chinese manual laborer quickly became the ire of draconian legislative measures, mainly the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1885.

contemporary accounts of work that take issue with the forward momentum of professionalism as the future of work. I use the word "counter-professionalism" to denote a low-grade opposition to the ascendant discourse of professionalism, not merely to annotate its counter-cultural energies but also to reflect on a capacious definition of resistance. The traditional definition of the prefix "counter," as well as its adjectival and noun forms, calls forth the structure of opposition; the OED describes the prefix as "running counter to the game," such as to "counter-act" or to "counter-dict" an existing set of relations ("counter, prefix" *OED*). At first, this might logically suggest that "counter-professionalism" offers the abandonment of the performance of work that constitutes white-collar labor. And yet, rarely do any of the case studies in the projects reject post-industrial work in favor of manual labor or give up their stake in knowledge work. Counter-professionalism approaches the complicated political discourse of what Michael Warner calls "counterpublics," which "maintains at some level, whether conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status" (Warner 86). Warner notes that "[t]he discourse that constitutes [counterpublics] is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness" (Warner 86). While Warner's observations are strictly about the domain of collective discourse, his study has an important clarification about the charge of the prefix "counter," where it offers more than just an antithetical mode or discourse. Warner cautions against thinking of counterpublics as a domain of "subaltern" production (Warner 87). Similarly, counter-professionalism is neither an escape from work nor a call to reform the structures of professionalism. It offers an examination of white-collar work where the discontent with post-industrial performance need not occupy a subterranean

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mode of feeling. It places minor affect as the prevailing condition of white-collar work, redefining the stakes of participation in a post-industrial future that is not merely American but also global.

Counter-professionalism addresses the problem of anti-work resistance or calls to reform work conditions from within capitalist production at a time when labor and precarity have become interlinked lived experiences. Melissa Gregg finds that late liberalism has given rise to many versions of uncertainty in the enumeration of productive labor that is indicative of the increasing collapsed distinction between so-called intellectual work and traditional forms of manual labor, engendering neologisms like "a global 'precariat' (Neilson and Rossiter 2005, Ross 2009), 'cognitariat' (Berardi 2004), or 'cybertariat' (Huws 2003)" (Gregg 251). These new classifications of uncertain labor eschew the "privileges and security once distinguishing salaried jobs from manual labor" and theorize a more general condition of precarious labor that proliferates unevenly for the laboring body and/or mind. In fact, Gregg contends that "[t]he term 'precarity' encapsulates this change and refers to all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work to subcontractors, freelancers or so-called self-employed persons'" (Gregg 251). It is no surprise then that scholars are beginning to "see political potential in this expressive identity, since erratic employment prevents citizens from attaining the state-sanctioned hallmarks of ontological well-being"; precarious labor can in fact become a site for "new subjectivities, new socialities and new possibilities."[15]

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[15] Melissa Gregg. "On Friday Night Drinks: Workplace Affects in the Age of the Cubicle." *The Affect Theory Reader*, 251.

In its reappraisal of anti-work politics, counter-professionalism portrays the changing political conditions that threaten the autonomy of the isolated knowledge worker. Counter-professionalism emerges less as revolutionary politics and more as an interrogation of the social and national hierarchies of professionalism. This study invokes the framework of counter-politics in a variety of forms: as a supplement, a negotiating mechanism, and a destabilizing agent. My use of "counter-professionalism," as an affective response to the discourse of professionalism, addresses the imbalance of institutional power in favor of the individual, non-exemplary actor.[16] Whereas anti-work politics opposes oppressive regimes of work through legible forms of collective organization, counter-professionalism is less combative and more strategic in its desire to redefine work structures. My use of the word calls upon a sideways reappraisal of work through individual discontent that are both active and passive, such as Bartlebyian refusal, dilettantism, strategic negotiation, and reluctant conscription.

Rather than a literary history that faithfully traces canonical representations of white-collar work in American literature, the project proposes two distinct moments where the ideology of professionalism invites bad feeling in the very local and global actors who are meant to further the agenda of post-industrial work. If the postwar moment, spanning 1945-1961 in the project, enact a strategic refusal of professionalized

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[16] The idea of counter-professionalism also has faint echoes of the concept of "counterinsurgency," a military tactic evoked in postwar American field manuals in a bid to disrupt insurgency groups in Latin America. The military strategist David Kilcullen calls attention to the amorphous nature of "counterinsurgency" as an operational tactic, where "there is no template, no single set of techniques, for countering insurgencies. Counterinsurgency is, simply, whatever governments do to defeat rebellions" (Kilcullen 1). In other words, unlike counter-insurgency, counter-professionalism is not about managing and containing unruly disruption, but that of turning the tables on evolving ordering principles of professionalism in a variety different ways. What counter-professionalism does conjure, however, is a non-militaristic mode of what Kilcullen calls an "an adaptation battle: a struggle to rapidly develop and learn new techniques and apply them in a fast-moving, high-threat environment, bringing them to bear before the enemy can evolve in response, and rapidly changing them as the environment shifts" (Kilcullen 2).

work, then the contemporary moment, spanning 1999-2013, enacts an urgent critique of the ethnicization of professionalized labor. While the first half anticipates the rise of countercultural critiques of American domestic power, the second half remains deeply mindful of the postness of ideology critique in the era of globalization.

Given the sheer sprawl of precarious white-collar work, this study reads representations of post-1945 labor across four genres, two genres that present a counter-force to the middlebrow novel of professionalism in the post-1945 period—the crime novel and the suburban novel—and two genres that deliberate on international participation in networks of American professionalism—the multiethnic *bildungsroman* and the post-9/11 finance novel. While occupying different sites of knowledge, these genres offer a conduit to registers of white-collar work. Traditionally, genres are reading practices that are organized around conventions. However, genres are also floating categories that often disrupt their own categorical rules. I choose genres that intersect with discourses of work and American citizenship to interrogate the hegemony of professionalism as a social ideal. The project focuses on figures *within* each genre as a manifestation of professionalism that otherwise remain covered over by a genre's focalizing concern. For example, the travel novels of Paul Bowles fixate on the Orient as an alternative to the insularity of American life. Bowles's novels are often read as examples of American Orientalism, where the American expatriate's cosmopolitanism is predicated on her or his mobility as an imperial citizen. However, it is also true that the bad feeling redolent in his postwar novels emanate from depressive states rooted in a discontent with midcentury professionalism and suburbanism. An examination of the expatriate figure complements an examination of affect as "nonsubjective experience"

(Terada 24). The figure of the white-collar worker is always conjured in postwar

discourse as an isolated individual, even when referred to in the plural. For sociologists

C. Wright Mills and David Riesman, white-collar work represents a crisis of individuality

even as it ushers in the promise of a technocratic, efficient society. This study's focus on

single figures addresses the problematic of "the lonely crowd," a hyper-individuated mass

of knowledge workers who are expected to perform an organizational role by suspending

personality.

The gap between the postwar and contemporary period is also a deliberate effort

to account for the resonance between the two periods in ways that complicate canonical

representations of white-collar work. Literary representations of white-collar work have

remained stubbornly inward in their consideration of the middle-class American subject.

As Mark McGurl delineates in *The Program Era*, the creative writing program nurtured a

form of American minimalism that was famously against the idea of emotion. The

centrality of bourgeois life was carefully carved out by writers like Raymond Carver,

who championed a social ideal of work as a paradigmatic achievement of American

life.[17] My study strategically avoids these innovations of minimalism as they reproduce

the landscape of postwar work as a largely white phenomenon, ignoring the rapid

diversification of the American economy precipitated by civil rights and immigration

reforms. My provocation is that the germination of postwar professionalism has immense

significance for the ethnicization of American labor in the post-civil rights period. Recent

Asian American writers are not only conscious of the connections between work and

ethnicity, but also craft a comprehensive revision to postwar work by deliberating on the

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[17] See Mark McGurl. "The Social Construction of Unreality: Creative Writing   in the Open System." *The Program Era*, 183-226.

figure of the foreign student and immigrant professional.[18] This turn away from stalwarts

like Carver, Wallace Stegner, Thomas Pynchon, and Don DeLillo in narrating post-60s

professionalism is a deliberate effort to account for transnational writers of color in the

landscape of white-collar work. Furthermore, the choice of contemporary Asian

American writers also highlights the continuing legacy of postwar professionalism in a

post-9/11 world that has come to rely on "soft work" (Heather Hicks) and "emotional

labor" (Arlie Hochschild). The rise of the Asian American model minority offers a

scathing comment on the continuance of black exclusion despite the internationalization

of American social and professional economies.[19] For example, in Susan Choi's *The*

Foreign Student (1999), Chang, the eponymous South Korean student must revert to

menial labor alongside the university's black kitchen staff when his paths to American

success are barred by racism. Meanwhile, Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* (2013)

shows that the Asian American knowledge worker stands between paradigms of inclusion

and exclusion. Asian American writers signal that model minority discourse is a

compromise formation of whiteness that seeks to not only instrumentalize ethnic labor

but also enforce the boundaries of panethnic participation in American work.

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[18] The earlier generation of Asian American writers like Maxine Hong Kingston critique the structure of midcentury professionalism in novels like *Tripmaster Monkey* (1990) while Frank Chin deliberates on the oppressive history of the Chinese railroad worker in T*he Chinaman Pacific and Frisco R.R. Co.* (1988). However, neither of these authors write about post-1965 immigrant professionalism. Wendy Cope-Lane's *The Coffin-Tree* (1983) and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989) offer accounts of post-1965 South Asian political and economic refugees that must learn to find their way around undocumented migrant work.
[19] While black writing grapples with the legacy of slavery, the social ideal of professionalism was anxious to erase the presence of black bodies in entirety. As Gordon Hutner argues, the few black middle-class professionals in the middlebrow novel of professionalism find that they are unwelcome in an overwhelmingly white suburban landscape. It is not that there were no black professionals in the postwar period, but that the representations of black professionalism are almost non-existent. See Andrew Hoberek on Ellison and the organizational man (*Twilight of the Middle-Class*); Stephen Schryer on black professionalism and the racist politics of Gunnar Myrdal (*Fantasies of the New Class*).

"Difficult Work" argues that the crisis of domesticity gives rise to the discourse of professionalism as a social ideal. I read *figures* of professionalism in the binary of the domestic and the foreign. The field of American studies has largely approached American professionalism along the axes of Cold War containment model, i.e. a model that reads along the binary axis of American capitalism and Soviet communism. But how do we tease out the international ramifications of a professionalized American economy? This is the question that has emerged in the last fifteen years. Scholars are complicating the logic of containment culture to address the reality of American empire and globalization in the contemporary moment. Taking their cue from what historian Odd Westad calls a "global cold war," literary critics have been contending with America's relationship to global and transnational socioeconomic forces.

Asian American studies has accounted for significant changes in twentieth century labor migration as a centripetal movement into America, calling attention to regimes of racialization that are inherently linked to the production of the productive "model minority" citizen on one hand and the threatening "perilous" alien on the other. Viet Nguyen has noted that the dichotomy between good and bad subjects of ideology inversely exemplifies scholarly attitudes towards "accommodation" and "resistance" (*Race and Resistance* 4). Nguyen laments that while Asian American intellectuals privilege modes of exemplary resistance, they ignore the more "flexible strategies" (*RR* 3) adopted by complex representations of the dichotomy, what he calls "panethnic entrepreneurship." Nguyen suggests that Asian America has had to contend not merely with oppositional structures of domination but the subtle manipulation of hegemony that

demands "acquiescence" and "consensus" to continue participating in the "American body politic" (*RR* 11).

Remaining cognizant of this distinction, my project interrogates "flexible strategies" of a variety of figures interpellated by professionalism: a marginal white middle-class, an ethnic American model minority, and a global diaspora caught between assimilation and expulsion. These "bad subjects" do not, in fact, offer exemplary resistance by exiting the ideological orbit of professionalism. Each of the four chapters present an intermediate case between sentimental assimilation and revolutionary discontent, powered by either strategies of low-grade disruption or subterfuge. The larger field of American studies has yet to reckon with the concomitant production of a *global* discourse of American professionalism that is both centripetal *and* centrifugal, that consists of migrant workers as well as temporary workers. This latter model would ostensibly need us to examine both multiethnic American literature and global Anglophone literature simultaneously in a way that does not merely privilege exemplary "bad subjects" of resistance. Whereas the post-1945 American novel rejects a triumphalist vision of the good life buoyed by professionalism, the contemporary ethnic/global American novel finds that it must embark on a more somber account of American professionalism, in which the rejection of the good life is complicated by the dissenting ethnic subject.

The first chapter, "Deviant Careers: Melancholy, Paranoia, and the Crime Novel" argues that the genre of the post-1945 crime novel disrupts the professionalized mode of "emotional labor" or "the self-management of feeling" (Arlie Hochschild) through deviant feelings of melancholy and paranoia. This chapter asserts that professionalism

requires a fictitious performance of personality by repressing emotion. In contrast, crime novels refuse to treat feeling as a marketable commodity. In Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* (1953) and Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), renegade detective Philip Marlowe and queer conman Tom Ripley offer two distinct rejoinders to postwar culture by fashioning themselves as professionals with non-negotiable feelings, emphasizing the false sentimentality of American middle-class life. Their deviant work—deciphering or committing crime—trains our attention to a marginalized middle-class that dissents from a narrative of upward mobility.

Adopting a transnational lens, the second chapter, "Expatriate Dilettantes: Depression, Acedia, and Post-1945 Travel" argues that postwar travel narratives develop the trope of the discontented American traveler who seeks an unsuccessful escape from the structure of professionalism. Bolstered by middlebrow magazines like *Holiday*, leisure travel grew rapidly as an institutional method of defining an ascending middle-class lifestyle—the paid vacation was an exciting new form of compensation to remedy the alienation of professionalized work. Middlebrow novelist Richard Yates and expatriate writer Paul Bowles disinvest from narratives of upward mobility by exploring the disaffected feelings of the American abroad. In *Revolutionary Road* (1961), Yates critiques middle-class suburban culture that covets the reach of the global American traveler through a breakdown of feeling and descent into depression. In *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), Bowles challenges middlebrow travel narratives furthering the work of American empire through the heightened depressive state of acedia. Bad feeling, both inside and outside the nation, emerges as a response to the seductive economic power of professionalism. The tendency of the expatriate novel to gaze eastwards—either towards

the imperial daydreaming of European adventure or the dilettante Orientalism of Morocco—demands a return to post-industrial society to grapple with its inconsistencies.

The third chapter, "Educational Ambassadors: Willfulness and American Knowledge Work," argues that novelistic representations of the postwar foreign student acknowledge the Asian knowledge worker's troubling proximity to manual and reproductive labor. The return to America through the foreign student attends to the gradual internationalization of the American economy after the postwar boom and offers a crucial window into the development of the ethnic/global professional. The foreign student in America falls into the legal and cultural category of the non-resident alien, placing her/him between Cold War foreign policy and civil rights discourse. In Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student* (1998) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), foreign students decode their unique position not through assimilation but evasion and willfulness. Choi's radical figure of the South Korean student evades two totalizing work paradigms—a cultural ambassador performing knowledge work and an alien outsider laboring as an Asian subject. In contrast, Lahiri's Indian student confronts the burden of reproductive labor placed by American legislative policy on the newly arriving immigrant family; even as she occupies the space of the neoliberal university, Gauri cultivates a life of filial isolation that undoes the law of the immigrant family and refuses to participate in an economy of human capital formation. Such figurations of the student betray the limits of American knowledge work that are continuously at odds with the fundamental racial difference of the foreign body.

The fourth chapter, "Global Janissaries: Terror, Risk, and the Post-9/11 Finance Novel," argues that feelings of reluctance and paranoia interrupt the workings of

American finance and empire. Tracing the rise of the contemporary finance novel, I suggest that Mohsin Hamid and H.M. Naqvi disinvest from structures of Wall Street employment to locate the inimical effects of finance capital on the ethnic body. Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) represents the organizational method by which the third world finance professional is recruited as an economic janissary of American capitalism. Hamid challenges the objective stakes of market return by introducing politically-charged reluctance and willfulness amidst a rapidly militarizing post-9/11 American economy. Similarly, H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) interrogates the personal stakes of finance capitalism through a narrative of downward mobility, where a young Pakistani analyst trades his white-collar job for a New York City taxi medallion. While finance has usually been studied in relation to mass feelings of euphoria or panic, the global South finance novel—stemming from the intersection between canonical American and postcolonial writing—depicts feelings that are peripheral to the economy of financialized work. The language of gain and loss, the addition or subtraction of value, is replaced with the language of cost, material damage, and complicity. If finance is the targeted other of terrorism, then the racialized Muslim immigrant is the collateral damage of both the American security state and global radicalization. Hamid and Naqvi challenge the formation of the hard-working, "useful" immigrant as a foot-soldier of an American financial empire by staging the Muslim body's precarious proximity to terroristic subjectivity.

The first and last chapters examine disparate literary figures of the professional as criminal—the postwar deviant and the post 9/11 terrorist—to understand how white-collar work enforces social citizenship. The first chapter, "Deviant Careers," considers

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the postwar sociological category of the "deviant" on the margins of society, often excluded based on class, criminality, and sexuality. While postwar professionalism is intent on producing social conformity as the basis for a thriving post-industrial society, deviance interrupts this vision through non-routinized, emotion-driven work that produces disorder and unruliness. The disorderly work of deviance interrogates both the social exclusion of the marginalized para-criminal as well as the increasing loss of agency of the white-collar worker. Similarly, the fourth chapter, "Global Janissaries," addresses what Junaid Rana calls the "Islamic peril" narrative, where the post-9/11 finance novel illustrates that the religious and culture difference of the global South professional precipitates heightened forms of social exclusion and surveillance. The finance novel interrogates the climate of xenophobic fear that enables the racialization of the global South Muslim professional as an anti-American, anti-capitalist criminal by a paranoid, financialized security state. In both chapters, the figure of the criminal throws into relief the hegemonic work of professionalism in defining the boundaries of work through mechanisms of social and geopolitical exclusion.

Meanwhile, the second and third chapters draw a link between work and transnational movement to explore the social cost of professionalism. While the second chapter turns to a postwar American desire for an exit from the white-collar work of midcentury corporations, the third chapter addresses the post-1965 influx of international students into the knowledge work of universities. "Expatriate Dilettantes" suggests that the dilettantism of travel only provides temporary relief from the passivity of white-collar work. Expatriation heightens the alienation and bad feeling of the professional-as-tourist, who, in a quest to escape American professionalism, becomes unmoored from a

purposeful work. In contrast, "Educational Ambassadors" addresses the international student's struggle to become a legible subject of professionalism within the American economy. The assimilative force of immigration place the high-skilled worker in a difficult position between being a thinking mind and a laboring body. Both outward and inward movements produce anti-work resistance in a minor, non-revolutionary register. The bad feelings of both domestic and international professionals remain stubbornly closed to extrapolation. Instead, they present a provisional strategy of survival through the non-performance of work, as with dilettantism, or the aestheticization of menial work.

The four case studies offer an evolving literary response to the social ideal of professionalism from domestic and foreign figures whose subject position is not that of castigated marginality and revolutionary anger, but that of compromised participation and low-grade discontent. Throughout the project, I demonstrate that the post-1945 transnational American novel cultivates minor feeling to interrogate the ascendancy of white-collar work that assumes global consensus about post-industrial work. Counter-professionalism builds a distinct model of discontented participation in capitalist work that confronts the need for a change in the regimes of an Americanized work ethic. While these models do not oppose the concept of work, they question the social ideal of professionalism that instrumentalizes work as a means of organizing identity. Instead of harkening back to an older, ecumenical definition of professionalism as calling, they orient themselves to a future in which work can articulate a non-hierarchical vision of labor. They also insist on the importance of labor as a generative axis of literary interpretation alongside race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and class. Finally, the study also reveals that America constitutes itself not only from the heavily guarded citadel of

domestic literature, but also the domain of what was once sanitized as World Literature. The domestic and the foreign remain deeply intertwined in invocations of work in American life, demanding that twentieth and twenty-first century American literature must necessarily engage with an expanding cast of global actors.

Chapter One

Deviant Careers: Melancholy, Paranoia, and the Post-1945 Crime Novel

> "…we must be prepared to see that the impression of reality fostered by a performance is a delicate, fragile thing that can be shattered by very minor mishaps."

> —Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*[20]

In *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* (1966). Patricia Highsmith devotes a section, titled "Distractions and Directions," to comment on the incompatibility of writers and "red tape." She complains that "there are the eternal maneuverings [a writer] has to perform to exist on an irregular and often inadequate income, irksome to people by nature not inclined to economy, much less to cheeseparing-the insecurity that is the very air writers breathe, since they are in a profession without unemployment insurance, paid vacations, or pensions" (*Plotting* 51). Mired in such quotidian matters, Highsmith finds that the best way to work as a writer is to enter "a state of innocence," and pretend she had no troubles. She notes somewhat sardonically, "I suppose it's a measure of how professional one is, how quickly one can do this. The ability does improve with practice" (*Plotting* 51). While Highsmith's biographer, Andrew Wilson, attributes this remark to her dedication to her work, Highsmith's ambivalence about postwar work culture is not incidental, but a running preoccupation in her novels as a keen diagnosis of postwar American anxiety. While late capitalist work culture, specifically white-collar work, demands rigorous and disciplined affective management in postwar America, this chapter contends that both Raymond Chandler and Patricia Highsmith resignify the social ideal of professionalism by calling attention to the unacknowledged presence of the precarious

and the deviant as constitutive social actors. While Chandler's hard-boiled fiction presents the case of complicit professionalism, Patricia Highsmith's suspense thrillers explore instances of perverse professionalism.

Between the two world wars, crime fiction emerged as a new form that renegotiated the existing tropes of detective fiction and literary fiction. Detective fiction has, of course, been a staple form since its most famous practitioners, Edgar Allan Poe and later Arthur Conan Doyle, popularized the genre for its fictional configuration of restored order and social coherence. Both August Dupont and Sherlock Holmes are figures of calculating intelligence, exceptional human beings who exercise their powers of deduction to see what regular individuals cannot. In *Signs Taken For Wonders* (1983), Franco Moretti goes one step further, arguing that Holmes is instrumental in strengthening the hold of the status quo and the bourgeois. Moretti's main contention is that detective fiction sidesteps the centrality of economic inequality in the distribution of economic power: "[m]oney is always the motive of crime in detective fiction, yet the genre is wholly silent about *production* that unequal exchange between labour-power and wages which is the true source of social wealth. The indignation about what is rotten and immoral in the economy must concentrate on… phenomena [like]… thefts, con-jobs, fraud, false pretences and so on… As for the factory, it is innocent and thus free to carry on" (Moretti 139). Moretti reads this as an indictment of the professional detective, who becomes an agent of collusion with prevailing norms by aiding the repression of criminality.

Similarly, Stephen Knight notes that the "clue puzzler" genre, which gathers steam in the nineteen twenties through writers like Agatha Christie, are interested in

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[20] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 56.

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creating the illusion of intellectual gamesmanship for a squarely middleclass audience. For Knight, this trend is sharply undercut by both Dashiel Hammett and Raymond Chandler, whose plain-speaking, tough-as-nails detective figures tackle a "growing dismay with modern mercantile society…but also general[ly] in the post-war period…its recurrent sense of lost dreams and dangers of over-sophistication" (Knight 113).

Post-1945 crime fiction turns away from the vocabulary of exceptionality and the messianic reordering of a seemingly irrational world. Instead, the genre inhabits categories of the criminal and the deviant without adjudication or arbitration in favor of a neutral description of affective worlds. In other words, crime fiction remains less interested in the explanatory power of detective fiction, and more attuned to the affective power of the senses. If "detective fiction is a hymn to culture's coercive abilities" (Moretti 136), then the crime fictions of Chandler and Highsmith introduce a stridently atonal mode of crime writing.

Highsmith's work presents a more radical departure from crime fiction of the postwar era. In a famous introduction to Highsmith's short stories, Graham Greene contrasts her work with noir novelists like Dashiel Hammett and Raymond Chandler and lauds her for being, foremost, a "poet of apprehension." Greene finds that, unlike noir writers' "romantic" vision, Highsmith's world is one populated entirely by unlikely events and sheer impossibility. The effect is to make the world bleaker but also more real. Invoking deviance as a quintessential trait of crime fiction, Anthony Hilfer notes that crime writers "revitalize conventional morality highlighting the incidence of a covert pathological relationship between righteous judgment and psychological projection. Their writings depict not only the rules of conventional morality as provisional and precarious

but, even more disturbingly, the array of sociologically agreed-on assumptions that are taken to substantiate civilized life" (Hilfer 97). Hilfer argues that the crime writer's success lies in her ability to disrupt established modes of social categorization. In a similar vein, David Glover traces the crime thriller's roots to the sensation novels of the nineteenth century, and contends that the genre emerges out of its focus on "the nervous system" to shatter the fragile social determinants of what Hilfer alludes to as "civilized life." The impulse of the genre is to "persistently…raise the stakes of the narrative, heightening or exaggerating the experience of events by transforming them into a rising curve of danger, violence or shock." The effects of the genre turn on an "intensity of... experience," mainly "assaults upon the fictional body, a constant awareness of the physicality of danger, sado-masochistic scenarios of torture or persecution, a descent into pathological extremes of consciousness, the inner world of the psychopath or monsters" (Glover 43).

Thus, by emphasizing "inner" states, crime fiction harnesses feeling as a fundamental state of the experiential world. As Rei Terada reminds us, "[f]eeling is a capacious term that connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological states (emotions)" (Terada 15). Crime fiction turns to feeling as "the common ground between the physiological and the psychological" (Terada 3) to produce a non-rational "nonsubjective" experience of feeling. Terada argues in *Feeling in Theory* that "the classical picture of emotion already contraindicates the idea of the subject" and that affect is "not a reconception of emotion-like states" (Terada). The primacy of nonsubjective feeling in crime fiction compels a redescription of the very *norms* of feeling.

But the question remains, how does crime fiction give us a fuller picture of late capitalist work? My contention is that crime fiction provides an inner window into the production of "emotional labor." The term, originally coined by American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in her groundbreaking book *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983), addresses a new reality of late capitalist labor in post-industrial society, that white-collar jobs have almost entirely replaced blue-collar factory jobs. The hallmark of this new kind of labor is that it "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild 7). Such suppression of feeling is not mere playacting but a mode of holistic performance that "calls for a coordination of mind and feeling," so much so that it ends up "draw[ing] on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (Hochschild 7). In other words, emotional labor demands that we not only pretend to embody our work, but also perform this embodiment as a mode of streamlined affect, thereby completing a profitable circuit of work and feeling.

Hochschild's insight is an immensely useful intervention for postwar American work culture as well, since the period sees a remarkable shift in the makeup of traditional labor forms. While sociologists like C. Wright Mills and David Reisman worry about the problem of "impersonality" in the performance of white-collar work, Hochschild argues that the worst way to perform emotional labor is to put on a sense of false cheer and devotion to one's job. She notes that Mills' insight on personality and emotional labor is crucial, but introduces an important difference:

> Mills argued that when we "sell our personality" in the course of selling goods or
> services we engage in a seriously self-estranging process, one that is increasingly

common among workers in advanced capitalist systems. This had the ring of truth, but something was missing. Mills seemed to assume that in order to sell personality, one need only have it. Yet simply having personality does not make one a diplomat, any more than having muscles makes one an athlete. What was missing was a sense of the active emotional labor involved in the selling. This labor, it seemed to me, might be one part of a distinctly patterned yet invisible emotional system—a system composed of individual acts of "emotion work," social "feeling rules," and a great variety of exchanges between people in private and public life. (Hochschild ix-x)

In Hochschild's account, professionalism seeks adherence to work in ways that involve not just manipulation of existing personality, but a *fictitious performance* of personality. White-collar jobs that function through "the voice-to-voice or face-to-face delivery of service" are not new. "[W]hat is new," Hochschild contends, "is that they are now socially engineered and thoroughly organized from the top… it makes the worker *more vulnerable* to the social engineering of her emotional labor and reduces her control over that labor. (Hochschild 8, emphasis mine). The question of "control" is crucial here, because as Mills contends, white-collar work renders the employee a passive, continuously mediated subject.

Writing about a decade after Hochschild, Italian political theorist Paolo Virno notes that the general condition of workplace settings from the sixties through the eighties is one where "[s]o-called advanced technologies [did] not so much provoke alienation…as reduce the experience of even the most radical alienation to a professional profile" (Virno 15). He theorizes that the "emotional situation" of the workplace underwent a drastic and universal change in the postwar period, and calls for a reappraisal of modes of feeling—"opportunism, fear and cynicism" (Virno 15)—that are now "put to work" in the service of production. Virno's observations are particularly poignant as they emerge from a period of sixties Italian labor politics that embraced "the

refusal to work" as a mode of anticapitalist feeling and revolutionary change. Virno reminds us that the proximity of work and feeling should make us alert to the inherently political nature of work. In this context, the work of professionalization in postwar America detaches itself from occupational (and political) specificity: this new worker becomes abstracted into a homogenized, reified personality, which emerges from what Hochschild calls the "socially engineered" nature of emotional labor. Hochschild warns against the adverse effects of such managed work affects: "As workers, the more seriously social engineering affects our behavior and our feelings, the more intensely we must address a new ambiguity about who is directing them (is this me or the company talking?)" (Hochschild 34).

These developments in the social characteristics of work life produce, in turn, consensus around American character, a consensus that privileges exemplarity and success as normative modes of professional performance. The organizational character of white-collar work and the interleaved nature of emotional labor offer what Sara Ahmed has called "the promise of happiness," which quells the desire for success in exchange for one's affective freedom within institutionality. In other words, white-collar work stages an elaborate system of exchange where both feeling and freedom get exchanged for vertical mobility in postwar America.

The Presentation of Self in Estranged Life

Sociologist Erving Goffman's studies of midcentury America make a strong case for the centrality of performance in social life. Engaging most directly with the success and failure of managing various social variables, particularly class, Goffman highlights a

shifting set of normative constraints, often homing in on scenes of professionalism and service for illustration. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman observes that the individual and the social are engaged in a process of communication influenced by both "governable" and "ungovernable" (*Presentation of Self* 7) modes of performance. In his analysis, figures of midcentury life attempt to produce a "working consensus" about their social scenes, producing "legitimate" and "normal" everyday lives that revolve around rigorous "impression management" (*Presentation of Self* 10). Goffman cites the behavior of the so-called criminal classes to elucidate the other side of "normal" situations, drawing a useful link between the performance of white-collar work and the deviant subject. Extrapolating from Goffman, the professional criminal classes in the crime novel offer a overlooked illustrative mechanism for the inseparability between postwar professional work and crime. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963), Goffman calls attention to the "discredited" individual in society through insisting on a continuum of "normal" and "deviant" (*Stigma* 127) to understand the conceptual framework of the social. He finds that "the most fortunate of normals" is guarding some "half-hidden failing" that "creat[es] a shameful gap between virtual and actual social identity. Therefore, the occasionally precarious and the constantly precarious form a single continuum, their situation in life analyzable by the same framework" (*Stigma* 127).

Goffman's study was not the first such study to take up the question of deviance. Sociologist Robert Park in the 1920s began to study the race and class dynamics surrounding the Chicago area. The concept of the "marginal man" emerged as a category of analysis to understand the production of racial encounters as well as criminal behavior.

Around the same time, the study of criminal behavior, including white-collar infractions, became a phenomenon when sociologist Edwin H. Sutherland produced a seminal textbook *Criminology* (1924) in order to correct the prevalent characterization of criminality as a raced and classed phenomenon. Sutherland advanced a controversial "sociological theory of criminology" to explain the criminal deviance of lower and upper classes alike. Sutherland's "differential association" theory explained criminality as arising out of associative networks and sought to correct the identification of criminal characteristics within certain identity categories. In the postwar period, the study of deviant behaviors became a topic of sociological interest to a network of sociologists from the University of Chicago (later dubbed The Chicago School), particularly after Edwin Sutherland's departure from the university. While criminology as a discipline was also interested in the question of deviance, these sociologists sought to correct the institutional bias with which the discipline continued to view criminals as "pathological."[21] In an insightful survey of the Chicago school, John F. Galliher notes that the word deviance was in fact not a term used in criminology, which preferred the label of "disorganization" (Galliher 170). Howard Becker, in particular, pushed for the ethical need for sociologists to adopt a more interactionist approach by assuming the perspective of the marginalized and the oppressed.[22] As president of the Society for the

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[21] Twentieth century sociologists continued to see American culture as suffused by what Merton calls "pathological materialism", where the ends would justify the means. The trope of mobility becomes a useful indicator of the desire for criminality for these sociologists. Later, sociologists Cloward and Ohlin would see criminality as emerging out of a frustration of the success narrative. They hypothesized that "[m]any lower-class male adolescents experience extreme deprivation born of the certainty that their position in the economic structure is relatively fixed and immutable—a desperation made all the more poignant by their exposure to a cultural ideology in which failure to orient oneself upward regarded as a moral defect and failure to become mobile as proof of it" (107).

[22] Later editions of Sutherland and Cressey's *Criminology* (an introductory textbook for students of the subject) used some of the same language of postwar sociology's interest in interaction. For example, the 1978 edition of the textbook describes the "process of communication," both "verbal" as well as

Study of Social Problems in 1966, Becker provocatively asked "Whose Side Are We

On?" in an address with the same title (Galliher 169). While Goffman certainly takes on

this imperative in his own way, his endgame remains somewhat different from his

compeers. His style of approaching everyday modes of interaction is infamous for its

refusal to adhere to standards of categorization, preferring "sarcasm, satire and irony to

attack and discredit those in positions of power" (Galliher 173). In fact, Goffman's work

affords an almost perfect hard-boiled correspondence with the crime novel in its

predilection to function as a "disrupter of categories."[23]

The affinity between midcentury professional performance and crime is

supplemented further through Goffman's reliance on a little-known mid-twentieth

century study of organized crime, David Maurer's *The Big Con* (1940), which offers a

highly systematized reading of conmen.[24] An academic who managed to infiltrate the

inner networks of professional criminals, Maurer gives us a detailed meditation on the

intricacies and efficiency of such networks, particularly their reliance on the social

impersonation of professionalism. He observes that conmen were a twentieth century

invention and, unlike their predecessors, evolved highly ritualized and professionalized

methods of operation: "[b]efore 1900, crime had not become a big business. Confidence

men did not realize that they were destined to become the aristocrats of crime. They had

not visualized a smoothly working machine, its political cogs greased with bribe-money

and its essential parts composed of slick, expert professionals" (Maurer 9-10). Much of

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"gestur[al]," as integral to the transmission of criminal behavior in "intimate group settings." But criminology continued to be interested in the disciplining of criminal behavior as an epistemologically stable category.

[23] This is a phrase that Tom Perrin uses to introduce the special issue of *Post45* on Highsmith.

[24] The text also provides useful correspondences with Highsmith's handling of the criminal professional particularly highlighting Ripley's predilection to rely on a set material machinery of conning even as he deviates from the pre-scripted performance of professional conmen.

the conman's success depended on his victim's willingness to make a quick fortune and thereby involved a mastery of social roles and expectations to gain trust with the "victim." Therefore, in elaborate, drawn-out operations (also referred to as "long-cons"), the distinguishing feature of conmen was not their difference as criminal minds but their ability to pass themselves off as professionals, i.e. as law-abiding citizens who appeared to occupy respectable social positions. Maurer's study of conmen reveals the importance of professionalism as a mode of performance that enables the staging of a work setting well before the advent of the midcentury office.

In fact, of the many cons that Maurer describes, the most successful ones revolve around staging the perfect professional setting. For example, in the early twentieth century, the "wire" swindle involved temporarily hijacking a "Western Union office, complete with operators, telegraph, instruments, clerks and a 'manager' " (Maurer 17). Later, more sophisticated "stores" raised the stakes of professional crime when "[d]ivision of labor increased and, in direct proportion, specializations became essential". Consequently "[t]he post of manager developed and some...became real experts in stagecraft and directions."[25] These counterfeit operations were so successful that the con store soon flourished as a "big business," complete with capital, skilled labor, and political support--in short a complete counterfeit corporation (Maurer 20). Thereby, evading criminality meant greasing the engines of bureaucracy with bribe money for "officers, judges and juries" (Maurer 25-26). It also meant that bureaucratic centers of professional power became a target for conmen as "professional men as a class are

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[25] In one anecdote about a Western Union scam, a manager "Charley" assumes a "dignified and attractive personality that puts Mr. Bates [the victim] at ease immediately"(35). "Charley" wields power by ordering his hired lackeys around in an office setting and exudes a picture of professionalism.

notoriously gullible; they readily fancy themselves as adept at financial manipulation as they are in their own field of specialization" (Maurer 107-108).

Given the intricate social mechanisms involved in these operations, it is hardly surprising that the professional criminal is a figure of keen interest and rich opportunity for the crime novel's critique of postwar America. As Goffman shows, the criminal is part of a set of postwar marginals, where the label of criminality evinces both an outsider status as well as a desire to pass for normal.[26] The work of managing the stigma of criminality becomes an "occupation" where the stigmatized person moves from being inside a group of like-minded outsiders to a representative speaking for the group. The occupation becomes a framing analytic because the profession immediately invokes disciplinary authority.[27] Goffman realigns the stakes of the career by coining the concept of a "moral career" to track the social trajectory of the figural outsider. In *Asylums*, he elucidates upon this refurbished use of "career:"

> Traditionally the term career has been reserved those who expect to enjoy the rises laid out with a respectable profession. The term is coming to be used, however, in a broadened sense to refer to any social strand of any person's course through life. The perspective of natural history is taken: unique outcomes are neglected in favor of such changes over time as are basic and common to the members of a social category, although occurring independently to each of them. Such a career is not a thing that can be brilliant or disappointing: it can no more be a success than a failure. (*Asylums* 127)

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[26] Throughout *Stigma*, Goffman emphasizes, as the subtitle of the study notes, a method of "management" underlying the deployment and the reception of stigma: rather than being merely an embodied category, it is continuously manufactured and managed through cues and knowledge-work that relies on the presence of others.

[27] It is worth mentioning that seventies' scholars of professionalism distanced themselves from more vituperative, organizational modes of professionalism. They isolated postwar professionalism as an almost exceptional case study. In fact, Eliot Freidson sounded a call for the "rebirth" of professionalism in the nineties and emphasized the radical potential inherent in the professions. Writing amidst such a renaissance, Jacques Donzelot sounds a note of Foucauldian caution about the insidious nature of professionalism and its ability to shepherd the late capitalist worker into productivity. David Babock extrapolates from Donzelot's hesitation about professionalism and notes that "[p]rofession becomes a means of naturalizing exploitative labor relations, by imaginatively linking them to the constitution and development of character" (Babcock 891). Goffman clues in on the narrative of development inherent in the "profession."

The flattening of the word "career" here produces a "two-sidedness" to the strongly professional term and illuminates a link "between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society" (*Asylums* 127). The performance inherent in a "a respectable profession" is transformed into a democratizing potential, where "unique outcomes are neglected in favor of such changes over time as are basic and common to the members of a social category" (*Asylums* 127). Therefore, Goffman's notion of a career offers a heuristic that measures pure performance within social interaction. Howard Becket also picks up on the phrase and delineates "deviant careers" in his seminal *Outsiders* (1966). The career becomes a stand-in for the predicament of the individual in the institution and illuminates the cant of the professional occupation. By recasting the phrase as a "moral career," Goffman moves the word away from its narrow connotation of normative development within workplace settings. The introduction of the word "moral" activates a politicized approach to the notion of a career, not as a matter pertaining to the private employee but as a question about the organization of the social writ large. The "moral career" of an individual, particularly a stigmatized person, triggers a conversation about the production of certain kinds of affects and performances as "normal" or "deviant."

The ugly feelings articulated by the crime novel suggest a form of "backwardness" that Heather Love characterizes as an overlooked mode of queer politics.[28] Love finds that recalcitrance in early to mid-twentieth century queer American writing marks an important refusal to accept a future-oriented narrative of progress, one that actively discounts the queer subject from the politics of reproductivity. Love's

contention has been a groundbreaking moment for both queer politics and affect studies. I borrow her attention to the political power of backward feelings, particularly melancholy and loss, to put pressure on a very particular conception of the success narrative as a normative injunction, which saturates postwar class discourse. Standing in opposition to the exemplary expertise of professionalism and its desire for a post-industrial society, crime fiction resists professionalism's instrumentalization of feeling by refusing to treat affect as a fungible, delimited "commodity." Instead, crime fiction inhabits a domain of feeling that suspends both the normativity and sentimentality of middle-class life through unresolved negative feelings that saturate the atmosphere of the generic crime novel.

Much like Goffman's postwar sociological work, the crime fictions of Chandler and Highsmith attend to a remainder or excess of everyday life that resist the production of a "normal" developmental subjects valorized by middle-class suburban life (as well as detective fiction). Crime fiction destabilizes the hold of exemplarity by calling our attention to networks of normativity that operate on the production of specific sites and subjects marked for exclusion. The genre explores the formation of a hegemonic American middle-class that is compulsive in its desire for uplift and progress, particularly through the regimentation of performance. In other words, crime fiction calls attention to the ways in which performance becomes a substitute for addressing inequity in earnest. While workplaces were rife with the reification of emotional labor, crime fiction widens the circuit of such labor to acts of everyday life, events and situations that rely on the work of emotional labor, without the contained institutionality of the workplace. In other words, crime fiction explores emotional labor that, even as it stands on the peripheries of professionalism, constitutes a vital center of white-collar work.

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[28] See Heather Love. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2009).

Crime fiction insists on the continuing presence of the downward mobility narrative, as a cautionary counterbalance to the success narrative. In his exploration of upward mobility, Bruce Robbins is more optimistic about literary representations of the welfare state and social good. For Robbins, the upward mobility narrative affirms a joint venture between individual and collective, where the individual relaxes hold over the past and any guilt associated with it. Instead, the development of the individual becomes the impetus of both the larger social structure and the individual. This concerted effort affirms "that, because society is interdependent, what the individual does is neither entirely his fault nor—as the doctrine of self-reliance had insisted—his achievement" (Robbins 89). In this chapter, crime fiction redraws these networks of interdependence. Figures of downward mobility fall into the chinks of societal anxiety about alienated subjects, and their downward turn becomes symptomatized as a personal failing. The crime thriller meditates on the overt and covert pathologizing impulse that produces subjects for whom precarity is an accumulating state of being. Their vulnerability is both expressed and produced out of their discontent and resistance, which only becomes legible through minor, rather than major or revolutionary, modes of feeling.

Bringing affect studies into the conversation illuminates otherwise evasive hierarchies of class oppression in the genre. Not unlike Howard Becker's interrogative, "Whose side are we on?," crime fiction develops a distinctly hard-boiled aesthetic that shifts our focus from a preoccupation with stable social order towards the status of the outsider and non-conforming citizen as subjects capable of a micro-revolution. The genre turns to affect in order to write against the instrumental methodology of the professions and to establish the primacy of feeling in postwar experience. The invocation of affect

here also confirms that crime fiction in the period is more than a mass-market phenomenon and makes a case for the cultural and critical acumen of the genre. This chapter asks whether the crime fiction relies on seemingly useless feelings—melancholy, shame, paranoia—and invokes nodes of the antisocial towards the queering of disciplinarity and normality. Can these distinctly anti- feelings—antisocial, anti-normative, antiestablishment, or even as Leo Bersani formulates it, "anti-relational"—renovate, at least provisionally, the discourse of the professions and the concomitant promise of the good life? This chapter asserts that the figure of the counter-professional emerges in postwar America through a complex interaction of discourses of normality and deviance. The crime novel reacts sharply to the depersonalization and instrumentalization of the professional by developing two modes of an excluded middle class: Chandler's Marlowe as the self-conscious cynical detective and Highsmith's Ripley as the role-playing conman-murderer. While Chandler's Marlowe is a precursor to the social exclusion of Highsmith's Ripley, both figures explore perverse contingencies of feeling through violence, impersonation, subterfuge, and prohibited actions. Both deviant social positions and unruly feelings align to critique the hierarchies of subordination by engaging in fantasies of getting even and, occasionally, exploring the pleasures of one-upmanship.

Philip Marlowe's Melancholic Professionalism

> "So you're a private detective," she said. "I didn't know they really existed,
> except in books. Or else they were greasy little men snooping around hotels."
>   Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*

The maligned figure of the private detective emerges in the American hard-boiled

crime stories that appeared in pulp magazines of the nineteen twenties, most famously

Black Mask and *Dime Detective*. These magazines published nascent short stories of

detectives and vigilantes who exercised a discretionary capacity that operated in extra-

legal territory. Detective fiction created its own variant in America between the two

world wars, gaining prominence with the crime novels of Dashiel Hammett and

Raymond Chandler.[29] The important difference between English detective fiction and its

newly formed American counterpart, as Frederic Jameson observes, was its movement

away from "deduction."[30] The hard-boiled genre veers away from presenting a rational

figure of the professional detective who operates, even if ingeniously, within the confines

of the law. Writing in era recovering from the shock of the Great Depression, Raymond

Chandler introduced his deadpan detective Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep* (1935).

Unlike the early pulp writing of Micky Spillane and other dime detective authors,

Chandler's writing takes a more self-conscious approach to the status of the lowbrow.

For Chandler, the detective story is a curiously difficult genre to maneuver because its

evasion of psychological depth. In his influential essay "The Simple Art of Murder," he

explains that

> [t]he detective story for a variety of reasons can seldom be promoted. It is usually
> about murder and hence lacks the element of uplift. Murder, which is a frustration

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[29] See Martin Priestman. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* (2003).
[30] For Jameson, the "peculiar nature of Chandler's plot construction" displaces "the older logic of cause and effect (or deduction)" and undoes "an aesthetic whereby the rhythm of [the older detective story's] succession or alternation is governed" ("The Synoptic Chandler" 35).

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of the individual and hence a frustration of the race, may have, and in fact has, a good deal of sociological implication. But it has been going on too long for it to be news. If the mystery novel is at all realistic (which it very seldom is) it is written in a certain spirit of detachment; otherwise nobody but a psychopath would want to write it or read it. The murder novel has also a depressing way of minding its own business, solving its own problems and answering its own questions. There is nothing left to discuss.[31]

The detective story was mainly concerned with a comprehensive restoration of social order. Unlike realist writers of serious fiction, Chandler believed that "the fellow who can write you a vivid and colorful prose simply will not be bothered with the coolie labor of breaking down unbreakable alibis" (Chandler "The Simple Art of Murder: An Essay" Location 68, Par. 1). Instead, the flatness of the detective novel brings with it an attention to gritty detail and atmosphere that Chandler was quick to gauge as the fulcrum of noir writing. The "detachment" that Chandler ascribes to genre fiction transfers over to an "attitude" of distance and alienation of the noir detective. The "coolie labor of breaking down unbreakable alibis" gives rise to the stigmatized private eye, who prefers to stay in the shadowy regions of what Paula Rabinowitz calls "pulp modernism". Operating between the lines of vigilantism and disciplinarity, Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe redescribes the work of professionalism through the stigmatized profession of the private eye. Unlike the traditional detective figure, the noir detective remains disinterested in the triumph of knowledge work and worries about the loss of a moral code. This loss is not merely rooted in the past but also anticipates an unpalatable future of disciplined feeling that manifests itself in the logic of hyper-organized professions.

Such a turn towards feeling has already been underway in scholarship around American crime fiction. Noir scholars have revised their reading of Philip Marlowe as a

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[31] Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder: An Essay," Location 18, Par. 2, *The Simple Art of*

self-conscious throwback to nineteenth century sentimentalism. While sentimental fiction

in the nineteenth century remained the domain of women readers, the depression era

swivels towards a male-oriented sentimental fiction that attempts to grapple with

changing economies of scale.[32] Michael Szalay contends that male bureaucracy replaces

family structures in noir fiction and cinema while Leonard Cassuto argues for a "hard-

boiled sentimentalism" circulating through twentieth century crime fiction. Similarly,

Sean McCann reads Chandler's fiction as "an elegiac parable of sentimental affiliation"

expressed through a "vision of male fellowship" (McCann 139). None of these scholars,

however, contest Marlowe's deadpan affect as anything other than repressed

sentimentalism and nostalgia for a mythical status quo.[33] Frederic Jameson, in fact, casts

Chandler's hard-boiled writing as a style of writing that can only inhabit the realm of the

aesthetic:

> The least politically correct writers of all our modern writers, Chandler faithfully
> gives vent to everything racist, sexist, homophobic, and otherwise socially
> resentful and reactionary in the American collective unconscious, enhancing these
> *unlovely feelings*—which are almost exclusively mobilized for striking and
> essential visual purposes, that is to say, for aesthetic rather than political ones."
> (Jameson 37, emphasis mine)

These "unlovely feelings," so easily dismissed by Jameson as merely "aesthetic," are

irremediable when considered exclusively in the domain of ethical action. But the

"socially resentful and reactionary" details also contain within them political potential

that can be seen through a consideration of affect, particularly that of melancholy. Freud

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Murder Kindle ebook file.
[32] See *Raymond Chandler Speaking* (1962), Sean McCann's *Gumshoe America* (2000), and Leonard
Cassuto's *Hard-Boiled Sentimentality* (2008).
[33] McCann comes closest to suggesting that feeling is an integral device for Chandler's writing: "Letting
'scene outrank the plot' and 'fact' escape the 'simplicity of fiction,' [Chandler's novels] reflect a desire to
cede pride of place to an ephemeral 'felt experience' that Chandler imagined always being overtaken by the
formal and institutional" (*Gumshoe America* 149).

notes in "Mourning and Melancholia" that, unlike mourning, melancholia is characterized by "a profoundly, painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self" (Freud 311). At first, this might read as a counterintuitive way of characterizing the tough-guy stance of Chandler's detective. But, I would like to address how melancholia illustrates "the loss of an object that is withdrawn from consciousness," in this case Marlowe as a postwar figure, who looks back with resigned anger. One could certainly align him with what Walter Benjamin dubs "left melancholia", which, in Wendy Brown's summation, is "Benjamin's unambivalent epithet for the revolutionary hack who is, finally, more attached to a particular political analysis or ideal—even to the failure of the ideal—than seizing possibilities for radical change in the present" (Brown 458).[34] In fact, Brown notes that the term signifies "opprobrium for those more beholden to certain long-held sentiments and objects than to the possibilities of political transformation in the present...[where] the sentiments themselves become things" (Brown 459).

Marlowe's melancholia manifests itself politically through a refusal to adopt a conformist postwar style and profession. His melancholy also calls for an important reappraisal of Chandler's writing; it signals not merely a crisis of postwar masculinity but a neglected politics of feeling that inhabits this supposed emasculation. Marlowe's late night trysts with Terry Lennox, over an endless supply of gimlets, reveal a deep homosocial kinship with the Englishman, and compels Marlowe to pursue a seemingly hopeless case. The turn to affect allows us to see the genre's useless feelings as registering a complaint against late capitalism, a complaint that also carries with it an oblique political demand for the restructuring of the category of work. Chandler's crime

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[34] Wendy Brown. "Resisting Left Melancholia". *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, 458.

thrillers do not merely seek to enact a sensory effect on the nervous system but turn our attention to the loss of a non-instrumentalized vision of the world. Marlowe's relationship with Lennox represents both a vision of pure relationality that transcends pecuniary interest as well as an affective bond that even confounds Marlowe. There is no reason for the detective and the millionaire husband to meet: "What I don't get is why a guy with your privileges would want to drink with a private eye" (*LG* 21).

Marlowe refuses to adhere to the narrative of market-oriented, organizational professionalism by courting failure. This position is not unlike the struggle of the postwar crime novelists themselves. As Sean McCann notes, "[d]riven by ambitions that they felt certain could not be realized, the major hard-boiled writers became, in effect, pulp avant-gardists— figures whose determination to overcome the limits of intractable cultural institutions could be measured by their willingness to embrace failure" (McCann 4). McCann aligns Marlowe with a blue-collar "working stiff" in his reading of the New Deal Writers' Project. Chandler's private detective could instead be reoriented as a knowledge-worker, who processes information in the mode of hard or "coolie" labor as well as affective labor. Following Chandler's own impatience with plot points, this chapter will pay close attention to surface descriptions of Marlowe's world to arrive at a better understanding of his detective work as well as his own feelings attached to his labor. Such a reading reveals Marlowe's melancholic professionalism as a curiously stubborn symptom, that neither blends into the landscape of white-collar work, nor recedes into the stereotype of a "greasy little m[a]n skulking around hotels" (*LG* 58).

Chandler's hard-boiled aesthetic, particularly in *The Long Goodbye* (1953), not only stages an interruption in the rhetoric of the organization man but also interrogates

the American liberal belief in the promise of upward mobility and success. As Erik

Dussere notes the novel aligns itself against "the new class identity associated with the

urban corporate executive [which] is envisioned as the very definition of the authentic"

(Dussere 78). Instead, the novel sets up a "crucial opposition between the executive and

the detective" (Dussere 78). Marlowe befriends the wealthy, alienated drunk Lennox,

who is subsequently accused of murder. Having established an unlikely friendship with

Lennox, Marlowe helps Lennox flee to Tijuana based on their sentimental bond, only to

hear that Lennox commits suicide in Mexico. The novel narrates Marlowe's refusal to

drop his friend's case, despite tremendous pressure from various powerful institutions. In

fact, Dussere categorizes the novel as an early precursor to the "countercultur[al]"

movements of the sixties and seventies. By contrast, I contend that the figure of the noir

detective embodies a complicit professionalism rather than a model of exemplary

resistance. Marlowe's individual politics unwittingly undercuts the notion of expertise

through more intuitive, affective processes of reasoning. The disavowal of the figure of

the professional detective does not take the form of revolutionary intent or even a descent

into vigilantism, but realigns the organizational legibility of professionalism. This

realignment is difficult to categorize, as Marlowe's professionalism is propelled by an

inscrutable code of justice that operates in the domain of feeling. While Chandler's other

novels collapse the desire for justice with a capacity to feel, *The Long Goodbye* stages a

direct altercation with white-collar work, and presents Marlowe as an elegiac figure of

backwardness.

The opening chapters of *The Long Goodbye* offer a concentrated vision of

Marlowe's style of resistance. Imprisoned temporarily in a jail cell for refusing to give up

Lennox's whereabouts, Marlowe's narration momentarily takes on a philosophical tone

that explores the weariness and emptiness of incarceration. Unwittingly, it also becomes a

meditation on the tenor of postwar life and Marlowe's own sense of emptiness bleeds into

the description. The picture of the prisoner is that of an empty shell, haunted by an

unnamable condition of isolation and abandonment: "Nobody cares who loves or hates

him, what he looks like, what he did with his life. Nobody reacts to him unless he gives

trouble. Nobody abuses him. All that is asked of him is that he go quietly to the right cell

and remain quiet when he gets there. There is nothing to fight against, nothing to be mad

at. The jailers are quiet men without animosity or sadism" (*LG* 52). The bodies

populating the space take on the look of emptiness by becoming mere props—"a huddle

of brown blanket…a head of hair…a pair of eyes looking at nothing" (*LG* 52). The jail,

as "one of the quietest places in the world" (*LG* 52), speaks not only of "suspension" (*LG*

52) but also passivity.

Taking on an affect of blankness, Marlowe converts this style of suspension into

an act of political rebellion, continuing to inhabit his prison cell for fifty-six hours of

gritty and unrelenting silence. Seville Endicott, the lawyer of newspaper magnate Harlan

Potter, admonishes Marlowe for this display of willful naïveté and preference for

vigilantism: "the law isn't justice. It's a very imperfect mechanism. If you press exactly

the right buttons and are also lucky, justice may show up in the answer. A mechanism is

all the law was ever intended to be" (*LG* 56). Endicott's model for justice walks the

narrow path between bureaucratic belief and cynical disenchantment. In a strange way,

Endicott homes in on the futurity of justice and its status as an unpredictable object of

change. As Potter's lackey, he espouses a utilitarian, faithless way of organizing the

world. Endicott's characterization of Marlowe as a renegade emerges out of Marlowe's refusal to maneuver the "mechanism" of law as a dispassionate observer. He remains unimpressed by Marlowe's enactment of "the big scene" which he casts as distinctly theatrical and useless: "Stand on your rights, talk about the law. How ingenuous can a man get, Marlowe? A man like you who is supposed to know his way around" (*LG* 56).

Chandler explains the theatrical nature of the private eye as a distinguishing feature of his work: "the professional is subject to all the pressures of an urban civilization and must rise above them to do his job. Because he represents justice and not the law, he will sometimes defy or break the law. Because he is human he can be hurt or beguiled or fooled; in extreme necessity he may even kill. But he does nothing solely for himself" (*RC Papers* 115). The loneliness and isolation of the PI cannot sustain itself in the domain of private emotion and must enter the domain of the affective in order to provide the professional's *raison d'etre*. Unlike the organizational man, however, the PI does not seek the assurance of corporate success or yearn to climb the ladder of upward mobility. His job is the means for expressing an affiliation with higher forms of justice that are only legible through the experience of being "hurt or beguiled or fooled." Marlowe opens himself up to the ugly feelings that accompany his profession to perform his duty—his melancholy emanates from knowing his ugly feelings will never be dispelled, and he is ordained to inhabit a zone of unhappy uncertainty. Chandler confirms this severe vision of the noir world declaring that the detective will "never get the girl in the end" (*RC Papers* 115).

Marlowe's professional status as a private detective aligns him with the seamier side of the law and throws his personal ethics (or lack thereof) in sharp relief with an

emerging American middle-class. The rise of the American college elite brings a crucial

change in the landscape of American professionalism, where the success of the

independent small businessman is concomitant to his ability to maneuver a white-collar

world. Instead of relying on traditional values of hard work and innovation, the emerging

middle class begins to rely on networking through bonds of collegiality.[35] Middle class

masculinity acquires a distinctively social character where "[m]en flocked to join

associations, lodges and clubs for a rough sense of camaraderie" (Clark 8). The primary

concern of such "camaraderie" becomes that of putting one's social bonds to work in the

service of a career. Whyte's organizational man reappears in a distinctly homosocial

mode; collegiality bolsters the expansion of work culture into everyday life and facilitates

the normativizing of the professional male. Amidst a market of educated, college-going

professionals, the noir detective is cast aside as a relic of a bygone era. Marlowe's

backwardness is evident in his unwillingness to enter social networks. Fired from the

police department for "insubordination", Marlowe lacks both educational expertise and

social grace. He toils at his work alone and wears his loneliness with pride, casting

himself as an orphan in a pitiless world:

> I'm a native son, born in Santa Rosa, both parents dead, no brothers or sisters, and
> when I get knocked off in a dark alley sometime, if it happens, as it could to
> anyone in my business, and to plenty of people in any business or no business at
> all these days, nobody will feel that the bottom has dropped out of his or her life.
> (*LG* 92)

The private investigator's precarity—occupational, economic, and existential—is his

primary condition. The self-deprecating tone is both an instance of his wistfulness as well

as the source of his difference. Marlowe is exposed to the contempt and the chagrin of

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[35] Daniel Clark argues that this trend is a direct response to the increasing prominence of women as well as

everyone he encounters; from law enforcement officials to his clientele to peripheral

figures in seedy bars, Marlowe's occupation elicits feelings of discomfort and uneasiness

about his lack of institutional structure and economic mobility. The first question always

posed to him, in almost every one of the seven Marlowe novels, is the adequacy of his

means of subsistence. The answer is unwaveringly counterintuitive: far from embracing

the prosperity of the postwar boom, he prefers his slender means of existence. When

Terry Lennox leaves Marlowe with "the portrait of Madison," he refuses to use the

money and instead imbues the note with a non-economic function. The monetary note

becomes a *memento mori* and a placeholder for a justice-to-come, a deferred wedge of

capital that can only regain its monetary power once justice has been served. In other

words, the five thousand dollar bill becomes a purely affective object. As Rei Terada

notes about the peculiar power of affect, "[o]bjects that seem to have no substance

nonetheless seem to have characteristics, objects that never seem to have lived seem to

have died"(Terada 18).

      Chandler makes it very clear in a letter to his publisher James Sandoe in 1949 that

the detective figure was always meant to be an empty set:

> [t]he whole point is that the detective exists complete and entire and unchanged
> by anything that happens; he is, as detective, outside the story and above it, and
> always will be. That is why he never gets the girl, never marries, never really has
> any private life except insofar as he must eat and sleep and have a place to keep
> his clothes. (*The Raymond Chandler Papers* 115)

Chandler's emphasis on Marlowe's over-determined negative attributes--"never gets the

girl, never marries never has any private life"--signals a fundamental lack at the center of

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working class immigrants to the American economy.

the hard-boiled detective persona: he is not a person as much as an abstracted figure of

"justice," a "catalyst" whose epistemological effects have long past its expiry date.

This lack is also symptomatic of Chandler's own melancholic attachments. In

general, his conception of the professions is by no means disinterested and has a few

telling idiosyncrasies. It is marked by distinctly moral, perhaps even imperial,

undertones.[36] For instance, writing to Blanche Knopf on 14th June 1940, about his

biography on the jacket of one of his books, Chandler complained about its inaccuracies

with respect to his professional trajectory. He objected to the jacket's "use of the

expression 'checkered career'" which he qualified as having "a pejorative connotation"

(*RC Papers* 25). He corrects the publisher's *faux pas* with a stern "I used the phrase 'tax

expert'" (*RC Papers* 25). In fact, Chandler had been fired from his job as a "tax expert"

with an oil company in 1932 after twenty years of service for alcoholism.[37] While writers

like Patricia Highsmith exhibit a disdain for recognizably professional careers,

Chandler's attitude towards professionalism in the post-1945 period operates in the realm

of bourgeois respectability. He also notes sourly in a letter to Helga Green on 22nd

October 1958 that "a professional failure was always a moral failure" (*RC Papers* 258).

At the same time, Chandler's brief flirtation with the civil service in England in his

younger days also speaks to ambivalence with organized work culture. While Marlowe is,

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[36] Even as he draws a picture of the private eye as the highest kind of professional, he concedes that his description is utopian: "[o]bviously this kind of detective does not exist in real life. The real life private eye is a sleazy little judge from the Burns Agency, or a strong arm guy with no more personality than a blackjack, or else a shyster and a successful trickster. He has about as much moral stature as a stop-and-go sign" (*RC Papers* 115). Chandler's flattening of morality here with the street sign curiously aligns with his judgment of American linguistic cadence elsewhere as imbued with a "flat" character. Also, the words ascribed to the "real-life private eye" are all Americanisms that Chandler found abhorrent and regarded as a failure of the American education system. It is no secret to Chandlerians that the author remained nostalgic for his English heritage even as he recognized it as an outmoded stance. Thus, his characterization of the ideal professional in his letters departs from the nuances of Philip Marlowe's world and veers into imperial nostalgia.

of course, removed from the domain of white-collar knowledge work, Chandler's own

desire for the clarifying work of cultural knowledge and erudition, not unlike the

convictions of Lionel Trilling in the period, influences Marlowe's uncategorizable

professional attitude.

Thus, Marlowe's recalcitrance is not anti-professional—he still performs the

epistemological chase inherent in the profession of the private detective. He keeps the

scope of his clientele very narrow: he informs anyone who cares to cast aspersions on

him that "one customer at a time is my rule," asserting a laconic, almost monastic

rejoinder that cuts against models of private profit inherent in his line of work.

Simultaneously, Marlowe's refusal of normal social ties in *The Long Goodbye* illustrates

an attitude that embraces the stigma and alienation accompanying his profession. He

notes with a certain resignation that his stigma has now acquired the condition of

universality: "I get it from the law. I get it from the hoodlum element. I get it from the

carriage trade. The words change, but the meaning is the same" (*LG* 115). The reason for

this condition of relentless ostracism remains irrelevant. Instead, he is haunted by a sense

of melancholic duty. In a moment of rare eloquence, Marlowe explicates:

> So passed a day in the life of a P.I. Not exactly a typical day but not exactly
> untypical either. What makes a man stay with it nobody knows. You don't get
> rich, you don't often have much fun. Sometimes you get beaten up or shot at or
> tossed into the jailhouse. Once in a long while you get dead. Every other month
> you decide to give it up and find some sensible occupation while you still walk
> without shaking your head. Then the door buzzer rings and you open the inner
> door to the waiting room and there stands a new face with a new problem, a new
> load of grief, and a small piece of money. (*LG* 158)

The "load of grief" is not only incommensurate with the "small piece of money" but also

tugs at Marlowe's sense of duty above and beyond immediate professional concerns.

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[37] See *Raymond Chandler Speaking*

While the "load of grief" is sentimentally charged, it is also accompanied by a melancholic sense of opprobrium about his "occupation" that can never be dispelled. Like Sisyphus, the "new face with a new problem" is, in fact, the only problem; as Chandler noted bitingly about the detective story, "there is nothing left to discuss."

Turning to a politics of feeling reevaluates the very spaces and business of the crime fiction genre. Frederic Jameson formulates that the office spaces in Chandler leads us to an important discovery about the work of realism in hard-boiled fiction. Instead of Barthes's reality effect, where the various objects and constituents of a space "did not mean or express anything, that they were able to stand in for the sheer massive contingency of reality itself," Chandler's offices are "a construction of a vacancy, an empty space" ("The Synoptic Chandler" 40). The conceit behind such a vacant space is to construct a "figurative office in its own right—the 'office' of those in flight" ("The Synoptic Chandler" 40). Lisa Fluet explains that the outcome of Jameson's reading is that it also illuminates how "numerous nonoffice structures conform [by] calling attention to many characters' inability to dwell, and to the inflection of the most private domestic spaces with the public, workaday anonymity of office space."[38] While Jameson's reading attests to the organizing function of the private detective in non-official spaces, a consideration of Marlowe's affect disrupts this function through a negation of the detective's organizing potential. The vacancy of the office space gestures towards a deep melancholy occupying both the spaces and the self-conscious narrative of the hard-boiled genre. Marlowe wanders through various kinds of classed spaces and yet cannot present us with a picture of "reality" that does not gesture to this fundamental lack. The office

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[38] Lisa Fluet. "On Chester Himes and Success." *African American Review.* vol. 43, no. 2-3, Summer/Fall 2009, 273.

space is certainly "the 'office' of those in flight," but it is also a prison of endless, nameless grief.

Marlowe comes with the scruples and a moral code that remains interested in the question of "character." If the private investigator comes with the promise of discretion and a propensity to remain detached from the larger realm of the social, Marlowe's style of professionalism refuses to close out an ethics of social being. The novel enacts this tussle between the domain of private and public feeling in the finale of the novel. Marlowe informs the bemused Lennox that even a farewell was meaningless to him. When Lennox tells him that Marlowe wasn't "the only man without a price tag," he responds by invoking a more nostalgic form of leave-taking: "You bought a lot of me, Terry. For a smile and a nod and a wave of the hand and a few quiet drinks in a quiet bar here and there. It was nice while it lasted. So long, amigo. I won't say goodbye. I said it to you when it meant something. I said it when it was sad and lonely and final" (*LG* 378). The long goodbye for Marlowe ends abruptly when Lennox turns out to be an empty performance, full of manners and lacking any of the inscrutable values that Marlowe once believed a part of Lennox's character. His searing diagnosis of Lennox is "a moral defeatist" whose set of values only encompassed the strictly individual: "You had standards and you lived up to them, but they were personal. They had no relation to any kind of ethics or scruples. You were a nice guy because you had a nice nature. But you were just as happy with mugs or hoodlums as with honest men. Provided the hoodlums spoke fairly good English and had fairly acceptable table manners" (*LG* 378). Marlowe equates Lennox's "niceness" to a shallow bourgeois performance, even as it is this performance that draws him to Lennox in the first place.

The contradiction that continues to haunt the novel is that Marlowe is nonetheless desirous of the empty performance of gentility and what George Orwell touted in a more imperialist vein as a kind of "decency." His melancholia about the loss of "ethics and scruples" is, as Will Norman finds, not as transparent as he presumes it to be. Norman argues that Chandler's later work fashions Marlowe's sense of justice as an inscrutable "moral occult…a set of absolute values which 'may be so inward and personal that it appears restricted to the individual's consciousness, predicated on the individual's 'sacrifice to the ideal.' "[39] In other words, even as Marlowe levels the charge of moral defeatism towards Lennox for his intensely personal and self-aggrandizing value system, he commits the same error in his apprehension of the world. The difference is that he does not abandon his set of moral scruples in the face of adversity and perseveres with the job at hand, albeit in a somber mood of sufferance. If Lennos is the right kind of man who ends up doing the wrong thing, Marlowe is the wrong kind of man trying to do the right thing.

I have argued in this section that the noir detective performs his work with a melancholic attitude that situates him outside of an emerging professional-managerial class. However, Marlowe's politics do not place him in any kind of exemplary position, but instead illuminate an excluded middleclass that is constitutive of the work of professionalism. While Marlowe is a renegade to both the police force and his clientele, his sense of self is still tethered to the continuing professionalism of his "business." Even as he critiques the postwar professional's deference to organizations, Marlowe is a

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[39] Will Norman. "Chandler's Hardboiled England: World War II, Imperialism and Transatlantic Exchange". *Post45*, July 16th, 2012, n.pag. Web. Accessed July 15, 2017.

precursor to Highsmith's playful and, as I will elucidate, occasionally perverse rendering of late capitalist life.

Plotting and Rereading Highsmith's Suspense Fiction

Highsmith was no stranger to the work of Raymond Chandler. As biographer Andrew Wilson notes, the author found Chandler's style, particularly the character of Philip Marlowe, extremely compelling. She was even more appreciative of his stance as an extremely hard-working writer, and referred to him as someone who could "work his heart out in both senses of the word" (Wilson). Throughout Wilson's biography *Beautiful Shadow*, he characterizes Highsmith as a devoted writer with a deep, almost religious adherence to work: during her time at Yaddo, the famous writers' retreat in New York, she divided her time between composing prose at her typewriter all day and slumped in an alcoholic stupor with Chester Himes by night.

Highsmith's characterization of the writer as an anti-work practitioner can certainly be read alongside the rise of creative writing as a postwar disciplinary field. Mark McGurl shows in *The Program Era* that the rise of the creative writing industry is, in part, facilitated by "a more immediate identification with the charisma of authorship. Taking a vacation from the usual grind, the undergraduate writer becomes a kind of internal tourist voyaging on a sea of personal memories and trenchant observations of her social environment, converting them, via the detour of craft and imagination, into stories" (McGurl 35). However, even as creative writing offered a break from regimented work, it also "link[ed] the profession of authorship with the classrooms and committees and degree credentialing and…the unglamorous institutional practicalities of literary life in

the postwar US and beyond" (McGurl 36). For McGurl, the concomitant ennui of the

creative writing industry is epitomized by the teaching career of Vladimir Nabokov, who

felt a sense of oppression as he churned out standardized lectures for his students.

Infamously, he catalogued his students as a roster of numbers without names and would

tell his students as much on the first day of class.

Unlike Nabokov, Highsmith was no salaried professor: she worked first as a

comic strip artist in the late forties before turning to writing as a full-time profession.[40]

She approached the question of her own profession as a writer with an ironic edge. While

most scholars agree that Highsmith's biography yields surprisingly little towards reading

her novels and stories, part of her work's antisocial effects is predicated on the evasion of

an identifiable "style," and perhaps even genre, of writing.[41] For example, her self-help

creative writing manual *Plotting and Writing Suspense Fiction* is deliberately evasive in

providing stable pointers for the writing of suspense fiction, or indeed, any fiction. Rather

than give in to the charade of the professional author, Highsmith provides us with a

fiendish set of increasingly confounding instructions. When she painstakingly sets up an

important technical example about setting through her own writing, she immediately

follows it up with a beguiling confession: "[t]he book did not turn out quite this way"

(*Plotting* 41). A few pages later, talking about "tempo," she declares, with a sudden

degree of flatness, that "[i]t is absurd to make laws about these things" (*Plotting* 58).

What Highsmith does advocate, however, is "surprising yourself and your reader"

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[40] Mark Seltzer notes in his article "The Daily Planet" that Highsmith's short career as a comic book artist (featuring superheroes no less) nurtures "the senses of precarity, captivity, and unearthliness in her work. The comic-book genre provides the iterative model of an unremitting and systemic violence—a Cold War violence suspended in its premonition and induced in its preemption. It provides living diagrams of the ongoing catastrophes of modernization—and with those diagrams the intimation of counterfactual or alternate worlds, a war of the worlds, and the end of the world" (*Post45* n.pag.).

(*Plotting* 58), which is perhaps the sincerest advice in the book and the hallmark of her writing.

As she admits candidly, part of her refusal to impart straight-forward advice to suspense writers is her abhorrence for "the suspense label." Contrasting the label with her reception in Europe, she notes that the category of suspense fiction is peculiar to "America, American booksellers, and American reviewers," which she deems "a handicap to the imagination of young writers, like any category, like any arbitrary law" (*Plotting* 133). She finds the distinction between "the straight novel" and the suspense novel an entirely spurious one. Mary Esteve insightfully notes that by castigating this distinction, "Highsmith seeks to reframe the trouble with her vocation by displacing categories of identity (straight fiction, suspense fiction) with categories of practice (good writing, bad writing)."[42] Good writing in her account must have "newness," which can only emerge through "a sense of joy." For Highsmith, writing is an affective project that exercises a "strange power" over both writer and treatment of character. This explains the anti-instrumental summation in the handbook's conclusion. She admits to "a feeling that I have left something out, something vital. It is individuality, it is the joy of writing, which cannot really be described, cannot be captured in words and handed over to someone else to share to make use of it" (*Plotting* 138). What distinguishes such "joy" is its deviation from stock narratives and formulae in service of economic considerations: "Murderers, psychopaths, prowlers-in-the-night are old hat, unless one writers about them in a new way" (*Plotting* 133).

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[41] Both Michael Trask and Kelley Wagers note that Highsmith's biographical life yields little in terms of critical traction.

[42] Mary Esteve. "Queer Consumerism, Straight Happiness: Highsmith's Right Economy." *Post45*, 18th December, 2012, n.pag. Web. Accessed July 15, 2017.

The Talented Mr. Ripley exemplifies Highsmith's desire to write crime in "a new way." Instead of portraying the usual cast of flattened criminals—what she refers to as "old hat"—the novel presents an interiorized narrative of unflinching criminality that critiques postwar professionalism and its attendant imperative to strive for the good life. While the later Ripley novels, written between 1970 and 1990, track his development as an aristocratic career criminal, Highsmith's introduction to Ripley in the first novel deliberates on a distinctly paranoid "deviant career."[43] The novel presents Tom's ambassadorial sojourn to Europe to retrieve a wealthy acquaintance, Dickie Greenleaf. Highsmith self-consciously invokes Henry James's *The Ambassadors* only to trade James's elliptical social encounters for highly charged scenes of violence; unlike James's protagonist Lambert Strether, Tom's escape from America brings no eventual redemptive return or serenity. Instead, Tom commits a spree of spontaneous murders emanating from the shame and stigma of being an ambiguously queer man of little means in postwar America. Even as he masquerades as the wealthy Dickie Greenleaf, Tom is immensely vulnerable in his class position and sexuality, a far cry from the accumulation of capital that characterizes the spirit of the later novels.

As in postwar sociology and Goffman's deviant studies, careers are important social events for Highsmith's midcentury characters. Prior to writing *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith wrote two novels, *Strangers on a Train* and *The Blunderer*, about careers of promising professionals cut short by radical uncertainty. In fact, both the architect Guy Haines and the lawyer Walter Stackhouse yearn to be leaders in the professions, not because of the concomitant material benefits but because of an idealized

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[43] This is a phrase Howard Beck uses in his seminal *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963) to describe the activities of various career criminals.

sense of vocation. Highsmith develops a recognizably middle-class work ethic, where both protagonists yearn to practice their professions away from the suffocating hold of institutional authority. They remain both critical of the rise of postwar professionalism and yet curiously wedded to a more Weberian work ethic. The sentimentalism at the core of their work is undercut by the events of their everyday lives and the stigma they experience through disciplinary mechanisms. After committing a coerced murder for the motiveless killer Bruno, Guy tries to find solace in his commissioned blueprints and architectural work. Bruno's invasive presence—imagined and otherwise—accumulates around his assurance of a regimentized good life. When disciplinary and organizational injunctions begin closing around Guy, the notion of work becomes a romanticized alternate world full of possibility. Similarly, in *The Blunderer*, Walter Stackhouse, a lawyer, yearns to begin his own law firm with a handful of close associates and a modest group of clients. His version of a fulfilled life is cut short by his wife's untimely demise and a detective out to prove his homicidal intent. Both professionals find themselves relentlessly pursued by figures of disciplinary authority, a private detective and a police detective. The effect is that their sense of self is stripped away and they are forced to confront their lives as empty performances. Unlike Ripley, who accepts the performative dimensions of his own personality, both Guy and Walter are driven to despair over their loss of self. Guy begins to wonder if he did in fact enjoy killing Bruno's father. Both figures find themselves unmoored from the stable good life promised to them by their professional and organizational success, a loss enacted by their ugly feelings of guilt and paranoia, of speculative murder and counterfactual plans. Their turn to the subjunctive radically disrupts their social and emotional development. By contrast, Ripley's success

is his ability to inhabit his feelings of shame and paranoia unflinchingly, his ability to suspend his desire for a narrative of development even as he ultimately yearns for it.

The Talented Mr. Ripley opens with a mix of criminal and sociological reading. We are presented with a cagey Tom Ripley, convinced that he was being followed through a landscape of seedy bars. Unable to detect any evidence of surveillance, Tom reflects on his own social and occupational position: "Was this the kind of man they would send after him? Was he, wasn't he, was he? He didn't look like a policeman or a detective at all. He looked like a businessman, somebody's father, well-dressed, well-fed, graying at the temples, an air of uncertainty about him" (*TR* 5). His indecision—"[w]as he, wasn't he, was he?"—immediately conveys his heightened anxiety and sets the tone for the incessant movement of his paranoid reading. When the man makes his way towards Tom, he becomes "paralyzed" with fear, running a litany of possibilities of jail-time and probation as the man approaches him. When the man turns out to be Herbert Greenleaf, a friend's father, Tom, relieved to be "free," takes control of the situation seamlessly: "Tom knew just what to say to a father like Mr. Greenleaf" (*TR* 6).

While the professional criminal described by both Maurer and Goffman is interested in material gains from non-stigmatized "good" citizens, Tom finds solace, first and foremost, in the psychic life of his victims. Even as his cons begin with a rational, mercenary intent, he finds himself drawn to the psychological effects he can produce in others. In the very first chapter, Tom realizes that his insurance fraud is a complete failure, but continues to target a "carefully chosen list of people who lived in the Bronx or Brooklyn and would not be too inclined to pay the New York office a personal visit, artists and writers and freelance people who had no withholding taxes" (*TR* 19). The

checks that his victims send him are always made out to the IRS, rendering him a mere middleman even as a fraudulent taxman. Instead of abandoning the hoax, Tom rationalizes that "[the operation] amounted to no more than a practical joke, really. Good clean sport. He wasn't stealing money from anybody" (*TR* 19). He finds immense pleasure in conning a Mr. Reddington into sending him another check and reacts by "giggling, the palms of his thin hands pressed together between his knees" (*TR* 19). This expression of delight appears many times over the course of the novel, particularly in moments where Ripley scores an social rather than a material victory.

Despite having no real organizational status throughout the novel, it is Tom's knowledge of the intricacies of performance that enable a deft impersonation of class identity. Ripley's affective labor as the masquerading conman aligns with one of Erving Goffman's most provocative claims. Goffman conflates true and false performances to the same standards of impression management and suggests that these performances emerge along a "continuum." He observes that "[w]hether an honest performer wishes to convey the truth or whether a dishonest performer wishes to convey a falsehood, both must take care to enliven their performances expressions that might discredit the impression being fostered and take care lest the audience impute unintended meanings. Because of these shared dramatic contingencies, we can profitably study performances that are quite false to learn about ones that are quite honest" (*Presentation of Self* 66). In fact, Goffman suggests that impression management is shot through with prejudice: while it is an "inexcusable crime against communication to impersonate someone of sacred status, such as a doctor or a priest, we are often less concerned when someone impersonates a member of a disesteemed, non-crucial profane status such as that of a

hobo or unskilled worker" (*Presentation of Self* 60). *The Talented Mr. Ripley* delights in

presenting the dilemma of distinguishing between "inexcusable crime[s]" and everyday

acts of minor violence. When placed in Goffman's "continuum," Ripley's performance

highlights that the work of impression management is fueled by a combination of fear,

paranoia, and anxiety. Much like Becker's question, "whose side we are on," Highsmith

shows that Ripley's impression management is a response to the stigma of class deviance.

While Ripley's affective labor is key to the novel's understanding of the middle-

class, the novel remains alert to the material machinery of social identity as well—from

passports to tax documents to forged wills. Goffman notes that "personal identity" is

controlled not only by "prestige and stigma symbols" (*SI* 15) but also identification

documents and official paperwork. Ripley understands the use and power of such

documents as a primary source of Anglo-American socio-political identity. His status as a

counterfeit insurance agent in America, and later, what Mary Esteve calls "killer-

gentleman of leisure" in Europe, is legitimated by his use of bureaucratic machinery. In

fact, Ripley's games of performance begin to acquire the tenor of a spy novel, with some

crucial amendments to the expected twists of espionage. In *Strategic Interaction*, a study

of covert bureaucratic maneuvers employed in espionage, Goffman notes that the

expertise of a spy consists of blending seamlessly into the background, primarily through

a facility with what is called "'authentication', that is, ensuring that minor parts of the

scene have been attended to and faked, in addition to the major ones" (*SI* 25).

As a masquerading American tourist, Ripley develops authentic details about

Dickie in his role-playing by mirroring the intricate movements of personhood rather than

efficient impersonation, not merely to detect evasion but as a mode of satisfying play.[44]

Most conspicuously, he decides to make deliberate mistakes in his Italian, dropping the

subjunctive register altogether, because it mimics Dickie's Italian diction. While this is a

perfect replica of Dickie's personality, Ripley performs his mistakes even when his

audience comprises entire strangers, i.e. people who cannot discern the crucial difference.

The affective overinvestment in impersonation interrupts the *haut bourgeois* of Dickie's

life and cultivates Tom's paranoia. Instead of what Goffman terms as the

"bureaucratization of spirit" (*Presentation of Self* 33), Ripley's impersonations are too

invested in the counterfactual and the imaginative.[45] For example, he derives more

pleasure from imagining the violent murders of his victims, whether he carries out the

deed or not. Subsequently, the actual murders seem to be scooped of all interiority and

are prosaic descriptions of violence. Highsmith remains invested in Tom's imaginative

potential and affective role-playing, which bypass the materially-oriented approach of the

professional criminal. In fact, unlike a professional conman, Ripley is hardly ever

prepared against detection and invests his energies in an affective performance that courts

the possibility of failure.

In *Strategic Interaction,* Goffman introduces the concept of the "counter-

uncovering move." Employed as a last ditch defense mechanism in the elaborate

machinery of espionage games, these moves are anticipatory or evasive maneuvers meant

to keep secrets hidden securely. They are purely strategic in Goffman's estimation,

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[44] As Michael Trask observes in this context, "[w]here mimetic duplication is 'artificial' and easy to pierce, then the adoption of another person's 'mood' appears to provide Tom with an 'unassailable' disguise" (256). Trask's use of the word "appears" is a crucial factor here, suggesting an important gap between Ripley's performance and the efficacy of his impersonation.

[45] Both Michael Trask and Mark Seltzer note the importance of the counterfactual in Highsmith's writing. See Seltzer's *True Crime* (2006) and Trask's "Patricia Highsmith's Method" (2010).

employed in the face-saving operations of dissembling governments and spies. Most importantly, Goffman's description of the "counter-uncovering move" intimates an innately paranoid reading of the world and sets the terms of its deployment in close proximity to "impression management":

> Just as subjects can be aware that they must mask their actions and words, so they can appreciate that the controls they employ may be suspected, the covers they use penetrated, and that it may be necessary to attempt to meet this attack by countering actions, namely, counter-uncovering moves. (*SI* 19)

The "attack," however, is layered in the language of speculation and probability. The "counter-uncovering move" involves anticipating another paranoid mind that can see through "controls" and "covers." In the case of the novel, Tom's paranoia anticipates the failing of his impersonation. Once he begins impersonating Dickie, he is plagued by a constant sense of danger and apprehension. Ironically, it is such constant vigilance that enables him to become an invasive force capable of subsuming Dickie's personhood. Part of Tom's anxiety stems from the knowledge that he is a clumsy professional criminal. For example, when presenting Dickie's passport to the officials entering his hotel room, he is afraid of being found out and reverts desperately to Dickie-like gestures. These gestures, like the dropping of the Italian subjunctive or Tom's adoption of a slightly high-pitched voice, remain meaningless to the casual observer, as they are predicated on a familiarity with the original Dickie.[46]

In fact, the novel is bookended by Tom's paranoia at the discovery of his "true" self, an impostor professional with no credentials or upward mobility. Tom operates

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[46] Trask argues that Tom adopts Dickie's mannerisms with unnecessary fastidiousness, and cites the dropping of the subjunctive register as a symptom of Tom's investment in performance. Informed by Trask's reading, I call attention to Ripley's performance as an increasingly paranoid performance that seeks to mimic Dickie's psychic life to the point of inhabitation.

between social identity and fraudulence, between performance and authenticity. He experiences an unbounded joy in his impersonations that, far from being bleakly malicious or antisocial, is primed for potentiality. For the duration of his impersonations, Tom experiences both the power and precarity of his temporary subterfuge. Even as Tom desires the good life that Dickie's identity allows him, he also desires the pleasures of impersonation. It is not enough to be Tom-impersonating-Dickie, but to seamlessly *inhabit* Dickie's persona. Ripley mixes registers between what Goffman calls "the knowing world and the unknowing world" of others. Tom's counter-professionalism is evidenced in his affective investment in impersonation, where he trades the epistemological fraud for an ontological reformulation. He occupies a Protean self, teaching himself to acquire and drop Dickie's mannerisms. He becomes so involved in playing the part that he begins to believe his own performance. The significance of this internal ontological confusion is that Tom's performance *becomes* his work. It expands the scope of emotional labor and, thereby, makes legible an excluded middle zone of counterprofessionals, workers whose mode of laboring has changed in relation to their marginal status *within* a normative middle class.

Unlike groups of networked professionals, Tom's deviant career does not generate certainty or futurity, but loneliness and the failure to sustain social networks. The question of friendship is a sore point for Tom and his feelings of emotional disruption becomes a catalyst for his murderous impulse. After implying that Tom is "queer," Dickie begins to steadily untie their bonds of friendship. Sensing Dickie's aloofness, Tom assesses his repressed feelings of rejection and comes to a startling realization:

Tom stared at Dickie's closed eyelids. A crazy emotion of hate, of affection, of impatience and frustration was swelling in him, hampering his breathing. He wanted to kill Dickie. It was no the first time he had thought of it. Before, once or twice or three times, it had been an impulse caused by anger or disappointment, an impulse that vanished immediately and left him with a feeling of shame. Now he thought about it for an entire minute, two minutes, because he was leaving Dickie anyway, and what there to be ashamed of any more? He had failed with Dickie, in every way… He had offered Dickie friendship, companionship, and respect, everything he had to offer, and Dickie had replied with ingratitude and now hostility. (*TR* 87)

Tom experiences a cocktail of emotion—"hate…affection…impatience…frustration"—that also overwhelms him with "shame." As Elspeth Probyn observes in "Writing Shame" that the emotion "is produced out of the clashing of mind and body, resulting in new acts of subjectivity consubstantial with the words in which they are expressed" (Probyn 80). The "new…subjectivity" at stake here is not merely ungovernable rage but a deep sense of failure and a desire to rectify his stigma. Probyn finds that shame, in its affective dimension, hovers somewhere between "external" description and "purely personal feeling." The contemplation of Dickie's murder arises out of a misallocation of blame to an external source. But it also bears the weight of being labeled a deviant by Marge, and later, Freddie Miles. For example, on the verge of being discovered as an impersonator, Tom disposes of Freddie, but justifies his actions by dismissing him as a homophobe:

A selfish stupid bastard who had sneered at one of his best friends…just because he suspected him of sexual deviation. Tom laughed at that phrase "sexual deviation." Where was the sex? Where was the deviation? He looked at Freddie and said low and bitterly: "Freddie Miles, you're a victim of your own dirty mind". (*TR* 127)

The two questions about the phrase "sexual deviation," asked in Tom's voice, are rejoinders about the lack of any sexual contact between Tom and Dickie. But their

doubleness as questions about Cold War sexual conformity is latent. Underneath Tom's

disavowal of his own identity as "queer" is also an abhorrence for categorization—

Freddie Miles's "dirty mind" here is his desire to stigmatize "one of his best friends" and

disregard the dynamics of his relationship with Dickie. It is crucial to note that when Tom

first imagines murdering Marge in Dickie's persona and clothes, he spurns the purely

sexual for something beyond sexuality, what he insists on calling a "bond." Tom's

queerness is predicated on a yearning for sociality that eschews categorization and

conformist strategies of relationality. The acts of murder, on the other hand, emerge from

his sense of shame as a complex interaction of affective processes, "through the specific

explosion of mind, body, place and history" (Probyn 81).

Yet, his desire for relationality relies almost too heavily on role-playing. After

witnessing Dickie's homophobic contempt for a few traveling acrobats, Tom remembers

a particularly "humiliating moment" with an impatient acquaintance Vic Simmons, who

punctures Tom's performance of queerness by scoffing at his insincerity. In America,

Tom liked to play up his own nebulous feelings regarding the nature of sexuality

whenever possible, often noting that he could not

> make up my mind whether I like men or women, so I'm thinking of giving them
> both up." Tom had used to pretend he was going to an analyst, because everybody
> else was going to an analyst, and he had used to spin wildly funny stories about
> his sessions with his analyst to amuse people at parties, and the line about giving
> up men and women both had always been good for a laugh, the way he delivered
> it, until Vic had told him for Christ sake to shut up, and after that Tom had never
> said it again and never mentioned his analyst again, either. (*TR* 80)

While Vic's outburst puts a temporary hiatus on Tom's performance, Tom's escape to

Europe convinces him again of his own innocence; his performance of queerness begins

to take on a more earnest role of self-definition. We begin to see the irony that layers

Tom's self-perception of queerness: "[a]s a matter of fact, there was a lot of truth in it, Tom thought. As people went, he was one of the most innocent and clean-minded he had ever known. That was the irony of this situation with Dickie" (*TR* 80).[47]

Tom bolsters his sense of self through avowing innocence and fostering self-enclosed worlds that create the feeling of absolute control. He channels his paranoia and sense of stigma by conjuring other roles, materializing temporary networks of relationality. Despite his loneliness, Tom remains most alert and alive when playing Dickie, because it involves anticipating and preparing for the moment of discovery. Ironically, his paranoia, a constant source of fear, also fuels his ability to perform his various roles. Sianne Ngai contends that the feeling of paranoia is shot through with the potential to produce a thinking subject: "while paranoid logic always offers 'escaping' as one option, it offers 'thinking' as the other" (Ngai 319). While Ngai does not valorize the proliferation of the paranoid subject, she calls attention to the reflexivity built into the affect. The definition of the paranoid subject is generally predicated on a medical categorization as one who exhibits "a persistent delusional system, usually on the theme of persecution, exaggerated personal importance, or sexual fantasy or jealousy, often as a manifestation of schizophrenia."[48] But Tom's paranoia borders a precarious zone of impersonation where he remains in remarkable control of such a "persistent delusional system." He becomes a more attentive son to Dickie's parents, sending presents to Dickie's mother and looking over business matters for his father. He notes with enthusiasm that "[I]t was not possible to be lonely or bored as long as he was Dickie

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[47] Such a statement of innocence also appears in various exhortations about America's innocence on the world stage. Tom's protestations of innocence to himself are also indicative of a period anxiety about America's role in the administration of world affairs.
[48] "Paranoia, n" *Oxford English Dictionary*. Web. Accessed July 15, 2017.

Greenleaf" (*TR* 118) The impersonation becomes so organic that "it was strangely easy

to forget the exact timbre of his own voice" (*TR* 117).

Eventually, Tom realizes that his role-playing begins to lower him into a well of

loneliness, eroding at his sense of self. The charm of impersonation must give way to the

reality of his isolated existence abroad. The self-contained nature of his travels brings

with it the stark reality of his antisocial performance:

> He had imagined himself acquiring a bright new circle of friends with whom he
> would start a new life with new attitudes, standards and habits that would be far
> better and clearer than those he had had all his life. Now he realized that it
> couldn't be. He would have to keep a distance from people, always. He might
> acquire the different standards and habits, but he could never acquire the circle of
> friends—not unless he went to Istanbul and Ceylon, and what was the use of
> acquiring the kind of people he would meet in those places? He was alone, and it
> was a lonely game he was playing. (*TR* 160)

The "circle of friends" that Ripley imagines seem to be better versions of the people he

knows back home. Ripley's distance from America and the power of this passport both

enable him to create his self-enclosed alternative world. No longer confined to the

economy of American life, Tom instrumentalizes the world around him by engaging in

performative games. Like his Jamesian counterpart Lambert Strether, Tom finds America

stifling and claustrophobic. In contrast, he experiences Europe with a fullness and vitality

that America cannot afford him. While Lambert pronounces himself a "failure" at various

points with some measure of irony, Ripley is anxious to transcend his working-class roots

by acquiring the good life.[49]

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[49] His tourism also broaches a larger problematic of the American abroad, one that became an unexpected
but important development for American geopolitics. Christina Klein notes in *Cold War Orientalism* that
the US government "often encouraged tourists to admit that racial inequality still existed within the United
States, but to emphasize that great progress had been made toward remedying it and was continuing. The
tourist… became an integral part of the state apparatus for managing the overseas perception of domestic
American race relations: encouraging Americans to be racially tolerant while abroad was far easier, and
more politically palatable, than enacting substantive civil rights legislation at home" (Klein 113).

Proliferating acts of murder, performance and loneliness, these games emerge as a form of what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism," a phrase that describes willing participation in structures or actions that are ultimately detrimental to one's well-being. For Berlant, "[a] relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berlant 3). Ripley certainly flourishes in terms of his capital gains: one could even say that the novel rewards him handsomely for the risks he takes. However, the paradox of cruel optimism is that its capacity to do harm comes out of an attachment to an *initial* sense of possibility. Berlant clarifies that "optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which the person or a people risks striving" (Berlant 3). But the cruelty here is also literal in the compulsive vulnerability it produces; "the very pleasure of being inside a relation become[s] sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming" (Berlant 3).

Ripley's games of impersonation place him in a double bind of "threat" and pleasure, furthering his paranoia as well as his hope of successfully achieving Dickie's good life. Berlant clarifies that the form of such optimism could be manifold ranging from "nothing" to "dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity"; "[i]t might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way

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Particularly, the tourist becomes a key figure who assumes the role of an informal ambassador. Klein calls our attention to the capaciousness of tourism to signal the breadth of American global ambition and contends that "the category of tourist broadened in the postwar years to include all those who participated in the global growth of American power. The U.S. government in 1955 defined a tourist not simply as a 'sightseeing traveler,' but used 'the term in its broadest sense' to include 'the bona fide non-immigrant who desires to make a temporary visit to a foreign country for any legitimate purpose'" (Klein 109). Expanding its breadth also meant expanding the scope of the contact between citizens and foreign nationals, and

of being" (Berlant 4). Tom's streak of consumption encompasses all these modes of being—as consumerist behavior, as murderous love, as achieving bourgeois subjecthood. The failure to mobilize an "improved way of being" emerges from his inability to acquire "a bright new circle of friends" (a feat that Highsmith only allows him fifteen years after the first book) and Tom remains bound to his cruelly optimistic foreign existence.

Having written an unprecedented happy ending to *The Price of Salt* (1952), a lesbian pulp novel published under a pseudonym, Highsmith writers a more perverse kind of happy ending for Ripley, one that Ripley himself is wary of. As he realizes that he is free to travel Europe, he worries that "[t]here was a specious ease about everything, like the moment just before something was about to explode" (*TR* 273). When informed of his inheritance by Dickie's father, his immediate reaction is skepticism—"[w]as it a joke?" He reverts to his material expertise as a con artist and reasons that "the Burke-Greenleaf letterpaper in his hand felt authentic—thick and slightly pebbled and the letterhead engraved" (*TR* 273). Despite this he cannot help but envision "imaginary policeman…waiting at every pier that he ever approached", and yet again he reasons with himself that there was "[n]o use thinking about that" (*TR* 273). Unlike the affirmative impulse of *The Price of Salt*, Ripley's closing utterance "il meglio albergo… il meglio il meglio" ("the best hotel…the best, the best"), signals both the freedom to continue his murderous journey in Europe as well as the incorporation of Dickie Greenleaf's bourgeois life. The "policemen" he imagines at every conceivable port, "patiently waiting with folded arms" (*TR* 273), will not bring him to justice. Nonetheless, like Dickie's ghost, they will continue to pursue him, but through other, more paranoid means. As I have shown throughout the chapter, Ripley alternates between performance and paranoia

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thereby encouraging tourists to do the work of reconciling American interests abroad.

to negotiate both his nebulous employment as well as the emotional labor involved in impersonation.

Highsmith's use of the crime thriller genre evokes the intense paranoia of the postwar era not merely as a formulaic device, but as a series of politically-charged disturbances, in which modes of ungovernable feeling and perverse contingencies interrogate normative structures from a place of non-rational inquiry. Her preoccupation with the inner life and emotions of characters has been mistaken, much like with Chandler, for a politically useless fascination with antisociality and criminality. The past ten years have seen a resurgence of interest in Highsmith as a prominent Cold War author. With the issue on Patricia Highsmith in the journal *Post45*, one can see the rise of something akin to a branch of Highsmith Studies. Tom Perrin introduces the issue by telling us that Highsmith's work has become synonymous with the atmosphere of fifties America and that her rediscovery from 2003 onwards has been a result of a marked resemblance between postwar America and the current decade. Leonard Cassuto observes, "these times are the closest we've ever come to the 50s, when anxiety boiled beneath the surface of the prosperous façade of American living."[50] This chapter shows that Highsmith redescribes the stakes of the suspense novel through close but neutral examination of the social and psychic category of the criminal. When considered through the prism of midcentury sociological discourse, it becomes apparent that the turn to supposedly pathological feelings and psychological effects show a desire to implode the categories of the deviant and the normal.

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[50] Leonard Cassuto, Qtd in Tom Perrin. "On Patricia Highsmith." *Post45*, December 18, 2012. Web. July 15, 2017.

Conclusion

While generic crime novels restrict themselves to the domain of formulae and stock figures, Chandler and Highsmith harness the physiological and the psychological towards producing deviant careers as affective rejoinders to the materiality of postwar life. Their crime fiction delineates an excluded zone of middleclass affect that draws attention to dispossession. Both authors remain interested in presenting antisocial states of mind that are both symptomatic and critical of the period. Ugly feelings speak to the frustration and bewilderment that emerges out of class marginalization and disenfranchisement even as they adopt more perverse methods of registering their position within capitalism. Instead of bringing feelings in line with character development and capital formation, deviant work signals the need for alternative modes of economic organization, alternatives that remain, for now, just out of reach.

The chapter's discussion of perverse feeling has some correspondences with discussions around negativity in queer theory. Lee Edelman, in the MLA Forum "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory," notes that negativity in queer theory represents "society's constitutive antagonism" and holds in it the possibility for critique. Particularly, "queer negativity's refusal of positive identity" is necessary towards configuring "the untraversable path that leads to no good and has no other end than the end to good as such" (Edelman 822). This chapter explores two figures of "negativity"— the noir detective and the criminal—for whom the professions do not hold the promise of self-actualizing potentiality or, at a minimum, untroubled, upward mobility. Instead, their version of professionalism relies heavily on a descent into melancholy, shame, paranoia, and a deepening reliance on games of passing and working the system.

Replying to Edelman in the conference forum, Judith Halberstam finds value in a more "undisciplined" response to negativity in which she includes Highsmith. She notes that unlike a "gay male archive," another archive needs to be opened up, one that entails

> a truly political negativity, one that promises, this time, to fail, to make a mess, to fuck shit up, to be loud, unruly, impolite, to breed resentment, to bash back, to speak up, to disrupt, assassinate, shock, and annihilate, and to abandon the neat, clever, chaismic, punning emphasis on style and stylistic order that characterizes both the gay male archive and the theoretical writing about it. (Halberstam 824)

Both Highsmith and Chandler rely heavily on such a thumbing of "style," preferring a more urgent and brash mode of confronting postwar disciplinarity epitomized by the narrative of professional development. However, these figures of counter-professionalism do not profess to enter the terrain of a "truly political negativity" even as they "fail..make a mess..fuck shit up…breed resentment" and so on. While it may be tempting to read these figures as emblematic of a distinctly antisocial politics, it is more fruitful to read their evasion and ambivalence as modes of an excluded middleclass, who are neither synchronized with discourses of normativity not aligned with radical, counterculture politics. These modes of annihilation and abandonment refuse to adhere to an ethically "useful" politics, and, instead, inhabit a zone of recalcitrant feeling. Steeped in melancholy and paranoia, counter-professionalism in Chandler and Highsmith oscillates on a continuum ranging from normality to deviance.

Chapter Two

Expatriate Dilettantes: Depression, Acedia, and Post-1945 Travel Writing

In America the career almost invariably becomes an obsession. The "get-ahead" principle, carried to such extreme, inspires our writers to enormous efforts. A new book must come out every year. Otherwise they get panicky, and the first thing you know they belong to Alcoholics Anonymous or have embraced religion or plunged headlong into some political activity with nothing but an inchoate emotionalism to bring to it or to be derived from it. I think that this stems from a misconception of what it means to be a writer or any kind of creative artist. They feel it is something to adopt *in the place of* actual living, without understanding that art is a by-product of existence. Paul Bowles has deliberately rejected that kind of rabid professionalism.
—Tennessee Williams, "An Allegory of Man and His Sahara"

Tennesse Williams characterizes the importance of Paul Bowles' novel *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) as the product of a "truly adult mind," noting that Bowles' first novel was published when the writer was thirty-eight years old. This difference is significant for Williams because both novel and writer prove to be an exception to the rule. Writing against the rhetoric of American empire, Bowles rejects "rabid professionalism" in favor of living outside the confines of national life. In 1947, Bowles quit his job as a successful composer at the age of thirty-six and left for Morocco. Convinced that he needed to shed his life as a composer to pursue meaningful work as a writer, Bowles chose obscurity and anonymity in what middlebrow magazine magnate Henry Luce dubbed "the American century." Bowles was one of many wandering American expatriate modernists whom Gertrude Stein, modernism's artist-curator, pointed Eastwards—including figures like Tennessee Williams and Djuna Barnes—but perhaps one of the only figures who made Morocco his home for the rest of his life. While Bowles presents a literary exception to the rule within American writing, his

concerns address the strident call for American ascendancy sounded by various factions

of middlebrow culture. This chapter addresses the anthropological forays of Paul Bowles

as well as the strong middlebrow desire for travel circulating in American magazines of

the midcentury.

As postwar sociologists Walt Whitman Rostow and Max Millikan contend,

America is defined by the culture of improvement, where the hallmark of American

development is its ability to generate "change" without falling over into "social

disorganization."[51] Offering a complicated portrait of American global power, Emily

Rosenberg argues that, despite a formidable record of infrastructural development, early

twentieth century economists as well as writers were, in fact, looking to the East as a

rejuvenating force for an ailing Western market crippled by stagnation and

overproduction. While "late nineteenth century theorists like Alfred Marshal and Charles

Cooley both drawing from eighteenth century Enlightenment thought, [were convinced

that] markets instilled discipline, regularity and responsibility," the reality was that "a

program of international regulated capitalism" was mounted to justify what was

necessary expansionism (Rosenberg 9). Couched as "an American civilizing mission,"

The professional-managerial class, comprising diverse groups such as bankers,

technocrats, and government officials, were instrumental to transmitting "the inevitability

of market progress" (Rosenberg 9) to distant parts of the world. Similarly, Meg Wesling

shows us America's success at imperial education through the test case of Philippines in

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[51] Rostow and Millikan note that "American society…is at its best when we are wrestling with the positive problems of building a better world. Our own continent provided such a challenge throughout the nineteenth century ... Our great opportunity lies in the fact that we have developed more successfully than any other nation the social, political, and economic techniques for realizing widespread popular desires for change without either compulsion or social disorganization." (*A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* 7).

the early to mid-twentieth century.[52] Edward Said finds that this new zeal of empire gave

rise to an American-style Orientalism, which began "roughly from the period

immediately following World War II, when the United States found itself in the position

recently vacated by Britain and France" (*Culture and Imperialism* 290). American

exceptionalism on one hand and American cosmopolitanism on the other give rise to an

internal conflict in narratives of expatriation. What are the consequences of expatriation?

Can discontent expatriates truly leave what they see as the oppressive sociality of

America?

Consequently, the American abroad is a matter of heated contention in the post-

1945 period with unflattering portraits of rapacious American interference painted by

texts like *The Ugly American* (1958). The critique of America's global might was also

compounded by the ubiquity of the American tourist in foreign settings. Alongside the

rise of the professional-managerial class within the nation, the period also saw the rise of

a whole industry of tourism. This was no coincidence: postwar work culture found it

more beneficial to boost the morale of their professionals through "perks like longer

vacations [that] portended a widening sphere of free time and personal autonomy; a

piqued geographic curiosity fired by new technologies that seemed to bring distant places

nearer; and internationalist hopes that cross-cultural contact could sow humanitarian

understanding" (Popp 5). This chapter examines how the writing of Richard Yates and

Paul Bowles ask whether it is possible to escape the oppression of white-collar work

through travel. However, cosmopolitan travel unearths buried, non-cathartic feelings of

depression and acedia, suggesting that postwar disaffection yearns for a structural

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[52] See Meg Wesling. *Empire's Proxy: American literature and U.S. imperialism in the Philippines* (2011).

overhaul. While Yates explores middle-class white suburban culture that covets the reach of the global American traveler, Bowles paints a portrait of the disaffected American abroad that inadvertently challenges the desired globalism of the American suburb. Cosmopolitanism emerges as a method by which to escape the intensely local and the parochial. American cosmopolitanism manifests itself as a conscious desire to escape the hegemony of American postwar existence. The travel novel reevaluates the stakes of American life by invoking transnational spaces as an alternate mode for the disaffected American professional. However, instead of salving over worries of working life, travel exacerbates narratives of resignation and downward mobility. Ironically, Yates and Bowles invoke cosmopolitanism as a spanner in the machinery of American global domination, only to find that their cosmopolitan desire is a symptom of existential despair. Both authors rely on bad feeling both inside and outside the nation as a response to the regimented and professionalized nature of postwar American life.

Travel writing gained immense popularity through the professionalized model of the paid vacation. In fact, this ability to travel offered a distinct function for American identity. The symbolic function of the vacation came to shape itself not as an instantiation of leisure but an affirmation of

> industrial modernity's driving dynamism… [B]y midcentury, paid leave periods, carved out for the explicit purpose of giving individuals the chance to get away for a while, had become an expectation for white-and blue-collar workers alike. Even if many middle-income people couldn't travel, paid leave at least made it a possibility. Vacations, then, were not only a highly visible part of the Fordist good life that flowed from business, labor, and government's cooperative pursuit of mass consumption but were metaphoric for the expanding life possibilities brought into view by a more equitable economic order. (Popp 2)[53]

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[53] In fact, Popp notes that the paid vacation was "unheard of" in the early twentieth century. This phenomenon arose as a central feature of postwar American economy, buoyed not only by America's prosperity during the Second World War but also the massive amounts of debt owed to America by

Midcentury travel was thus shorthand for both market expansion and self-actualization. The tourist, much like the middlebrow travel writer, acquires a very specific function for the professional-managerial class, that of getting away from the strain of emotional labor, "a metaphor for life possibilities" that are predicated on the concept of exhilarating travel.

As Pheng Cheah noted almost twenty years ago in the influential edited collection *Cosmopolitics* (1998), cosmopolitanism, in the Kantian sense, does not disinter the hegemony of the nation-state. In "Perpetual Peace," Kant's inauguration of cosmopolitanism—feeling at home in the world—divests the Western subject from statehood. Cheah notes that it is only with Marx that cosmopolitanism gains an antithetical force to the excesses of the nation. In other words, the invocation of cosmopolitanism does not necessarily distance the cosmopolitan subject from the nation, as various movements of decolonization have since illustrated. The nation continues to be an immensely useful but equally problematic category of analysis, and thereby Cheah invokes cosmopolitanism to precipitate what he calls the "cosmopolitical." Both Yates and Bowles invoke transnational spaces to signal their discomfort with American social formations facilitated by the concept of the nation and are at odds with the biopolitics of American life at home and abroad. Their preference for affective spaces *outside* the power structures and bureaucracies of the nation-state expresses a midcentury disdain for American professional life, which functions in these novels as a social manifestation of a repressive state. The corporate professional represents an automatization of American national character and the desire to travel, even at the level of an unfulfilled fantasy, is

European companies. See Richard K. Popp. *The Holiday Makers: Magazines, Advertising, and Mass Tourism in Postwar America* (2012).

indicative of an individual disavowal of work. Since midcentury work is contiguous with the projection of a national consensus around American success, literary explorations of self-improvement comment on totalizing projections of success by reflecting on rapidly disintegrating narratives of middle-class failure.

Midcentury narratives of self-improvement have generally been categorized as middlebrow texts by scholars like Joan Shelley Rubin and more recently Christina Klein. Rubin notes in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (1994) that the middlebrow is used as a pejorative category in the period, conveying an undesirable distance from literary, often high modernist writing. The publication of Dwight MacDonald's "Masscult and Midcult" turned the tide against middlebrow culture as compromised and excessively commodified. Reading the middlebrow requires suspending the rhetoric of "highbrow" readers like MacDonald, Lionel Trilling, and symptomatic readers like Frederic Jameson. The postwar period was a time when the literary canon was closing ranks around the exemplarity of modernist fiction, thereby casting everything else as either too middle-class or too mass-market in its literary orientation.

As Gordon Hutner argues, critical assessments of the period ignored marginal writers like Paul Bowles, William Gardner Smith, Carson McCullers, and others by fixating on the failures of the postwar novel. Hutner's *What America Read* undertakes a taxonomical reading of middlebrow culture that suspends the question of literary merit without excusing the politics of suburban writing. Hutner makes a strong case for the rehabilitation of fifties suburban fiction, particularly middlebrow novels which were derided for their lack of literary merit. He observes that the very nature of fifties middle-class fiction undergoes a radical change—not only does the middle-class novel compete

with the rise of "TV and Hollywood," but also the rise of genre fiction. Middle-class

fiction also shrinks in size and becomes a "niche" market.[54] A reappraisal of the *function*

of the Post-1945 novel of middle-class fiction can yield a much more robust look at the

work of suburban fiction:

> In the 1950s, this fiction was said to decline because it could not do what another
> generation did, as virtually no other generation of English-speaking novelists,
> except perhaps the British Victorian writers, had done—invent the domestic
> literature of its time as a world literature. Arguably, '50s writers were presented
> with the more modest but nonetheless vital opportunity to write the social history
> of their time. There may not be the masterworks that other decades might claim,
> but the generality of accomplishment might be wider and higher than historians
> have heretofore assessed.
> (Hutner 290)

Nonetheless, Hutner is cautious about *how much* to read middlebrow culture—for

example, he forewarns against writing a whole dissertation on the suburban novel in case

the concern eclipses more important works during the period like Ralph Ellison's

Invisible Man.[55] However, a turn to negative feeling reframes the deep discontent that

saturates middlebrow fiction that grapples with the suburb as a space of social violence

and stagnation on one hand and as the only possible space where white middle-class

culture can flourish. Keeping the problem of what Catherine Jurca calls "white diaspora"

in mind, I limit my consideration of the middlebrow novel to travel narratives that

propose travel and dilettantism as an antidote to the national insularity systematized by

American postwar professionalism. Bowles and Yates give us a glimpse into the primacy

of travel in constructing a vision outside the framework of the American good life, even

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[54] Hutner explains that "[t]his change partly results from genre crossing, in that pulps and romances more
actively venture into the middle-class territory of the novel, so the novel competes not only with mystery
and detective fiction, as in years past, but also with spy thrillers and sensational works on a seemingly
unprecedented scale" (*What America Read* 285).
[55] See Andrew Hoberek's *Twilight of the Middle-Class* (2009) and Stephen Schryer's *Fantasies of the New
Class* (2011) for two readings of Ellison's novel and the ideologies of professionalism.

as their counter-professionalism emerges from within the rhetoric of American global hegemony. Their narratives persist with ugly feelings that have been dismissed by cultural critics of the period as having no literary merit. While the legacy of modernism is certainly pronounced in Bowles' earlier writing, his protagonists bear closer resemblance to the actors of middlebrow fiction like Richard Yates' *Revolutionary Road*. By reading Yates in conjunction with Bowles, I propose that they present the escape mechanism of travel as homologous middlebrow meditations on Americanism, from within and without the nation.

Escape Fantasies and the Middlebrow Suburban Novel

Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955) was the most successful middle-class novel of the fifties, appearing at a time when sociologists like C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and William B. Whyte were launching their critique against the organizational man. Wilson's novel contends with questions that have become hallmarks of the suburban novel—a war-returned veteran, disenchantment with postwar success, and a complicated negotiation of feeling in workplace settings. The suburban novel develops an important function for middle-class America, the expression of discontent with normative culture but one that inevitably leads back to the warm embrace of sentimentality. Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road* (1961) is only slightly different in this regard; Abigail Cheever contends that Yates's novel represents the organizational man differently from the traditional rhetoric surrounding midcentury corporate indoctrination. Wilson's Tom Rath redeems the organizational man by absorbing his values as a family man into the structure of the corporation. Cheever notes that Rath's

refusal to be subsumed into the performance of white-collar work does not cost him his job, but, in fact, redeems United Broadcasting Corporation as a reasonable employer.

By contrast, *Revolutionary Road* refuses to provide a sentimental redemption of the organizational man and inhabits a stark vision of negativity and depression. The novel tells the story of Frank and April Wheeler who tire of their life on the suburban street of Revolutionary Road in upstate New York. Mired in dissatisfaction, they hatch an elaborate plan to exit dull American domesticity by traveling to Europe, where they can both restart their lives. Frank's biggest complaint with his American life is his humdrum professional job at the Knox corporation, where he works in the distribution department handling the selling of "electronic data processing" (Yates 208) machines. However, the Wheelers' travel plans are put on hold indefinitely by April's unexpected pregnancy, an event that ends with her tragic suicide. At the end of the novel, Frank is left a single parent entrenched deeper into a new role in his job selling ideas instead of products. While the Wheelers seek to escape a superficial, affected world of false feeling, other characters like the Givings find solace in the upwardly mobile, secure and deracinated sanctum of the postwar suburb. Abigail Cheever draws attention to the language of "contamination" pervading Frank and April's subconscious life, who worry obsessively that "the world they inhabit inauthenticates them" (Cheever 204). The Givings' son John presents a test case for fleeing negative feeling where his mental health problems threaten to disrupt the economy of suburban life through familial suppression. Repressing John's depression, the narrative fixates on the Wheelers, particularly Frank, in its consideration of postwar discontent as professional ennui, only to produce Frank as a future version of

John's depression, literalizing their paranoia about the melancholic contagion of the suburb.

Frank begins his job at Knox Business Company as a "joke"—he explains to anyone who listens that his father used to work there. As sociologists like C. Wright Mills and David Riesman note about the organizational man, he slides into cycles of enervation caused by the regimented performance of work. At the ironically named paper company Knox, professionalism exists as a series of empty tasks that do not produce a viable commodity. Frank's work has no specific direction. It exists as solipsistic labor, where the circulation of professional affect generates useless memos and spiraling stacks of papers. Like the veritable "dead letters" of nineteenth century American fiction, they shuttle between in-tray and out-tray. The work of the Knox Company attains a perverse meaninglessness:

> He had to think, and the best way to think, was to go through the motions of working…he tried to see how many papers he could get rid of without actually reading their contents. Some could be thrown away, others could be almost as rapidly disposed of by scrawling 'What about this?' in their margins, with his initials, and sending them to Bandy, or by writing 'Know anything on this?' and then sending them to someone like Ed Small, next door. (Yates 89)

If the definition of work is to engage in an act of production, then the "motions of working" are mere simulations of productivity. In other words, they keep the engine of the department running with a feedback loop that negates the very concept of work. The questions scribbled on these unread papers are programmatically evasive, evidenced by the fact that "the danger here was…the same papers might come back in a few days marked 'Do' from Bandy and 'No' from Small." Faced with the contradictions of action and inaction, Frank decides that "[a] safer course was to mark a thing 'File' for Mrs.

Jorgensen…[I]f it was [important], he might mark it 'File & Follow 1 wk,'" (Yates 89).

Thus, Frank's work remains opaque and unknowable, often becoming so tedious that he

cannot detect any real meaning behind the work. Work is divorced from purpose to the

extent that the materiality of his work--"a whole bulging folder filled with scrawled over

typewritten sheets and loose sliding paper-clips" (Yates 90)—assumes menacing internal

forms like "live snakes" (Yates 90), fueling his discontent.

Trapped by a feeling of meaninglessness, both Frank and April turn to travel as a

literal manifestation of "mobility" and escape from the insularity of American suburban

life. Unlike Mrs. Gidding or the Campbells, they are disinterested in the upward mobility

of capital and crave the intellectual mobility of dilettantism. Catherine Jurca notes that

these suburban characters "repudiate their middle classness, in what becomes a dominant

fictional paradigm of white middle class experience … 'Other people belong in the

development, not us; everyone else is happy as a corporate drone, except for me'" (Jurca

139). Frank's conviction about the lack of meaning in their life within structures of

normativity "proves an engine of mobility that frees them from constraints" (Jurca 139).

Ironically, their desire to travel as self-improvement is also a conceit that emerges out of

postwar corporate work. The novel's period setting around "the summer of 1955"

coincides with the rise of American travel as a meaningful leisure activity for middle-

class employees and high-flying executives alike. The most popular travel magazine of

the period was *Holiday*, a publication replete with images of both domestic and

international destinations. Most issues of the magazine, including ones in 1954 and 1955,

are insistent about the immediately accessible nature of European travel with

advertisements proclaiming that "Europe is only a stone's throw away" or that "Europe is

waiting." The entire January 1955 *Holiday* issue is dedicated to "Travels Europe": the editor exclaims that world has been reinvented by innovations in American travel. The magazine inaugurates the year's first issue—"Travels Europe 1955"—by attributing "a surging desire of more Americans than ever to know, understand and visit their parental nations." Conveying the scale of European travel, the editor cites 200,000 American tourists in Spain alone and invoke a sentimental promise in the description of two exemplary Texan lovers. The magazine argues that "more people than ever [are] conscious of the fact that European travel is today an excitement in any season" ("Travel Europe 1955," *Holiday* January 1955). Most importantly, travel is presented as a self-evident enterprise of improvement, where the task of getting away from one's workday guarantees an indescribable pleasure. In *Revolutionary Road*, this zeitgeist precipitates the Wheelers' conviction that European travel offers an effective counter-balance to American postwar ennui. Frank and April Wheeler fixate on Paris as a destination for their release from suburban life as the deep immersion of Europe promises a bohemian life of fulfilling unpredictability. This immersion is a promise of freedom that echoes the spirit and language of America's founding—the first ever edition of *Holiday* likens the pursuit of travel to the "pursuit of happiness" ("In Pursuit of Happiness," *Holiday* 1946). Travel magazines draw a direct correlation between a change of setting and change of mood, manifesting a middlebrow belief in self-actualization.

Christina Klein suggests that the chief characteristic of middlebrow culture was its consistent desire to educate and reform its audiences. In her close analysis of two influential middlebrow magazines, *The Reader's Digest* and *Saturday Evening Review*, she posits that the large circulation and the intent to educate created a strongly polarizing

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form of the middlebrow. While there was no explicit intervention by the US government, the motives and opinions of these magazines tended to lean heavily towards the betterment of America. *Reader's Digest* expanded its circulation to other regions (like Latin America) as well as other languages (like Arabic in 1943), where the rhetoric of internationalism was built into the worldview of middlebrow magazines (Klein). On the other side of the consumer magazines spectrum, travel magazines advertised vacations as psychological recovery and class betterment with added cultural benefits. The logic of improvement and education in magazines like *Holiday* attend to the power of internationalism to expand the horizons of everyday Americans. Both types of magazines project interest in a purportedly "average" reader to level out the experiences of middle-class America as a continuously translatable and legible experience.

As writer Russell Lynes noted in a 1949 issue of *Harper's Magazine*., the middlebrow performs a crucial "mediating" function in cultural intervention. Lynes distinguishes between "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" in an article with the same title, and attributes a purely mercantile interest to the middlebrow. But his hierarch branches into a more nuanced description, where the middlebrow consists of an upper middlebrow and a lower middlebrow, the latter interested in the consumption of the apparatus set up by the former:

> They [the lower middlebrow] are the people who go to hear the lecturers that swarm out from New York lecture bureaus with tales of travel on the Dark Continent and panaceas for saving the world from a fate worse than capitalism…They are hell-bent on improving their minds as well as their fortunes. They decorate their homes under the careful guidance of *Good Housekeeping* and the *Ladies' Home Journal,* or, if they are well off, of *House and Garden,* and are subject to fads in furniture so long as these don't depart too radically from the traditional and the safe. (Lynes 27)

The middlebrow has also been characterized as the desire for universal access, but Lynes'

polemic is that the middlebrow is an empty set. The home spaces of the suburb and the glossy pages of middlebrow magazines discourage close reading by diverting attention to a sentimental universal that foreclose all attempts to confront critique or negative feeling. In other words, the middlebrow participates in a strategic refusal of critique while insisting on the logic of improvement. In this regard, the suburban novel uses description to critique institutionalized structures of work and family. In other words, the suburban novel both critiques and reproduces the effects of middlebrow culture.

The conceit of "the traditional and the safe" gains force as a method by which American insularity is cultivated and then protected. But as Abigail Cheever notes of *Revolutionary Road*, resisting the narrative of suburban middleclass life turns out to be just as "dangerous" as participating in it. Middlebrow culture performs the curious trick of both fencing the nation-state through the self-segregated suburb and sanctioning American pioneering through tourism and travel. Christina Klein describes the process of American expansion during the Cold War as a complex process of mapping where middlebrow intellectuals and artists sought to "replace the old nationalist map that Americans carried in their minds, in which the United States filled the frame, with a new internationalist one" (Klein 13). The process of reshaping American minds precipitates a "sentimental mode [that] values the intensity of the individual's felt experience, and holds up sympathy—the ability to feel what another person is feeling, especially his suffering—as the most prized" (Klein 14). Klein argues that "sentimental education" is the mode through which the US state department encouraged Americas to foster good relations with Asia and Africa. Her analysis also carries with it a crucial inference: the role of feeling, particularly the good feelings of affiliation and sympathy, were foremost

on the agenda because it allowed the policies of the nation-state to remain undisturbed.[56]

US state department instructions to travel writers assumed American superiority and

values as sacrosanct, believing that such writers

> should take a pedagogical, rather than a merely entertaining, approach and help
> [other] travelers 'a knowledge of a country, its language, and its peoples,' which
> would include developing "some idea of its relations with the United States." At a
> more personal level, travel writers should promote an attitude of tolerance among
> travelers, specifically "a desire to share common interests" with the people they
> encountered and an ability "to understand significant differences." (Klein 111).

Magazines like *Holiday* certainly encouraged travel not only as upward mobility but also

as the fulfillment of deep-seated desire to discover uncharted territory, whether in Fort

Lauderdale, Singapore, or Paris. *Holiday* issues from 1954 and 1955 are littered with

various advertisements urging travelers to consider the ease with which European

destinations remain open to possibilities and the ease with which American tourists can

traverse Euro-American geographies.

By contrast, Frank worries about his own inauthenticity as the Wheelers begin

planning their European expatriation. He settles into a perfected routine that allows him

to further the empty labor of his earlier work into the efficiency of advertising rhetoric,

stitching together sales campaigns for a promising new data processing machine.

Enamored by his ability to generate detail out of nothing, he discovers that his voice

unlocks a powerful feeling of industriousness. When April reminds him of their escape to

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[56] Similar pronouncements emerged from a host of public intellectuals anxious to cast the American nation
as a conscientious observer of freedom and equality by addressing the importance of working through both
national and international feeling. Reinhold Niehbuhr's *The Irony of American History* (1952)
acknowledges the difficulty of the "pedagogical" maneuver involved in teaching America as well the world
about its complicated leadership, suggesting that "the paradise of our domestic security is suspended in a
hell of global insecurity" (Niebuhr 7). Such a "historic situation" conjures, in Niehbuhr's estimation, an
overarching American duty. The "irony" of the American situation is predicated on moving the ugly
feelings elicited by empire into acquiescence and sentiment. America assumes the role of a benevolent but
firm ruler over a world run amuck by communism.

Europe, he rebukes her fantasies by citing the impossibility of finding suitable

employment, quickly losing sight of his stated desire to find meaningful, non-vocational,

and possibly intellectual work. His crisis reveals that his desire for professional power

trumps the search for authenticity. April responds with a slightly different understanding

of expatriate culture:

> The point is you won't be getting any kind of a job, because I will. Don't laugh—
> listen a minute. Have you any idea how much they pay for secretarial work in all
> these government agencies overseas? NATO and the ECA and those places? And
> do you realize how low the cost of living is, compared to here?" She had it all
> figured out; she had read an article in a magazine. Her skills at typing and
> shorthand would bring them enough to live on and more—enough for a part-time
> servant to take care of the children while she worked. (Yates 151)

April's most likely real-world counterpart for her knowledge of Parisian employment is a

September 1954 article "An American Girl in Paris." Far from a picture of idyllic

existence, the article suggests that being employed in Paris is a hard and often fruitless

affair for young women. What keeps the young women from continuing to eke out a

living is the conviction that the Parisian landscape allows for an authentic existence that

remains timeless and filled with the fulfillment of unreal possibilities. The protagonist of

the article, half-satirically dubbed "Nancy Pride," tells the reporter Paul A. Deutschman

that, in Paris, the professional occupation is far less deterministic in its relationship to

class identity. Deutschman casts the American girl as one of many "expatriates" dotting

the metropole. Pride is "from a town in the farthest and most-insulated end of the

Philadelphia Main Line.., working at odd jobs that almost defy classification—at least by

Stateside standards" ("An American Girl in Paris" 107). The reporter comes to learn that

the very tenor of expatriate life is such that employment can only be sustained as a

difficult, bohemian enterprise. Nevertheless, Pride conveys a sense of unbounded

freedom amidst the uncertainty—Paris allows for the cultivation of real feeling. More so,

Paris allows for a special kind of "loneliness" that allows one to be "lonely in a crowd."

April Wheeler espouses a similar brand of sentimentality in her characterization of life

abroad:

> You'll be doing what you should've been allowed to do seven years ago. You'll be finding yourself. You'll be reading and studying and taking long walks and thinking. You'll have time. For the first time in your life you'll have time to find out what it is you want to do, and when you find it you'll have the time and the freedom to start doing it" (Yates 151).

Her short declaratives—"You'll be readings and studying and taking long walks…You

will have time"—are cast in future perfect tense, fixing the action and outcome of

Frank's intellectual renaissance. Her declaratives also signal that Frank remains an unfree

agent whose time belongs to someone else. April suggests that Frank's employment

relation yokes him to a different locus of desire, one that prevents him from "finding"

himself.

Frank briefly buys into April's vision of restarting life in Europe and adopts a

defamiliarizing perspective towards his own place in professional life. On his way to

work, he stops to observe the hundreds of men and women shuffling to work and

contemptuously re-evaluates their purpose:

> How small and neat and comically serious the other men looked, with their gray-flecked crew cuts their button-down collars and their brisk little hurrying feet! There were endless desperate swarms of them, hurrying through the station and the streets, and an hour from now they would all be still. The waiting midtown office buildings would swallow them up and contain them, so that to stand in one tower looking out across the canyon to another would be to inspect a great silent insectarium displaying hundreds of tiny pink men in white shirts, forever shifting papers and frowning into telephones, acting out their passionate little dumb show under the supreme indifference of the rolling spring clouds. (Yates 125-26)

Frank's anticipation of freedom renders the site of professionalized work as a form of repetition compulsion with its "endless desperate swarms." He shuttles between thinking of the operation as a panoramic dystopic vision and as everyday individual tragedy. His reverie also brings this scene of capitalism closer to communist propaganda, where the men are rendered "pink" and automatic. Much like Deutschman's characterization of insularity to Nancy Pride in the *Holiday* article, the passage signals an exclusive community of white professionals and race exclusion. The "passionate little dumb show" is a contradiction in its purposive purposelessness, echoing Frank's individualized experience of office work.

Unlike their neighbor Mrs.Givings, the moral arbiter of the neighborhood, the Wheelers substitute the drudgery of domestic work with the potential of travel as anti-work politics, a fact highlighted by the novel's long meditation on Mrs. Givings' strong work ethic. Mrs. Givings own relationship to work is a safeguard against suburban discontent, where she invests meaning in her work life as an "administrative assistant," and in real estate after retirement. While her son John, the only diagnosed depressive character in the novel, has a "complete nervous breakdown" due to "overwork" (Yates 207), Mrs. Givings holds onto her sense of self by defining herself foremost by her capacity for hard work.[57] Cultivated in a secretarial career, her workaholic tendencies leave little room for objects and people that do not accrue both symbolic and material value. The novel presents her obsessive work as symptomatic of the suburb's oppressive

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[57] Frank too discovers a momentary belief in the power of work when he counters the unfreedom of white-collar work through the creative language of advertising speak. The depression of "forever shifting papers and frowning into telephones" is replaced with "that euphoria of half-refreshed exhaustion" when he begins using his Dictaphone to channel innovative but ultimately empty solutions to the problems faced by the distribution department (Yates 126).

aesthetics of perfect houses and carefully-wrought lives.

When the Wheelers' expatriation is abruptly put on hold by April's pregnancy, their fear of "contamination" by the suburb threatens to come true. Without Frank's immersion in professional live, April commits suicide by inducing a miscarriage and chooses death over an immersion in "the great life of the suburbs" (Yates 157). The omniscient narrator describes the strange hold that suburbs have over its residents, describing the community as a shimmering but empty reflection towards the end of the novel:

> The Revolutionary Road Hill Estates had not been designed to accommodate a tragedy. Even at night, as if on purpose, the development held no looming shadows, and no gaunt silhouettes. It was invincibly cheerful, a toyland of white and pastel houses whose bright, uncurtained windows winked blandly through a dappling of green and yellow leaves. Proud floodlights were trained on some of the lawns, on some of the near front doors and the hips of some of the berthed, ice-cream colored automobiles. (Yates 339)

The Wheelers are rendered an anomaly to the systematic "cheerfulness" of Revolutionary Road, where sentimentalism is an overpowering presence. The neighborhood is a "toyland" but with markers of surveillance that eliminate its denizens. The Wheelers represent a curious break not only for Mrs. Givings but the neighborhood in general. The first line of the passage deems the Wheelers' "tragedy" not only unacceptable but also expendable. The narrator briefly slips into pungent satire to suggest that the Wheelers' ugly feelings mark them for elimination from suburban life. Mrs. Givings is relieved when the Braces move in to the Wheelers' former home. She is particularly unhappy with the Wheelers whom she characterizes as "a bit neurotic" (Yates 354). A long monologue of the house's repairs follow, recasting the cinematic lens that the narrator had assumed in describing the suburban architecture of the gated community. The surface becomes an

important collection of affects: the desire to inhabit an eventless existence as with the Givings, but equally, manifest with ugly feelings that are too difficult to manage. Cheerfulness is not merely a method of affective management but an indicator of a disturbed depth of feeling.

Although suburban novels seem to have little to do with the expatriate writing of Paul Bowles, the next section argues that Bowles' travel novels are not merely travel writing but literal extensions of suburban depression, occasionally recast as transnational acedia. Like the suburban novel, Bowles' travel writing struggles with the endgame of resisting the narrative of American cultural imperialism. While middlebrow novels like *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* end with the resolution of discontent by reinforcing supposedly American values of upward mobility, *Revolutionary Road* offers an ironic resolution that ends in tragedy for the Wheelers and an intensification of suburban emptiness. In a similar move, Bowles' travel novels represent the dull horror of postwar downward mobility and the failure of an alternate life outside the nation. Instead of the sanitized experience of travel that middlebrow magazines project (the same that convince the Wheelers to move to Paris), Bowles' novels confront the limits of capitalist cosmopolitanism and the expansion of American power to global landscapes. However, his travel novels are complicated by his active career as a travel writer for venues like *The Nation* and *Holiday*. The next section examines how his travel writing offers an ironic juxtaposition to his novelistic writing, furthering the distinction between his literary and professional writing, his civilizational discontent and his work as a traveler.

Paul Bowles' Eastern Careers

In a 2002 *Harper's Magazine* retrospective of Bowles' work, Francine Prose

compares the author's writing to that of an anthropologist who does not intervene in his

stories with either sympathy or horror. Prose draws a portrait of Bowles as a consummate

objective artist, willing to let the world play out in front of him in the most primal terms:

his protagonists are either naive or violent, and often, both at the same time. Detractors of

Bowles, particularly scholars in and of the Middle East, have read the author as a deeply

Orientalizing figure, whose racist portrayals of Moroccan society are symptomatic of his

national subject-position. Yet, Bowles's literary writing expresses a deep ambivalence

about cultural encounter that evidences and critiques the reach of the American nation-

state. In other words, Bowles' Orientalism is both coterminous with the sleights of hand

performed by American foreign policy and simultaneously critical about more visible

forms of American empire. I pay attention to the ugly feelings of Bowles' work as a

critique of an expanding American empire, where his racist representations are

symptomatic of the nation he sets out to critique. In approaching Bowles through the

apparatus of affect studies, I take my cue from Joseph Boone in *The Homoerotics of

Orientalism* (2014), who asserts the value of reading, like Eve Sedgwick or Ann Laura

Stoler, "beside" and "along the grain" (Boone 422). Non-exemplary modes of reading

allow us to see a middlebrow engagement with failed cosmopolitanism and cultural

encounter that undercuts the picture of harmony and sentimentalism propagated by other

post-1945 travel writers like James Michener. Midcentury travel writing is so entrenched

in forms of American empire that Bowles' literary narratives produce a very tenuous

style of counter-professionalism as expatriate dilettantism.

Bowles' personal narrations of travel are extensions of holiday culture in America. His bohemian lifestyle generated a tremendous amount of interest for elite "middlebrow" publications in the period, like *Holiday*, *The New Yorker,* and *National Geographic*. As a transnational writer in an intensely polarized Cold War world, his magazine work offered the promise of adventure, eclecticism, and native knowledge that could be conveyed easily to an American readership. A closer examination of these articles shows a marked preference for exoticism and enchantment.

In a *Holiday* article from April 1959 titled "Africa Minor," Bowles evokes a different register of affect in his portrayal of "minor" or peripheral lands, where he walks the line between sentiment and pure description. He professes the need to write about Morocco "not intellectually, but emotionally," drawing a portrait of Moroccan society as a zone of "intuition":

> But in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco there are still people whose lives proceed according to the ancient pattern of concord between God and man, agreement between theory and practice, identity of word and flesh (or however one prefers to conceive and define that pristine state of existence we intuitively feel we once enjoyed and now have lost). (*Travels* 254)

Bowles is at pains to distinguish his description from mere "mysticism," but he errs on the side of nostalgic preservation. What makes Bowles' writing middlebrow is that his anthropological style often slides over into the realm of the pedagogical. He gives his readers a picture of harmonious integration, where he emphasizes the changes afoot in North Africa: "It is only since the end of 1955 that Morocco has had its independence, but already there is a nucleus of younger Moslems who fraternize freely with the writers and painters (most of whom are American girls and youths) who have wandered into this part of the world and found it to their liking. Together they give very staid, quiet parties

which show a curious blend of Eastern and Western etiquette" (*Travels* 256). Bowles

goes on to state that the terms of cultural encounter in North Africa are fast changing—

"We now come here as paying guests of inhabitants themselves rather than of their

exploiters. Travel here is certain not to be as easy or comfortable as before…but at least

we meet the people on terms of equality, which is a healthier situation" (*Travels* 265). As

observed earlier, this note of "healthier situations" and "equality" are axioms of US

foreign policy in the period. The rhetoric is at odds with interviews in which Bowles

routinely bristles against the rhetoric of US dominance, suggesting that Bowles remains

willfully oblivious to his own Orientalism. In one instance, he rages against American

insularity by noting that "[t]he xenophobe will always find the alien

unhealthy…Unhealthiness is one of a hundred ways of being inferior" (*Conversations

with Bowles* 4). He indulges in reformist rhetoric in his travel writing, often

symptomatically even he writes "emotionally." His ambivalence and inconsistent

political positions place him *within* rather than outside or against the formation of

American empire.

Bowles' travel writing evinces a canny ambivalence about his mode of work.[58] In

an article for *The Nation* titled "Challenge to Identity," Bowles ponders the nature of his

audience and structures them into one of two possibilities: "the stay-at-homes or the

venturers-forth." He concludes that, unlike "a century ago," it is the latter group of people

who comprise the "travel book" audience. He attributes this as a very particular condition

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[58] His purely pecuniary motives in writing for these magazines are quite evident. In an interview in 1973
with *The Paris Review,* he admitted to a financialized relationship with America: "[t]here was nothing I
wanted [in America], and once I'd moved away I saw that all I needed from the States was money. I went
back there for that. I've never yet gone there without the definite guarantee of making money"
(*Conversations with Bowles* 43).

of midcentury life, where "in theory anyone can go anywhere." The audience for Bowles'

pedagogical travel writing is the suburban equivalents of the Wheelers. In his study of

European tourism and literature *The Beaten Track* (1993), James Buzard makes a

distinction between the nineteenth century tourist and traveler, which has a significant

correspondence to Bowles' version to travel:

> Tourists were …seen as the unwitting harbingers of unwelcome modernization,
> the insidious agents of transformative power. While they passed "superficially"
> through districts they little knew nor long remembered, they none the less
> profoundly altered those districts by virtue of their numbers, their dissemination
> of cliché responses, and their patronage of new, obtrusive institutions—like
> hotels, railway lines, and 'macadamized' roads—which irrevocably altered the
> landscape. In contrast, the traveler was to seek the double goal of attaining a
> distinctly meaningful and lasting contact with visited place that would none the
> less make no constitutive changes, leave no imprint of force behind. (*The Beaten
> Track* 28)

In Buzard's analysis, the traveler emerges as more than a wealthy cosmopolitan sampling

the world. The traveler has more affinity to modes of feeling that are distinctly non-

commodified and illegible to capital: "the traveler, roaming free of imposed borders and

limitations, can veer into those fertile fields for the imagination which lie to one side of

the other of the tourist's usual path, there to discover secret significances and unsuspected

spurs to deep feeling" (*The Beaten Track* 35).

Bowles was certainly mindful of travel writing's capacity for feeling and suggests

that the function of travel writing in the mid-twentieth century shifts "from the place to

the effect of the place upon the person" (*Travels* 239). Like the nineteenth century

traveler, he insists that

> [f]or me it is the story of what happened to one person in a particular place, and
> nothing more than that; it does not contain hotel and highway information, lists of
> useful phrases, statistics, or hints as to what kind of clothing is needed by the
> intending visitor. (*Travels* 240)

He draws a distinction between the tourist and the "writer," conflating the nineteenth century notion of a traveler with a creative artist. Unlike the tourist, the writer is cast as a figure of truth-telling who must discover a region beyond its accessibility to the tourist: "whatever attempts have been undertaken to make a place accessible to the tourist are just so many barricades in the way of the writer, and if he manages to make contact with the place it will be in spite of them rather than thanks to them" (*Travels* 242). The new region's recalcitrance to give up its valuable secrets must be outmaneuvered by the creative intelligence of the writer.[59] His estimation of the writer as an arbiter of truth is also evidenced in an anecdote about the bureaucratic opacity of the writer. When asked by a South American official about the precise nature of his occupation, he turns the question back on her with a pithy "What would I be?" Her reply is to express genuine doubt: "I don't know…It says 'writer' in your passport" (*Travels* 243).

To articulate the creative and political dilemma of the travel writer in this schema of tourist and writer, we must also consider a third term, that of the dilettante. Bowles was invested in cultivating the idea of a creative class of writers who could inhabit the world with minimum restrictions.[60] He complains to a journalist in 1970, long after he had established himself as an expatriate writer, that while France had set up postal facilities for the creative class, America did not find the need to recognize the writer or the artist as an integral part of society. The category of work for the creative class

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[59] He suggests that "[t]he purpose of official aid for the visitor is to make individual research unnecessary; in many countries there is a further, more sinister design in government-sponsored tourist bureaus: a conscious intent to discourage personal relationships between strangers and residents. Writers are particularly suspect, of course, but it is one of their routine tasks to circumvent this sort of thing" (*Travels* 243). This is certainly the case with another important writer of the period, Leon Uris, Amy Kaplan notes that Uris's research for his famous nov*el Exodus* involved a heavily-monitored trip to Israel, which in turn, Kaplan argues, influenced the shape of the novel.

[60] The Beat writers—Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs—were so enamored by Bowles' freedom from the West, that they followed him close behind to Tangier.

intersects with state-sanctioned forms of travel. The prerogative of the creative class

allows Bowles to distance himself from his literary figures whose relationship to work

never fully enters the terrain of the creative or the artistic. While it would be easy to read

the various expatriate figures—the tourist, the Beatnik—in Bowles' journalistic writing

in a satirical tone, his literary writing ventures into the terrain of the middlebrow travel

novel, where we must contend with the displaced feelings of depression in expatriation

and self-exile.

Under the Unsheltering Sky

Both Joseph Boone and Joseph Massad have identified Bowles as a premier figure

of twentieth century Orientalism. In fact, Massad characterizes writers like Bowles and

Burroughs as "offshoots of standard Orientalist representation of the Arab World"

(*Desiring Arabs* 165). While this remains true of his travel writing, his literary writing

offers a more nuanced awareness of the representative limits of cultural encounter.

Bowles's novels have received relatively little scholarly attention compared to his life or

his Arabic translations; both Boone and Massad, for instance, only refer to his

collaborations with Mohammed Mrabet. Instead, I read Bowles' postwar novels—*The*

Sheltering Sky (1947) and *Let it Come Down* (1952)—as emblematic of the desire to

escape American ascendancy through expatriation and inadvertent complicity in

American Orientalism. Unlike Bowles' anthropological style in American middlebrow

magazines, his postwar novels grapple with the depressive feelings of expatriate figures.

Routing Bowles' novels through affect allows us to read for the compromised reality of

transnational counter-professionalism that attempts to configure a life outside of

American domesticity. Considering ugly feelings in transnational encounter—from anti-depressive melancholia to its iteration of acedia—I suggest that Bowles' political vision articulates a crisis of American domesticity experienced by expatriate subject.

Bowles is deeply interested in forms of what he calls "unhappiness" that he characterizes as a "disease." In an interview with the *New York Review of Books*, he notes "[i]f I stress the various facets of unhappiness, it is because I believe unhappiness should be studied very carefully; this is certainly not time to pretend to be happy, or to put his unhappiness away in the dark. (And anyone who is not unhappy now must be a monster, a saint or an idiot.) You must watch your universe as it cracks above your head." (*Conversations with Bowles* 5). His emphasis on "unhappiness" suggests that Bowles's literary writing resonates with recent scholarship on both personal and political forms of depression. His writing reveals an alternate story to American expansion, one that remains disinterested in either mere touristic consumption of local flavor or the imperialism of market expansion through developmentalism. His novels express disaffection with middle-class American life as well as the reach of what Lauren Berlant calls "the good life" narrative, straddling an interstitial zone between realism and satire, middlebrow suburban novel and travel account.

Bowles activates this critique by registering both a discomfort and a desire for an Orientalized anthropology of non-American spaces, particularly North Africa. As Joseph Boone observes in *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, the propensity of the Western male subject is to view the Other as both same and different. This mixing of registers creates an intense ambiguity in the author's literary writing. The dejection and horror that emerge in his novels are symptomatic of their distance from the nation-state, where his suburban

characters attempt to make a career in a transnational setting, much like Bowles himself, only to realize that the economies of work in North Africa, particularly Tangier, are more complicated than they had first imagined. In fact, their very assumption that life abroad would yield a richer, more fulfilling experience emerges from a peculiar hubris cultivated by postwar prosperity—that while conditions at home remain oppressive, the American abroad can always find his or her fortune. These work economies rub up against the limits of hospitality, finding that their depression turns into an economic, social and affective experience.

The diagnosis of depression in the midcentury was still in its nascent stages and was gaining traction in the medical community. In fact, as Laura D. Hirshbein notes, the diagnosis was more likely to suggest an economic rather than a psychic condition. In medical circles, depression was studied as a purely biological phenomenon that was grouped with stigmatized psychic conditions. Hirshbein notes in *American Melancholy* that "in the 1950s, medications were not specifically designated for patients with particular diagnoses and practitioners typically conceptualized most patients into one of two major categories: schizophrenia or manic-depressive psychosis" (Hirshbein 29). She notes that psychiatric studies fixated on "descriptive than analytical" results, where "[r]eports in the medical literature about medication effects tended to include case reports to best illustrate the dramatic improvement in the lives of the patients who received medications" (Hirshbein 29). In other words, the scope of medical depression did not extend to affective responses to the world. An affective examination of depressive melancholia in Bowles limns the space between medicalized narratives of illness and civilizational accounts of late imperial writing. Depressive moments generate a non-

rehabilitative epiphany where their expectation of freedom in cosmopolitan suspension is revealed to be existentially empty. The realm of depressive melancholia and acedia resituates the isolation and emotional torpor of expatriation into a larger structural problem that cannot be rehabilitated into the sentimental feelings, either of the nation-state, the rising developmentalist narrative of American foreign policy, or the success narrative of the pioneering American abroad.

Bowles creates what Jonathan Flatley calls "machines of self-estrangement" that facilitate modes of "affective mapping," a technique of "self-distancing that allows one to see oneself as if from outside" (Flatley 80). Disenchanted professionals are represented within in a literal realm of "estrangement" where they court forms of "defamiliarization, making one's emotional life—one's range of moods, set of structures of feeling, and collection of affective attachments—appear weird, surprising, unusual, and thus capable of a new kind of recognition, interest, and analysis" (Flatley 80). Simultaneously, their reliance on techniques of affective mapping is represented as the *refusal* to be locatable, entering the conceptual space of a negative cosmopolitanism. As Matthew Hart notes of American expatriate fiction, a turn to the world outside often results in a heightened proximity to the nation-state, where the expatriate experiences the world as yet another form of America. Expatriation in Bowles' literary work results in a return to the depressive structures *within* the nation-state and the suburban novel.

This is a significant departure from Flatley's conception of the affective map. For Flatley, the concept is "not a stable representation of a more or less unchanging landscape," but it does provide "a feeling of orientation and facilitating mobility" (Flatley 7). In Bowles's writing, the affective map works in the negative register, inhabiting

structures of unhappiness and ugly feeling that refuse to play along with ideas of self-improvement. While Brian Edwards and Greg Mullins suggest that his writing owes a debt to existential philosophy, I would like to suggest that transnational anxiety moves between depressive melancholia and Ann Cvetkovich's recent approach to the medieval concept of acedia. The anxiety of cosmopolitan statelessness and concomitant xenophobia generate narratives of downward mobility, expressing frustration with Western conceptions of progress but equally complicit in forms of racialization and Orientalism. Bowles' two postwar novels, *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down*, represent the disaffected Western subject who loses intellectual faith in American ideals but remains inextricably tied to the affective fantasies of an imperial nation-state. These figures find that changing their immediate landscape cannot cure their depressive or imperialist tendencies.

In his first novel, *The Sheltering Sky*, an American couple, Port and Kit Moresby, travel through Algeria fueled by Port's contempt for "Western civilization." Yet, their cultural encounters in Algeria are punctuated by Orientalist fears about the region and an uneasy solidarity with a few British tourists. Losing his passport subsequently, Port falsely accuses an Algerian hotel manager Abdelmalek of stealing the document. When Abdelmalek is cleared of the charges by French colonial officials, Port is so ashamed that he abandons retrieving his passport and flees deeper into the Sahara with Kit. He then contracts typhoid and dies, leaving Kit stranded in an unfamiliar landscape. Much like Port's abandonment of his passport, Kit leaves the company of the colonial French and expatriate communities. She sheds her American identity and adopts a nomadic Algerian life, at which the novel switches into an unemotional descriptive style that refuses to

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inhabit her internal thoughts. Bowles's second novel *Let It Come Down* (1952) presents a

more straightforward rejection of American middlebrow life. Nelson Dyar quits his job as

a bank teller in New York and sets out to work in Tangier for a tourist bureau run by an

old friend. When he reaches Tangier, however, he finds that his depressive instincts only

compound. The lack of work in the professionalized sense leads him to an illicit world of

currency manipulation and spying. Instead of embarking on a glamorous life of leisure-

crime, Dyar's illegal operations are unsuccessful in their design. Like a typically

existential character, he finds himself increasingly distanced from his status as an

expatriate, and must flee into a literal island of isolation. Both *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let

It Come Down* invoke forms of depressive melancholia and acedia in North Africa that

interrupt American national belonging. The novels invoke downwardness that is

distinctly different from cathartic tragedy or pungent satire by paying close attention to

the mood of its expatriate characters—and the mood of these characters morphs into

atmospheric disturbances that are both individual and geopolitical.

    The first short chapter of *The Sheltering Sk*y gives us a close description of Port's

state of mind, even before we learn his name or his circumstances. Waking from a dream,

he analyzes his feelings of emptiness, which have now become familiars:

> He awoke, opened his eyes. The room meant very little to him; he was too deeply
> immersed in the non-being from which he had just come. If he had not the energy
> to ascertain his position in time and space, he also lacked the desire. He was
> somewhere, he had come back through vast regions from nowhere; there was the
> certitude of an infinite sadness at the core of his consciousness, but the sadness was
> reassuring, because it alone was familiar. (*SS* 11).

The movement between "somewhere" and 'nowhere' produces a "reassuring" sense of

existential dread, one that provides an affective compass for Port's civilizational

autocritique. While the description of Port's "sadness" gives us little purchase on the work of resisting American concepts of selfhood, it signals the "certitude" with which the novel inhabits a mode of negative feeling. Port's sense of suffocation in an "airless room," to the extent that he feels "paralyzed," reappears in different ways. For example, when thwarted from engaging with a mysterious girl, he experiences "a physical shudder" that heightens his geopolitical dislocation. He feels as if he were "alone, abandoned, lost, hopeless, cold…a deep interior cold nothing could change" (*SS* 140-141). The slightest incident precipitates deep introspection of "unhappiness" and "glacial deadness," suggesting a longer genealogy of melancholy than one precipitated by the shock of cultural encounter. With a great deal of stoic resignation, he ruminates that "he would cling to it always, because it was also the core of his being; he had built the being around it" (*SS* 140-141).

Port's dilettantism manifests as an evident lack of work that facilitates his mobility. Straddling the gap between traveler and tourist, he is initially stung by the Algerian immigration authorities' officiousness when they demand that he fill out the "blank" category of "profession." The officials insistently demand that "the monsieur must do *something*." Kit smoothes over the matter by declaring him a "writer." Port is instantly "infuriated by their stubbornness in insisting upon his having a label, an état-civil" (*SS* 199). But he converts their gaze of surveillance into an exercise and finds a way to direct some superficial cosmopolitan interest at the world: "for a few hours the idea of his actually writing a book had amused him. A journal, filled in each evening with the day's thoughts, carefully seasoned with local color, in which the absolute truth of the theorem he would set forth in the beginning— namely, that the difference between

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something and nothing is nothing— should be clearly and calmly demonstrated" (*SS* 199). The "theorem" converts his interest in the material conditions of the world back into melancholia, where nothingness is the "truth" that Port finds compelling.

However, Port's sense of cosmopolitan interest is revealed to be entirely superficial and self-serving when he loses his passport. A key development for the novel, the loss of the passport, along with the novel's general obsession with the symbolic and commercial significance of passports, is a canny move by Bowles' to critique modes of Western travel to so-called peripheral regions. As Christina Klein, Richard Popp, and Brian Edwards have noted variously, organizations like the European Travel Commission relied on selling tourism as a "passport to peace" in the 1940s, where travel attains a diplomatic, neoimperial dimension. In contrast, Port's traveling adventure to Algeria comes unhinged from any prospect of peaceful, cosmopolitan travel. Port certainly plays into the politics of an unfettered embrace of the world by grandly declaring that he did not need "a passport to existence" (*SS* 95). But after he loses the document, he confesses to the Lieutenant "ever since I discovered that my passport was gone, I've felt only half alive. But it's a very depressing thing in a place like this to have no proof of who you are, you know" (*SS* 159-160). The loss of the credentializing document from the nation-state precipitates a radical loss of self that invokes an atmosphere of severe melancholy and enervation:

> He did not look up because he knew how senseless the landscape would appear. It takes energy to invest life with meaning, and at present this energy was lacking. He knew how things could stand bare, their essence having retreated on all sides to beyond the horizon, as if impelled by a sinister centrifugal force. He did not want to face the intense sky, too blue to be real, above his head, the ribbed pink canyon walls that lay on all sides in the distance, the pyramidal town itself on its rocks, or the dark spots of oasis below. They were there, and they should have pleased his eye, but he did not have the strength to relate them, either to each

other or to himself; he could not bring them into any focus beyond the visual (*SS* 160-161)

The "sinister centrifugal force" suspends Port between medicalized discourses of depression and a cultural anxiety of late imperial emptiness. While Port does eventually succumb to typhoid, Bowles makes it difficult to separate his existential melancholy, biological symptoms of depression, and his oncoming illness. The passport is retroactively imbued with the power to animate his pioneering spirit, and its loss drains his ability to face up to the reality of the world around him. The "local color" recorded in his journal now becomes alienating and distant, a mere play of surfaces without any meaning.

Brian Edwards characterizes *The Sheltering Sky* as a critique of the programmatic rhetoric of US foreign policy, particularly the desire to easily translate global experience into American experience. Contrasting Bowles to middlebrow magazine tycoon Henry Luce's conservative vision of American global supremacy, Edwards rereads *The Sheltering Sky* as an interruption in the act of geopolitical translation. For Edwards, Bowles presents the inefficacy of cultural translation through the inscrutability of tongues, where inscrutability reimagines the imperialism of American centrality. Therefore, the national character of the American is undone through the work of cultural encounter—the Maghrebi desire for independence cannot conform to American notions of identity. While this is certainly true in Bowles's writing, I suggest that Bowles must be read in the tradition of the suburban novel where the discontented American flees the suburb towards the East as a promised land of feeling, even when the stakes of that feeling remain unredeemable, opaque, and distinctly unsentimental. Port's desire to

venture further into the Sahara is inscrutable to Kit, but his death precipitates a similar

inscrutability in Kit's apprehension of the "foreign." In other words, ugly feelings allow

us to theorize the hegemony of American ascendancy, in which even a critique of

American power replays the inimical effects of that power, Bowles chooses to represent

Port, Kit, and Dyar in a labyrinth of complicity that are pointedly ideological and,

crucially, emotional.

The chapter's analytical shift from depression to acedia has immense significance

for Bowles' writing.[61] Acedia is medieval in its origin and is a mental state attributed to

monks who fall out of ecclesiastical decorum. Referred to as the "noonday demon," it is a

medieval affect that is finding resurgence as an alternative to melancholy and depression

in contemporary culture. I invoke the term here to convey the *feeling* of intense isolation

that Bowles' characters experience. In fact, given Bowles' love for primitivist vocabulary

and desire for backwardness, it seems entirely conceivable that Bowles is deliberately

invoking the condition in an attenuated form. At its most basic, it is an affliction of the

mind suffered by monks in monasteries. The monk "'often goes out of his cell, and

frequently gazes up at the sun, as if it was too slow in setting, and so a kind of

unreasoned confusion of mind takes possession of him like some foul darkness, and

makes him idle and useless for every spiritual work, so that he imagines no cure for so

terrible an attack can be found in anything except visiting some one of the brethren, or in

the solace of sleep alone'" (John Cassian, Qtd Cvetkovich 86).

The affliction severs the monk from his professional duties to God and places

him in a zone of "unreasoned confusion." The so-called uselessness of this state is a

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[61] The only other mention of Bowles and acedia is made in passing by literary scholar Ihab Habib Hassan in *Selves at Risk: Patterns of Quest in Contemporary American Letters* (1990).

crucial characteristic of the affliction as it places the monk outside the continuum of his priestly life.[62] While there is some "solace" to be found in the company of other monks, the affliction still activates discontent with the spiritual order. It fills him with "an impatience with things as they are and a desire to be not only in a different place but a different time." The monk only finds relief in "staying uselessly [infructose] and with no profit [*sino ullo profectu*] in his cell" (John Cassian, Qtd Cvetkovich 86). What is particularly potent about invoking acedia, for Cvetkovich, is that it "disrupts progressive or continuist histories of melancholy….[serving] as a negative figure in positive constructions of melancholy by Renaissance, Romantic and even psychoanalytic writers" (Cvetkovich 89). A consideration of acedia as both individual affliction and affect serves to deepen the meaning of melancholic resistance to normative American life. Acedia takes us away from models of depression that can be definitively cured or managed through medical discourse, and replaces it with what Bowles calls "spiritual despair." It transfers the bad feeling of individuals towards what Cvetkovich calls "political depression," and leaves out Benjamin's model of left melancholy. David Eng and David Kazanjian have also noted the importance of acedia as competing models of melancholy for Giorgio Agamben who finds that such deep melancholy places the afflicted on "the threshold of radical creativity…the unfolding of a world in becoming" (*Loss* 13).

In representations of middlebrow life, acedia disrupts ameliorative models of travel and forces a reckoning with the bad feelings that emerge both within and without the nation-state. If tourism were to serve as a model for motivating productivity within

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[62] While Cvetkovich historicizes the condition of acedia by turning to fourth century Christian theologian John Cassian, she simultaneously theorizes the outcome of this condition for affect studies. My analysis relies on Cvetkovich's characterization of the monk's break with traditional narratives of melancholia. Cvetkovich reevaluates acedia as heightened melancholia for its immense political potential.

work, then acedia renders a return to the world of work virtually impossible. It enters a

terrain of bad feeling that remains unredeemable and illegible. Ann Cvetkovich reads the

condition as an endless downward spiral out of rationality:

> 'Drawn out from his cell to become 'restless and a wanderer,' the 'mind of an idler' is 'little by little ensnared by dangerous occupations, so that, just as it were bound up in the coils of a serpent, it can never disentangle itself again and return to the perfection of its former profession' (Cvetkovich 86)

Similarly, in *The Sheltering Sky*, Port's delirious despair, heightened by typhoid,

convinces him of two separate planes of existence. Both distance and depth accumulate in

his senses to give him a "true" feeling of which was the more vital center. While Port

draws upon a sense that he "knew" which center of perception is the correct one, his

fever precipitates a synesthesia in his consciousness:

> His reaction was always the same: a sensation in which the outer parts of his being rushed inward for protection, the same movement one sometimes sees in a kaleidoscope on turning it very slowly, when the parts of the design fall headlong into the center. But the center! Sometimes it was gigantic, painful, raw and false, it extended from one side of creation to the other, there was no telling where it was; it was everywhere. And sometimes it would disappear, and the other center, the true one, the tiny burning black point, would be there in its place, unmoving and impossibly sharp, hard and distant. And each center he called "That."…[H]e could remember the two centers and distinguish between them, even though he hated them both, and he knew that the one which was only there was the true one, while the other was wrong, wrong, wrong. (*SS* 222)

This entire passage, presented to us in free indirect speech conveys Port's feeling of

"self-estrangement," refracting his reality into a small portion of "true" consciousness.

The moving centers and the final utterance, "wrong, wrong, wrong," convey an attitude

of desperate reasoning that is now more severe from his previous melancholy; his typhoid

invokes the paranoid feeling linked to acedia. His loneliness transforms into that of a

monk, where he remains at the remote edges of illness and feeling:

It was an existence of exile from the world. He never saw a human face or figure, nor even an animal; there were no familiar objects along the way, there was no ground below, nor sky above, yet the space was full of things. Sometimes he saw them, knowing at the same time that really they could only be heard. Sometimes they were absolutely still, like the printed page, and he was conscious of their terrible invisible motion underneath, and of its portent to him because he was alone. Sometimes he could touch them with his fingers, and at the same time they poured in through his mouth. It was all utterly familiar and wholly horrible— existence unmodifiable, not to be questioned, that must be borne. It would never occur to him to cry out. (*SS* 222-223)

At the end of his life, Port enters a zone of not only absolute loneliness, but also a fluid relation where objects seem to flow through him. Walter Benjamin shows that melancholia possesses a similar kind of doubleness, where the hollowed-out world of the melancholic performs the simultaneous work of resignifying loss, one that facilitates what Jonathan Flatley, via Walter Benjamin, calls an "allegorical mode of looking":

In the melancholic state, the world becomes a set of objects with no necessary function or meaning, the object world has been emptied of significance, and in this sense it has also been prepared for allegorical transformation. The melancholic state of mind, then, even as it dwells on ruins and loss, is at the same time liberated to imagine how the world might be transformed, how things might be entirely different from the way they are. (Flatley 37)

The Sheltering Sky fixates on the melancholy of the American expatriate and attempts an "allegorical transformation" by bringing Port closer to his experience of a horrifying, existential truth. He does not "cry out" in his wretched state because he has achieved the condition of true "exile," a form of unbearable loneliness that, despite his horrors, offers him an escape from his civilizational disillusionment.

While *The Sheltering Sky* is silent on the disgruntled American within the nation, *Let It Come Down* (1952) draws a pointed portrait of suburban discontent. In a description of disenchantment that reads like Bowles' autobiographical descriptions in *Without Stopping,* Dyar feels a pressing need to leave America: "[a]t the moment it was

almost as though he did not exist. He had renounced all security in favor of what

everyone had assured him, and what he himself suspected, was a wild goose chase"

(*LICD* 21). The situation becomes so hard for him to bear that he begins behaving

"hysterically" with his family, not knowing the "reason" for his sudden outburst. When

his father suggests a doctor, he scoffs at the idea, attributing his condition to his stagnant

life. In America, as a bank employee, he feels imprisoned by his job at the teller's

window. This sense of imprisonment is amplified when he observes a tourist bureau in

New York City: "[t]he thought occurred to him that it would be a torturing business to

work in such a place, to plan itineraries, make hotel reservations and book passages for

all the places one would never see. He wondered how many of the men who stood inside

there consulting their folders, schedules, lists and maps felt as trapped as he would have

felt in their place; it would be even worse than the bank" (*LICD* 25).

The melancholy of Dyar's work life extends to the general set of postwar life as

well. Dyar begins noticing a listless routine in the performance of American life and

decides to trade his mapped-out professional life for the mirage of an unknown career in

a foreign land. He turns his depression and melancholia into "a way of being interested in

the world." Dyar hazards a change in landscape as a desperate ploy to escape the

entrapment of postwar life by signing up for a job at a Tangier tourist bureau. While both

the bank job and the tourist bureau in America signal meaningless work that exists in a

vacuum, Tangier's peripheral status provides a tangible alternative. It promises a similar

kind of mundane labor but in a remote and uncharted setting, thereby transforming the

expectations of work. However, when Dyar lands in Tangier, he finds himself in an

economy of illegal deals and nebulous employment with little or no knowledge of

Tangier's geopolitically complex international zone. Unlike Port, Dyar is much closer to the dilettante figure that Bowles draws disparagingly in his travel accounts. In fact, Daisy, another American expatriate leading an aristocratic life in Tangier, scoffs at Dyar's pretensions of cosmopolitan worldliness: "No. I see no sign of work. No sign of anything, to be quite honest. I've never seen such an empty hand. It's terrifying…I've lived in America long enough to have seen a good many American hands. All I can say is that this is the worst" (*LICD* 34). She typifies him not only as a bonafide American but as "the worst" of these "empty hand[s]." Dyar's retort is weak and insubstantial, but indicative of his continuing ennui: "Work is all I've ever done" (*LICD* 34).

Dyar is plagued by a sense of "downward" movement, and much like Port, he finds occasional comfort in moments of intense unhappiness and isolation. After enlisting the Moroccan Thami's help in escaping Tangier to the countryside, Dyar alternates between uninhibited freedom and paranoid suspicion about Thami's motives. He works himself into an anxious state about Thami's intentions, reading his taciturn silences and willingness to help Dyar through an Orientalist haze. Unlike Port, Dyar's downward descent is not initiated through a series of choices, but a consequence of his expatriation. He mounts the apparatus of comparison when surveying the new landscape in front of him and concludes that the emptiness surrounding him was all consuming. Dyar turns inward and outward simultaneously in his approximation of his depressive affect.

> In some remote inner chamber of himself he was staring through the wrong end of a telescope at his life, seeing it there in intimate detail, far away but with awful clarity, and as he looked, it seemed to him that now each circumstance was being seen in its final perspective. (*LICD* 253)

Acedia places Dyar in a non-rehabilitative negative mode. It also literalizes the fall of the profession, where the "dangerous occupation" of the monk is replaced by the dangerous

occupation of the Orientalist in Tangier. Like Henry James' nineteenth century expatriate figures, Bowles' protagonists wish to not only escape American life but also find rejuvenation in a non-American setting. While James' protagonists, particularly Lambert Strether and Roderick Ferguson, find pleasure in becoming travelers without pecuniary motivations, Bowles' protagonists find that they cannot outrun their imbrication within systems of capital, where acedia interrupts the post-1945 experience of American travel by generating persistent forms of existential despair that is well beyond the scope of rehabilitation.

Conclusion

The suburban novel and the travel novel provide an important test case of the escape fantasy of middlebrow professionalism. Expatriation only intensifies states of ennui and discontent within the domestic setting. Both Yates and Bowles offer different modes of fatalism in describing the eventual downward trajectory of expatriation. These modes of counter-professionalism offer dilettantism as a counter-force to productivity in work, where the act of leaving the secure space of the nation also necessitates unlearning programmatic modes of American success. The materiality of suburban life—remodeled houses, manicured lawns, large cars, a regimented performance of work—must be discarded for strange locales and foreign customs. While dilettantism wanders into the problematic space of American Orientalism, it presents a flawed but necessary critique of postwar work, where disavowing structures of American sociality offers a temporary release from the rigors of professionalism.

At the same time, post-1945 American expatriation also boasts of luminaries like

Richard Wright, William Gardner Smith, and James Baldwin. Unlike the Beatniks, these expatriate writers searching for a particular expression of racial solidarity, as opposed to white melancholy, outside the space of the American nation-state. For prominent members of the creative class like Richard Wright, the realigned global world order provides a clarification of a particularly American predicament. Wright chose to attend the 1955 Bandung conference in Indonesia, where he covered the birth of the non-alignment movement. What attracted Wright to the conference was the declaration of freedom from Cold War hegemony and the strong sense of solidarity with the people of various decolonized countries. He finds that the Bandung conference offers him an opportunity to reconfigure his own experiences of oppression as a black American in light of a global proclamation of independence:

> …I feel that my life has given me some keys to what they would say or do. I'm an American Negro; as such, I've had a burden of race consciousness. So have these people. I worked in my youth as a common laborer, and I've a class consciousness. So have these people. I grew up in the Methodist and Seventh Day Adventist churches and I saw and observed religion in my childhood; and these people are religious. I was a member of the Communist Party for twelve years and I know something of the politics and psychology of rebellion. These people have had as their daily existence such politics. These emotions are my instruments. They are emotions, but I'm conscious of them as emotions. I want to use these emotions to try to find out what these people think and feel and why. (*The Color Curtain* 13)

Wright's dependence on "emotions" and states of injury lead him to expand his curiosity to the world outside. On the other hand, writers like Baldwin found that they could not outrun their blackness in Europe. Baldwin writes of how his blackness was likened to that of a demon in a small village in Germany, revealing the starkly global nature of anti-blackness. These ruminations on expatriation suggest that travel often includes not only an expansion of geographic horizons but also a continued confrontation with "home."

Postwar American travel narratives reveal that the glittering surface of capitalist consumption both acknowledges and represses the predicament of American nationality. While the rise of the professional-managerial class within the nation encourages travel and cosmopolitan feeling, writers and artists contest these manufactured narratives of self-improvement that cannot cover over social inequalities and ugly feelings. Middlebrow writers like Yates and Bowles emphasize the existential urgency of dilettantism as a counter-force to American socioeconomic hegemony. Dilettantism detonates the concept of work by turning to tourism-as-work, highlighting both the global power as well as negative feeling of the suburban subject.

Chapter Three

Educational Ambassadors: Knowledge Work, Willfulness, and the Multi-Ethnic

Bildungsroman

> The experience of the foreign student in the United States is frequently a difficult and unsettling one, involving periods of isolation and loneliness. The students are surrounded by many kinds of pressures and a constant demand: succeed!
> —William Frank Hull[63]

> During the flight, I read *The Student Guide to North America,* a paperback volume that I'd bought before leaving London, for seven shillings six pence on Tottenham Court Road for, although I was no longer a student, I was on a budget all the same. I learned that Americans drove on the right side of the road, not the left, and that they called a lift an elevator and an engaged phone busy. "The pace of life in North America is different from Britain as you will soon discover," the guidebook informed me. "Everybody feels he must get to the top. Don't expect an English cup of tea."
> —Jhumpa Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent"[64]

The post-1945 foreign student has been narrated by education and immigration policies as an uneasy cultural phenomenon of the Cold War. Arriving from different parts of the globe, foreign students present a uniquely liminal demographic to early twentieth century as well as post-World War II American educational institutions. Universities were eager to become leaders of the category of knowledge work and gain control of a global information economy. In turn, government officials in the developing world were ready to stoke the desire for young minds to attend study abroad. While influx of the foreign student is a relatively minor phenomenon in contemporary history, this figure merits revisiting, both in the context of American policy and literature. This chapter argues that a more nuanced portrait of American labor, through both official accounts and

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[63] William Frank Hull, "Introduction," *Foreign Students in the United States of America: Coping Behavior Within the Educational Environment*, 3.
[64] Jhumpa Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent," *Interpreter of Maladies*. 162.

literary implications of Cold War foreign policy, reveals a conflicting account of the foreign knowledge worker. The management of the alien student shows that the figure occupies two opposing subject positions: as a friendly cultural ambassador performing valuable geopolitical knowledge work and as a threatening alien outsider laboring as a third world body.

This contrasting configuration suggests a reappraisal of the foreign knowledge worker in postwar work. Studies of the Cold War have traditionally characterized the period as an encounter between two industrialized nations with peripheral global actors. But this geopolitical account has experienced a rapid shift in the last ten years, and Asia has emerged as an important actor in accounts of the Cold War.[65] The case of the Asian student continues revisionist accounts of a "global cold war" rather than the predominant narrative of containment. This figure provides the American nation-state with both an opportunity to reeducate an alien mind as well as accumulate knowledge useful to foreign policy. In other words, the case of the Asian student strongly indicates that the domestic and the foreign are inextricably intertwined in the period.[66]

The figure provides a crucial piece in a puzzle that defines America from without. Documents and directives from the American government published by the Institute of International Education, an independent nonprofit organization established in 1919, distort the figure of the Asian student through the lens of American power with two

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[65] See Mary L. Dudziak (2000), Christina Klein (2003), Odd Arne Westad (2007), and Daniel Y. Kim (2009).

[66] Daniel Y. Kim contextualizes the relationship between America and the Third World as one inflected by "the geopolitical imperative of containment… supplemented by one of integration, which targeted the developing countries of the Third World. From this perspective, the Cold War was not simply a bilateral struggle between the democratic West and the Communist East, but a triangulated struggle over the rapidly decolonizing South…[which would] require winning the war of hearts and minds in places like Korea" (Kim 555).

simultaneous accounts. These internal documents—handbooks and guidelines issued at a

time when both knowledge work and the foreign student emerge as categories of research

and analysis— establish the view that the foreign student is instrumental in transmitting

an American work ethic to a global audience. However, Cold War rhetoric around the

student is also saturated with the language of exemplarity, where the student's

determination to capitalize on his educational windfall is her or his only notable quality.[67]

The categorical confusion is only acknowledged in the mid-eighties by a study that

reluctantly acknowledged the "absence" of any verifiable data to account for any failure

of the foreign student.[68] While such contradictory accounting is certainly symptomatic of

America's aspirations of global stewardship, the post-1945 foreign student also points to

a latent anxiety about racial inequality in the discourse of work. This is partially

evidenced in the passing of the landmark Hart-Celler Act of 1965, which repealed a

discriminatory National Origins Act set by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1924.

Looking to bolster the nation's deficit in so-called high-skilled labor, the Immigration

Act of 1965 opened America's gates for students and professionals from the developing

world. The act signals that America's image abroad is tied to its treatment of foreign

bodies at home, and the foreign student emerges as an important cog in the advertising

machine for new labor opportunities.

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[67] Various internal government publications offer iterations of the foreign student's usefulness, notably "Initial Orientation of Foreign Students," "Foreign Medical Students," and "The College, The University and the Foreign Student" (1963/1974).

[68] See Goodwin, Crauford D.W. and Michael Nacht. *Absence of Decision: Foreign Students in American Colleges and Universities: A Report on Policy Formation and the Lack Thereof* (1983).

A brief history of the foreign student sketches contradictory midcentury attitudes towards the figure as well as the rise of knowledge work within the United States.[69] Furthermore, the dearth of information about the figure necessitates a turn to contemporary literary considerations of the student that provide the only narrative of failure or static development around the figure. They imagine a crucial historical detail of the postwar period—the fifties to the seventies—that remains neglected in the literary history of white-collar work. While immigration reform emphasizes paths to eventual citizenship, it regards foreign students with unease for their status as an alien temporarily incorporated into America. Two novels—Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student* (1998) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013)—read the proximity of the figure to scenes of manual labor, where the third world body threatens to disrupt the boundaries between knowledge work and manual or reproductive labor. Contemporary literary narratives bring to light a larger tendency within the American novel to grapple with feelings of discontent within discourses of white-collar work, reckoning with both the enforced exemplarity of the figure and a fundamental racial difference. These ambivalent feelings testify to the difficult reckoning of the third world Asian subjects in post-1945 America; their crisis of legibility as *foreign minds* signals the limits of an American knowledge economy.

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[69] Apart from the F1 or nonimmigrant student visa, the H1B or guest worker visa also gains prominence in the 196 Immigration Bill. The H1B visa is designed for employment in "specialty occupations," particularly those engaged in "theoretical and practical application of a body of specialized knowledge" and requiring "a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty" to enter the United States. This article limits itself to the consideration of the F1 visa as the H1B visa is not immediately applicable to either Choi or Lahiri's protagonists, because they enter the country as students. One of Lahiri's protagonists, Gauri, enters the country based on the family reunification clause in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which allows "alien spouses and their minor children" to enter the country. Lahiri's protagonists, Gauri and

The Foreign Student and U.S. Educational Policy

Study abroad was not an entirely new midcentury phenomenon.[70] A sizable portion of the nineteenth century saw American students flocking to Germany, or occasionally English, universities. The early twentieth century saw a sea change where the arrival of immigrants from Europe was accompanied by an increasing number of French and Chinese students. Philanthropist Alfred Kahn promoted the exchange of American and French students and scholars. One of the first studies of this rising phenomenon came well after the First World War, when the YMCA commissioned a scholarly work simply titled *Foreign Students in America* (1923). The study, stemming from missionary zeal but inflected inwards, reckons with the increasing relevance of the temporary foreign body to American life. It recognizes an emerging demographic that allows for a performance of equality and access to the American dream, but without the economic burden of state intervention since such students relied on their own funding or were beneficiaries of a foreign government's largesse.

After the passing of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Acts, the Asiatic foreign body was viewed with paranoid suspicion that was fueled foremost by fears of a foreign invasion. Some alien students attempted to counter their image as potentially untrustworthy agents within the United States. In one early attempt, Dr. Ching-Kun Yang wrote *Meet the United States: A Handbook for Foreign Students in the United States* (1945). Yang's handbook renders the international student as a subject of benign encounter. Written initially for a primarily Chinese audience, the handbook was

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Subhash presumably convert to an H1B on their path to citizenship as they both end up working for universities.

[70] See Chih-Ming Wang's *Transpacific Articulations* (2014) for a detailed account of Asian American foreign students in the United States, well before the articulation of an Asian American identity.

translated into a general primer by the author in close consultation with the Institute for International Education. The preface, written by institute director Stephen Duggan, approves of the effort in the most salutary terms, noting that "[t]he book contains a searching analysis of American civilization and culture. It describes briefly but adequately all phases of our life: political, economic, social, cultural, and industrial. No activity has escaped the keen eye of Dr. Yang...[t]he entire book is suffused by a loving enthusiasm for the American dream. A reading of this book by the American student will give him a more intimate knowledge of our own way of life and an increased but chastened pride in his country" ("Preface"). In fact, Duggan professes on more than one occasion that the handbook will be of "absorbing interest" not only to the foreign student but also the American student, exemplifying the foreign student for his commitment to "the American dream." It is no coincidence that the author, Ching-Kun Yang, is a successful entrant into the symbolic economy of the dream, first securing a post doctorate from the University of Michigan, and then, employment at the University of Washington.

Yang works through various systematic strategies of surefire success for the incoming student. He suggests that students choose universities where the likelihood of running into groups of other fellow foreigners is reasonably limited. Giving the example of Chinese students, he notes that clustering of brethren might lead to insularity and, thereby, threaten their professional development. For Yang, the American university is a storehouse of practical knowledge, and the handbook considers various strategies to maximize this technical potential. A strong command of English is also crucial to the acquisition of such knowledge:

> There are even more indirect disadvantages resulting from a poor knowledge of English and lack of contact with the American environment. For instance, the

activities and work of professional organizations have contributed a great deal to America's progress. Contacts with these organizations in the student's field is extremely important in his own work, in understanding America's progress in science and technology, and in developing relations between foreign and American scientific and technological organizations. But if our English is poor and if we associate exclusively with others of our own nationality without mixing with Americans, we shall be unable to enjoy these contacts. (Yang 90)

Exhorting foreign students to absorb American definitions of "progress," Yang stresses the need for quick assimilation after the initial period of estrangement, citing adaptability as the key to success (Yang 80-81). Yang also stresses playing up the incoming student's difference to her/his advantage, first suggesting that inexpensive gifts might make for frictionless contact between cultural strangers. But much more importantly, Yang advises the student for "the preparation of mental gifts" for the promotion of "international friendship." He exhorts the student to become more informed about his own country before leaving to transmit interest about his home in American circles. He primes the incoming student for American curiosity and suggests cultivating a quasi-ambassadorial persona. Similarly, he advises staving off "hermit loneliness" by joining "extracurricular organizations." While some of these collegiate organizations remain closed to the foreign student, Yang believes that the student must turn himself into an exemplary citizen within the university, sometimes by joining "honor societies" (Yang 96).

He ends this ruminative section on assimilation by giving a poignant piece of advice for managing their affect: "Smile and you will be popular; a constantly straight, serious face will certainly keep away friends" (Yang 96). This instruction of social performance points to a preoccupation that runs through the handbook; "a constantly straight, serious face" deepens the perception of menacing foreign intent. Yang's instructions are not merely a primer on entering an American knowledge economy, but an

exhortation to de-emphasize the very bodily presence of the alien. He tells his incoming

brethren to learn prescribed social forms that signal their harmlessness as *bodies* to reap

the benefits of professional success. Yang's work is prescient about the importance of

collegiate communities for the American nation as well as the importance of affective

performance in the acquisition of professional skills.

In fact, the student's foreignness is neatly enfolded into a vision for a better global

order that remains resolutely American. A third world oriented foreign policy gains

strength after the Fulbright Act of 1946, which advocated "the use of surplus war

property to fund the 'promotion of international good will through the exchange of

students in the fields of education, culture, and science.'"[71] Such legislation paved the

way for students from "developing," postcolonial countries such as India, Indonesia, and

South Korea.[72] This becomes even more pronounced by 1963, when the Committee on

the Foreign Student in American Colleges and Universities observes that the trend of the

foreign student is an important indicator of global economic development, and that

America would continue seeing an influx of foreign students:

> the "typical" foreign student, if there ever was one, is no longer the cultivated
> youth from a wealthy Western European family who comes on his own financial
> resources for his own special purposes. If our government and other governments
> mean what they say about the importance of education for economic
> development, the "typical" foreign student increasingly will be from new nations
> and relatively underdeveloped areas, will come on resources other than or in
> addition to his own family's, and will be seen as means of fulfilling the
> objectives of whomever or whatever provides those resources: the U.S. college or

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[71] "History." *Fulbright US Student Program*. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. *Web*. Accessed July 15, 2017.

[72] The South Korean student provides a perfect example of the rising popularity of an American education. Jane Cho accounts that Post-WW II Korean students hoped to gain expertise and education in American universities. Starting from the late 1940s, American intervention in Korea as well as the (eventually) South Korean government's efforts to modernize the economy contributed to a rise in international students from the country. For a detailed account, see Jane Cho's dissertation *Immigration Through Education*.

university, his own government, the U.S. Government, private agencies, or a combination. ("The College, The University and the Foreign Student" 11)[73]

The Committee's tentative prediction, on "the importance of education for economic development," articulates a comprehensive trend, exactly forty years after the YMCA study: the new foreign student will be an integrated knowledge worker than a passing curiosity. The list of sponsoring agents for international education is also fascinatingly diverse, instantly multiplying the felicity and dexterity of the student. In other words, the changing demographic of the student is equally an indicator of structural change for American knowledge work.

Knowledge work emerges as an integral part of postwar life, particular on the heels of the Great Depression and the upheaval of the Second World War. In his study *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (1962), economist Fritz Machlup inaugurated knowledge as a unit of labor and a mode of work.[74] The primary occupation in such work, in this new schema, is any kind of involvement in the flow of information from a sender to a receiver, who, in turn, transforms into a sender. Thereby, this new knowledge worker is not tied to material goods but the transmission or redirection of information. The status of this new knowledge worker, whom Barbara and John Ehrenreich famously define as "the professional managerial class," is also a replacement for the ownership of capital and the management of labor.

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[73] This observation appears in a 1974 reprint of the original 1963 report titled *International Education Interchange: The College, The University and The Foreign Student* (11).

[74] Machlup theorizes "the 'promotion' of knowledge from the rank of an exogenous independent variable to that of an endogenous variable dependent on input, on the allocation of resources" (7). Such a reappraisal involves reconfiguring the production of knowledge from "discovering, inventing, designing and planning" to "disseminating and communicating" (7). Machlup calls for a necessary collapse between information and knowledge as activities that involve the transmission of new knowledge from one party to another.

These workers are the harbingers of a new kind of workplace phenomenon in the

twentieth century, precisely because the control of ownership over low wage work is

replaced with the control of experts. Citing Alvin Gouldner, Alan Liu points us to a more

precise contemporary definition of the knowledge worker within the professional-

managerial class (PMC): **"**knowledge work is primarily a linguistic habit…rooted in a

shared 'culture of critical discourse' that originates in schooling to inculcate habits of

analytical distance, judgment through rationality (as opposed to authority), technical

mastery, professional autonomy, and other ultimately class practices" (Liu 33). In fact,

forms of mental work promoted the primacy of a particularly American work ethic,

inculcated through these analytic modes. In the domestic economy of the United States,

the prestige of knowledge work promised fresh economic opportunities and covertly

advocated post-1945 American knowledge supremacy as an antidote to Soviet communist

modes of knowledge production, often through the postwar university.[75] This results in

the creation of a "New Class" that is markedly different from that of the nineteenth

century.

Liu reminds us that this development also manifests an entire sub-set of

knowledge workers who remain peripherally placed in relation to a managerial class. He

finds that this subset is, in fact, difficult to define in precise terms: "the New Class

overlaps complexly and sometimes undecidably with what may be called its 'trailing

edge'" clerical and other clean-collar service workers who identify (or are identified)

with the code of professionalism but who do not enjoy the perquisites of that status" (Liu

2011, 31). Foreign students, in the nineteen sixties, are recognizably closer to this

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[75] See Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley (*2004).

"trailing edge" of knowledge workers, where their training is both part of a future group of a professional-managerial class but without the certainty of entering the American workforce.

This is precisely what Chih-Ming Wang finds in his case study of the Chinese student in America. In *Transpacific Articulations* (2014), Wang posits an important historical axiom for twentieth century international education:

> [w]hereas Asian states viewed Western education as a necessary path to modernity, the United States regarded it alternately as a means of ecumenical evangelism, of achieving international peace, and of building Cold War alliance at different historical moments. When the foreign student came to study in America, he or she, knowingly or not, also entered these ideological strictures that regarded education more as a cultural component in the larger scheme of things. (Wang 3)

The international student poses a unique opportunity as well as a problem in the process of acquiring an American education. In turn, the student must learn to separate "ideological strictures" from cultural knowledge to thrive in her/his new environment.

When such a student failed to blossom, the result was a blow to the exceptionality of knowledge work and American progress; instead, failure to adhere to this premise produces forms of downward mobility or isolation. Literary texts are the only identifiable site where the slide from knowledge work to manual as well as reproductive labor becomes evident. In fact, such representations emerge from contemporary ethnic American novelists who are themselves children of foreign students. The following sections will consider novelistic representations of foreign students who embrace evasion and willfulness as strategies of survival.

Failure and Evasion in Susan Choi's *The Foreign Student*

In *The Foreign Student* (1998), Chang, a first generation Korean American foreign student, struggles to find his place in the American South in the aftermath of the Korean War. A former employee of the United States Information Service (USIS) in present day South Korea, Chang is already acquainted with American culture through magazines and movies, but finds himself cast as a constant outsider within America. Literary scholars have read Choi's novel as a specific dilemma of the Korean War, positing that the novel gestures towards an existing body of Asian American fiction. Daniel Y. Kim and Crystal Parikh suggest that Chang's predicament is he is a displaced Korean-American subject and a "borderline subject." Kim stresses the importance of reading Chang/Chuck as a distinctly Asian American literary figure, even as the novel refuses the markers of the Asian American novel. Josephine Park argues that Choi deliberately chooses to distance herself from pan-ethnic Asian American movements to voice Chang's unique predicament as "friendly" and "foreign": "the flurry of meetings and brochures devoted to welcoming the foreign student to postwar America never considered that this figure might actually become an American" (Park 79). This section draws a more nuanced map of American foreign labor and the consequences of failure in American knowledge work.

When Chang first arrives in America, he finds that his alien status is immutable. Upon landing in the Southern college town of Sewanee, Tennessee, the narrator prepares us for his reception: "[t]o Mrs. Reston, he seemed to have dropped into the pool of porch light from outer space" (*TFS* 6). His speech is slower than the Americans around him, and he frequently lapses into bemused silences. The narrator suggests that this is equally

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a reaction to the town's insularity: "[h]is limited English was mistaken, as it so often is by people who have never been outside their own country, for a limited knowledge of things" (*TFS* 17). His first American friend Katherine assures him that the stark reception of his alien status is akin to "thoughtlessness." She characterizes Sewanee, much like the narrator's scathing observations, as an "island" where "[n]othing new ever washes up…and that makes people dull." She confides that he is "the first new thing here in a while" (*TFS* 35).

Outright intellectual dismissal does not deter Chang—he "does not bother to dispel this impression [of being intellectually deficient]," and uses it as a "hidden advantage" (*TFS* 17). During the Korean War, Chang was canny about his role as a mediating agent of knowledge. His job as a translator with the USIS primes him for the necessary pitfalls of translating his Korean world into the two-dimensional economy of an American global imaginary. Before his arrival in the US, Chang demonstrates his usefulness as an agent of knowledge in the administration of a Korean nation that was quickly turning into a Communist battleground. Little more than an office boy, he is given the task of menial translation work. His role as a sponsored student changes the nature of his interaction with the American nation-state, but his acts of translation continue the trajectory of his previous professional employment. He finds that he continues to be a mediating force between an American imaginary and the reality of the Korean nation. However, the stakes of his mediation undergo a dramatic shift—he moves from a being an ideologically administrative agent to a cultural authority on his foreignness. As part of the conditions of scholarship funding, he gives presentations at

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the Episcopal Church on the nature of the Korean war, where he finds himself in the novel position of being a native informant in peacetime.

Instead of acquiring knowledge, he becomes, as an American host characterizes him, an "emissary" (*TFS* 140). His host, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, chooses an archaic word for ambassador, which carries a particularly sharp latent meaning. The word "emissary" originates from the Latin "emissaire," another word for a "scout" or a "spy." Immediately, this sets up a polite but suspicious distance between host and guest. The host, a friend's father, establishes the centrality of American domestic norms by quizzing Chang on the difference between white meat and dark meat. Such an assumption of American centrality is also characteristic of Chang's interactions with other minor characters within the novel. Disinterested in his actual experiences, they refract their knowledge of an insular American world through him. The narrator tells us, "they thought of him as a romantic castaway, whose presence among them confirmed everything that was best about themselves…each act of charity towards him became an isolated instance of good manners" (*TFS* 140). Thus, Chang hovers between ambassador and immigrant, donning neither role. He is "never permitted the liberty of being a mere student…always singled out as a foreigner" (Park 80).

While American foreign policy knows how to read and instrumentalize his Koreanness within the framework of the United States Information Service—as Korean emissary and agent of American empire—the domestic framework of the nation cannot incorporate his foreignness within the institutional spaces of the American university (and by extension, the nation-state). His cosmopolitanism is subjected to the scrutiny and paranoia of discrimination through both social and disciplinary mechanisms. For

example, when Chang and his only friend Katherine stop at a gas station, they are

received with a great deal of curiosity. Katherine is threatened by their surveillance and

feels the violence of the gaze on behalf of Chang, instinctively fearing the repercussions

of their exceptional pairing. As they drive away, Chang notes, "[t]hey don't know what to

make me" (*TFS* 37) An innocuous remark, this sentiment is a literal manifestation of his

uneducable state. His remark is followed by Katherine's quick correction: "They don't

know what to make *of* me" (*TFS* 37). As Crystal Parikh contends, "Chang's presence [in

this moment] makes visible the previously excluded absence of the Asian, which in turn

'animates' him as a stranger. Heretofore, absent and foreign, he now has to be 'made'

over into 'someone' recognizable" (Parikh 50). Such an act of pedagogical remaking is

unconsciously undertaken through Katherine's own helpful prepositional addition.

Ironically, his alienation renders him partially immune to some of the town's

racial discrimination. He becomes, in Leslie Bow's description of similar case studies,

"partly colored." Reading an important South Korean sociological work, Choon Soon

Kim's *An Asian Anthropologist in the South* (1975)*,* Bow suggests that "'the foreigner' is

a point of identification that resists one of lesser status, the 'minority' who is understood

to be something less than white" (Bow 137). Such a foreigner opens up an important

"interstitial" space in the South that remains otherwise covered over, that of "the crucible

between 'not black' and 'not white'…signifier of objective distance and nonbelonging"

(Bow 137). For Kim, assuming the role of the foreigner has a great deal of professional

advantage. His narrative emphasizes that it allows him to move between black and white

communities with a fluidity that is difficult to recreate in the American South:

> "Foreignness" thus appears to have a positive professional resonance: in echo of
> Simmel and Park, the stranger is free from local biases and his transience renders

him inconsequential to established social structures; he has no people and no history and is, in the words of Park, free to "interrupt the routine of existing habit and break the cake of custom." (Bow 131)

Bow comes to an important conclusion about the feature of the foreigner in the South—by disrupting its processes of racialization, however briefly, the foreigner creates the space to diagnose forms of racialization: "the Asian American subject is [not simply] constructed within the South's racial continuum… Both the privileges and degradations that attend interstitiality are to be found in what goes unsaid, what is to be read between the lines. What the southern context of Asian anomaly enables, then, is an understanding of racial latency" (127). Foreignness precipitates a suspension of racial categories that gauges limits of personhood.

In fact, even before Chang enters the American nation, he experiences a sense of himself as an indeterminate foreign body when American occupying forces leave Korea. His interactions with the occupying Americans lead him to a pragmatic understanding of a negative freedom and the limits of his positive foreignness. The omniscient narrator tells us:

> He declared himself a small principality, and pledged his undivided allegiance [to himself] again. The Committee for the Preservation and Welfare of Himself convened its first meeting and passed a resolution excising agitators from his heart…The resolution might have been only the product of his injured feelings, but once it was made, he found it had the power to dictate each decision that followed, as if he'd come up with philosophy after all. (*TFS* 164–165)

This sense of being an intensely compressed space, "a small principality," also informs his interactions on American soil. He fosters a continuous distance from his interlocutors through evasion and forms of voicelessness; his silence renders him nearly invisible by the novel's actual major and minor characters. While Chang is deeply affected by the

sheer scale of his "nonbelonging" in America, precipitating "his injured feelings," he gravitates towards a space of institutional isolation. This isolated space—a mass-market paperback pulp bindery in Chicago— stages a literal proximity to the accumulation of knowledge that remains just out of reach. It highlights Chang's interstitial space between a knowledge economy and a labor economy, where the acquisition of knowledge is constantly interrupted by the threat of being reduced to an abjectly laboring body. But it also allows him to contend with the ugly feelings of cosmopolitan displacement, where he must redouble his efforts to "pledge his undivided allegiance to himself" (164).

Chang's manual labor at the bindery offers a more sustained portrait of the foreign student's precarity. Estranged from the university setting, Chang believes that the space of a bindery will recover his acquisition of knowledge through a proximity to the production of books. The space also conjures the comfortable memory of his father's library in Korea where he first learnt English through "a mixture of terror and childish pomposity." The bindery intensifies his isolation and ends his development as a student by realigning him with the Japanese immigrant working class in Chicago. Tellingly, he "hated the work more than anything else he'd ever done in his life" (*TFS* 234). Instead of finding that he is in an "actual bindery where books were made" and knowledge packaged, he finds himself in a "morgue," a factory that caters to "books that had already been made, used, and broken" (*TFS* 235). The job distances him form absorbing any kind of purposeful, stable employment or education.

He is reduced to such intense monotony that he begins pretending to be "a machine, flipping and ripping in time to an annoying tattoo that had established itself in his head and began to coincide with his footsteps and the way he ate his eggs at the

cafeteria counter." The tempo of the grueling work becomes a suffocating internal rhythm, "beat[ing] within him all night [until] it reached him even when he managed to sleep, so that he dreamed of work, and woke more exhausted than ever" (*TFS* 234). The initial promise of state-of-the-art American knowledge is replaced with manual labor where the books arrive "grimy and full of dust" (*TFS* 235). These books remain entirely indecipherable, "printed in cheap ink that blackened his fingertips on porous yellow paper that crumbled at the edges or broke if it was folded" (*TFS* 236). In fact, instead of reassembling these former objects of knowledge, he disassembles them entirely, reproducing his loneliness and abandonment in material form: "He had to pick up every one, flipping through it carefully, his filthy chapped thumb releasing a slow cascade of pages, each falling alone" (*TFS* 235).

Chang's labor is consigned to produce a meager profit out of forgotten knowledge. Fran, his overseer at the bindery, tells him in no uncertain terms that his job entails conjuring up money from the great piles of discarded books: "People stick money in books and forget. They do it all the time" (*TFS* 235). The vagueness of this endeavor condemns Chang to sure failure—if he does not find the money, he is either incompetent or, as Fran puts it "provocatively," a thief. When he finally does find the money, a supposedly serendipitous find of a hundred dollars planted by the overseer, he uses it to abandon his menial labor. Consequently, he is accused of being a thief and is expelled from the university. The job confirms his place as an uneducable subject and cuts against the appellation "Sensei Einstein" bestowed upon him in a briefly happy interlude, when he communes with a group of hospitable Japanese immigrants.

Chang's failure is that his success cannot be powered by sheer determination in the face of impossible odds. He bears the exhaustion and suffocation of this literary "morgue" with equanimity, and begins to read these "indecipherable" books for their material remains. He finds odd bits of forgotten trash amongst the pages and collects them with care, coming into contact, for an instant, with an aesthetic understanding of American life:

> A bleached "Admit One" movie ticket. A yellow cash register tape whose purple numbers had bled, a piece of string, an empty envelope, the hairy hind leg of a bug…A scrap of paper that said "Jean, I Love You," A greasy feather. A postcard of Portland, Oregon, written all over, even straight across the picture, in a feverish, illegible hand. He stopped dead and tried to decipher it. (*TFS* 236)

Instead of acquiring a formal education, he learns to observe the minor and the useless. He rescues junk from oblivion, drawing both pleasure and knowledge from these discarded items. His desire is to "decipher" them, even as his body is stricken with a "chronic cough." Even briefly, he frees himself from the rubric of what Colleen Lye calls "racial form" (Lye 7). Chang's labor at the bindery interrupts typologies of both the yellow peril and the model minority, entering a circulation economy that undermines the monetization of his manual labor.[76] In a second-hand knowledge factory, he stumbles upon a mode of secret and unusable aesthetic knowledge, partially undoing the instrumentalized historical logic of an economically efficient Asian body.

This mode of reassembling useless knowledge only offers brief respite from his narrative of downward mobility. Unlike the success stories of Korean American students entering the United States, Chang remains "illegible." His illegibility signals the slipperiness of the cosmopolitan student unmoored from the homeland, thereby causing

discomfort to the host nation. As Josephine Park notes, "the role of the foreign student is liberating in one world and constraining in another, and the attempt to struggle free of it reveals a primary scene of captivity" (Park 104). The stakes of his reeducation remain unresolved: is the university meant to suture him back together as a newly delineated South Korean subject in the wake of the Korean War? Or is his reeducation meant to usher him into what Ellen Wu calls the "definitively not-black" structure of the model minority? Chang's loss of student status shunts him into the status of a working class non-citizen, when he suddenly finds himself working alongside the black kitchen staff.

While most readings of the novel have treated Chang's story as that of Korean migration, the novel repositions him by the end in the category of the undocumented non-citizen, with only the faintest glimmer of citizenship on the horizon. He is told in no uncertain terms by Dean Bower that, "if admitted in the future, he would work" (*TFS* 322). In return, he would to give up his scholarship "forever." Chang accepts the terms with no protest, only replying with a submissively resigned phrase, "I am very glad" (*TFS* 322). His cosmopolitan evasion forces us to reckon with the unfinished business of the Korean War and interrupts the triumphalism of US nationalism and domestic policy around the foreign student. It calls into question the rhetoric of global sympathy during the Cold War.

Success and Willfulness in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

Since the publication of the Pulitzer-prize winning *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000), the stories and novels of Jhumpa Lahiri have queried the figure of the Asian

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[76] See Colleen Lye, "A Genealogy of the 'Yellow Peril,'" *America's Asia*, 12-46.

American knowledge worker. For example, in the short story "The Third and Final Continent" (2000), Lahiri sketches the first years of an immigrant knowledge worker. Ashoke Ganguli in *The Namesake* (2008) enters America as a doctoral student of "fiber optics" at MIT, after which the novel quickly turns to the struggle for coherence and legibility of first- and second-generation Indian Americans. Both narratives culminate in the intergenerational family as an ultimate horizon of development.

The Lowland (2013) continues to explore the trope of the foreign student, but shifts towards a consideration of the figure as a peripheral Cold War knowledge worker. The novel tells the story of two students Subhash and Gauri, who find varying degrees of professional success by assimilating as American citizens and enacting a distance from the Indian nation-state. Both husband and wife seek to escape the trauma of revolutionary politics of the Naxalite movement in Bengal in different ways—Subhash from the oppressive regime of an Indian middle-class economy and Gauri from her reluctance to enter the Naxalite movement.[77] They nurse the death of Subhash's brother and Gauri's first husband Udayan in America, and attempt to build their lives after an unsuccessful marriage that stems from an obligation to Gauri and Udayan's child, Bela. While Subhash is a more straightforward example of the model minority, with his steady economic ascendancy and paternal caregiving, Gauri embodies the American work ethic as an antidote to the failure of maternal feeling. She transgresses from a law of familial duty and deviates towards a politics of non-reproductivity.

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[77] The Naxalite Movement is named after a peasant revolt in the village of Naxalbari in 1967 that sparked a flaming anger of discontent with Indian national life. Influenced by the thought of Mao Tse-Tung, the movement was initially backed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and sought not just to take back means of agricultural production but also take control of state power. The movement splintered off as an armed struggle, eventually resulting in the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh in 1990. See Prakash

Lahiri offers a portrait of a foreign student who fits the trope of the white-collar

model minority American citizen, but disrupts the logic of reproductive labor through the

ugly feelings of maternal labor. While Gauri becomes a successful professional, she fails

to inhabit the role of a mother, abandoning her child to Subhash's care. Her abandonment

allows for a dispassionate entry into the neoliberal economy of academic labor and

activates a politics of non-reproductive labor. The novel positions Gauri's knowledge

work in direct opposition to the affective labor of domesticity, undercutting the impetus

of family reunification in the 1965 Immigration Act.[78] The Immigration and Nationality

Act of 1965 introduced important changes to existing legislation that made the family

unit an important gateway into the nation, both legally and culturally.[79] While preferences

were rearranged on many levels, moving from racist quotas to an equitable system of

refugees from Communist regimes, family members of existing US citizens and, most

importantly, high skilled and unskilled workers to meet labor shortages, it was the family

reunification program that had important social and legal ramifications. Daniel J.

Tichenor notes that the family reunification initiative brought about a crucial change in

the demographic of sending countries. The changes in the bill lead to "'chain migration'

of family members [leading] to unprecedented levels of Third World immigration to the

United States in subsequent decades. Indeed, Asian and Latin American arrivals would

comprise three-quarters of legal alien admissions in the 1970s and 1980s" (Tichenor

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Singh's *The Naxalite Movement in India* (2006) and Arun Mukherjee's *Maoist "Spring Thunder": The Naxalite Movement 1967-1972* (2007).

[78] In *Fictive Kinship*, sociologist Catherine Lee states, "about 70 percent of visas for legal immigration are reserved for family reunification" (Lee 2). Lee argues that, even as the goal of family reunification was to change the earlier racist quotas, the family unit was integral to the control of immigrant populations through "a particular vision of nationhood or a national identity." The family reunification program was a means of diversifying the nation through controlling the very definition of a normative family.

[79] Act of October 3, 1965 (H.R. 2580; Pub.L. 89-236; 79 Stat. 911); named after Representative Emanuel Celler (D-New York) and Senator Philip Hart (D-Michigan).

218). Such migration has led to an irrevocable narrative link between the immigrant subject and intergenerational families in literature. The bill also inaugurated Asian Americans as a category of model minority success, that is, "a racial group distinct from the white majority, but lauded as well assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically nonthreatening, and *definitively not-black*" (Wu 2, emphasis in original). The Asian subject in such a definition proves to be a useful economic catalyst and a conveniently depoliticized agent for an emerging knowledge economy.

Contrary to this historical formulation, Lahiri's novel turns to a political actor in the form of Gauri, a reluctant participant in the Naxalite movement, who finds a way out of both nationality and domesticity through American professionalism. Having witnessed the assassination of her first husband by Indian paramilitary forces, Gauri's abandonment of Bela refuses to reset the clock of trauma through maternal labor. Instead, Gauri becomes what Sara Ahmed calls a "willful subject" through the abandonment of her family. For Ahmed, willfulness "has historically been used as a technique for dismissal" (Ahmed 133). Thereby, a willful subject is one with significant ties to disobedience and acts of transgressing against normative modes of being; "[t]o be unwilling to obey the will of the sovereign" (Ahmed 116).

Gauri's willfulness takes the shape of disobedience against the sovereign will of the family, which is mixed with feelings of failure as well as anger. She leaves her family and moves to California to become a professor, at a time when Bela and Subhash visit Subhash's parents in Tollygunge in Calcutta. Subhash's immediate reaction is less of hurt than surprise, that Gauri had refused a marriage of "tolerance" for the sake of Bela's welfare. This abandonment, only recognizable to Subhash as a reverberation of a past

political event, becomes an act of willfulness to Bela for whom "there would never be an answer to why [her mother had] gone" (*TL* 259). This kind of willfulness comes with its pitfalls, often predicated on the scope of the original assertion of the will. Ahmed notes that there are two sides to willfulness:

> Willfulness is not only what subjects are assigned with but shapes the bodies who receive the assignment. Willfullness could be thought of as political art, practical craft that is acquired through involvement in political struggle, whether that struggle is a struggle to exist or to transform an existence. Willfulness might be thought as becoming crafty. (Ahmed 111)

Gauri's method of leaving her family turns out to have similar shades of craftiness, where she bides her time within domesticity, waiting to grow out of her status as an unpaid student.[80] Her proximity to knowledge work, even as it gains exemplarity within a university system, disrupts the intricate structure of a care economy. Gaining an academic mentor frees her from the structure of her current family, and convinces her that any expression of love or sentiment would potentially obliterate her memory of her first husband Udayan. She thinks of a time when Subhash stays home during a snowbound week and spends his time "making a holiday of it" with his daughter. This sentimental moment precipitates a deep revulsion for Gauri, who finds that familial feeling has the potential to interrupt her memory of the Naxalite struggle. Immediately, her thoughts turn to the violent repercussions of the peasant movement in West Bengal, and she recollects "how the bodies of party members were left in streams…to shock people, to revolt them" (*TL* 169). The language of the novel momentarily slips into the secondary affective use of "revolt," that is to invoke feelings of "disgust" (*TL* 169).

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[80] Sara Ahmed casts this as a canniness necessary for an ethics of disobedience: "Willfulness can be understood as the labor required to reach that no, which might even require saying yes along the way. The

Since the violence of the Naxalite movement disrupts her place within a postcolonial family structure, she exits the immigrant logic of reproducing human capital by entering a temporality of abandonment. Refusing to tailor her life to the normative tenet of what Lee Edelman calls "reproductive futurism" (Edelman 27). Gauri disavows the family unit as well as her child. Edelman famously notes in his polemic that the "Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention" (Edelman 3). The primacy of the child, in Gauri's case, is stripped of its potentiality: the family unit becomes saturated with an outmoded futurity, punctuated with the reality of Udayan's death which refuses to allow for a fresh start in a foreign country. Gauri's melancholic conviction about her maternal unviability evinces a non-reproductive future, one where she exits the economy of immigrant family structures entrenched in American capitalism and enters a knowledge economy of "unanswerable [philosophical] questions" (*TL* 233). Unlike Subhash's high-skilled knowledge work, situated within scientific discourse at a research university, Gauri chooses the uncertain path of German philosophy.

Gauri's knowledge work becomes the conduit for a queer form of productivity that ostensibly replaces the child with knowledge work. To Bela, Gauri's knowledge work is a disappointing and less empirical version of Subhash's scientific prowess, not only because it enacts a continuous distance between her mother and herself, but also because it evades materiality:

> For the past few years Bela had heard the word dissertation and not had any idea what it meant. Then one day, in their new house , her mother told her, I am writing a report. Like the ones you write for school, only longer. It might be a book one day. The reality had disappointed Bela. She'd thought until then that it

effort to acquire a will to disobey is the effort not only to say no but to say it publicly, to say it loudly, or to perform it through one's own bodily action or inaction" (Ahmed 119).

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was some sort of secret, an experiment her mother was conducting while Bela slept, like the experiments her father monitored in the salt marshes. Where he took her sometimes to see the horseshoe crabs scuttling across the mud, disappearing into holes, releasing their eggs into the tide. Instead she realized that her mother, who spent her days sequestered in a room full of books, was only writing another one. (*TL* 201)

The materiality of Subhash's labor renders it instantly understandable to the child, while Gauri's betrayal is cemented by the secretive nature of her "experiment," opaque and unknowable to prying eyes. Bela encounters her mother's work as detritus and remainder, coffee cups with mold growing in them or "crumpled sheets of paper in the wastebasket, covered with nothing but p's and q's all over them" (*TL* 201). The nature of Gauri's work accrues bafflement and then resentment in the child. If, as Ahmed theorizes, "willfulness is usually a charge made by someone against someone" (Ahmed 134), Bela's mind forms this accusation by confronting the opacity of Gauri's work. For Bela, the detritus of Gauri's work illustrates not only her maternal absence but also her debilitating abandonment.

In fact, Bela observes that her mother transfers the affective labor of motherhood to the affective labor of producing her dissertation, where her work displaces Bela altogether:

> Recently her mother had started referring to the dissertation as a manuscript. She spoke of it as she might speak of an infant, telling her father one night at dinner that she worried about the pages being blown out an open window, or being destroyed by a fire. She said it worried her, sometimes, to leave them unattended in the house. (*TL* 201)

This is a marked contrast from Gauri's prior routine of abandonment, when she would disappear for hours without a word of explanation to Bela. Not surprisingly, Bela reads Gauri's work as a threat to her experience of childhood, one that endangers her sense of

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home. This becomes particularly pronounced when Subhash presents Gauri with a file cabinet for her papers. As Gauri begins filling with the pages of her dissertation, sounds of "the drawers opening and closing" gain an ominous cadence for Bela:

> She had a dream one night, of returning home from school and finding their house burned down to a skeletal frame, like the houses she would construct out of Popsicle sticks when she was younger, with only the file cabinet, intact, on the grass. (*TL* 202)

The file cabinet, the receptacle for Gauri's productivity, stands in inverse relation to the 'skeletal frame" of the home, both impregnable fortress and mysterious agent of destruction. The materiality of the cabinet, its impersonality and its association with academic productivity, endanger Bela's feelings of kinship. To borrow Edelman's terms, Gauri's productivity undoes the certainty of the child's future, and presents, in the child's unconscious imagining of *its* future, a desolate imaginary structure, one that is as fragile and spent as "[p]opsicle sticks." This fragility is in stark contrast to the post-1965 national efforts to strengthen structures of immigrant kinship. The sticks are also useless objects that signal Bela's desire for familial wholeness, one that the national imaginary has come to expect of the immigrant subject.

Reproductivity, family, and Asian American subjectivity have become a matter of deep cultural significance. Lisa Lowe and Sau-lin Cynthia Wong note that the intergenerational family has become formulaic in its application, a "master narrative."[81] Reading Lahiri's second short story collection *Unaccustomed Earth*, Susan Koshy finds that "Asian Americans have not only become exemplary neoliberal subjects defined by flexibility, high human capital, and opportunistic mobility, but the Asian American

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[81] Quoted in erin Khue Ninh, "Model Minority Narratives and the Asian American Family," *Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, 114.

family has also come to be identified as an intimate form ideally equipped to reproduce human capital" (Koshy 346). Citing a controversial Pew Research Center study, "The Rise of Asian Americans" (2012), Koshy notes the report "place[s] greater importance than the general public on career and material success, and these values are evident in their parenting norms" (346). Similarly, Erin Ninh provides a sharp evaluation of this trend within American capitalism, noting

> the immigrant family is active in the education and training of subjects for the labor force (akin to if not directly overlapping with more formal sites of schooling)—and over that period, increasingly for a particular professional-managerial sector of the labor force. Familial insistence on graduating a narrow band of professionals—medical doctors, pharmacists, or investment bankers, as well as lawyers and engineers—echoes through Asian American stories like the most common of knowledge" (Ninh 48),

With triumphant theses about "tiger parenting" still enjoying popular parlance, the Asian American subject is often singled out for complicity in the production of willing subjects within American capitalism, subjects who obtain the American work ethic at the level of the family. As Ninh puts it so aptly, "family feeling is…biopolitical" (Ninh 48).

Unlike Susan Choi's student-protagonist, Gauri, Lahiri's professor-protagonist, finds that the university system is a welcoming space that facilitates her disobedience from the sovereignty of filiality. While the status of being a foreign student is profoundly disabling for Chang in postwar America, for Gauri, in post-65 America, it is a stable foothold in her escape from a traumatic past. By the end of the novel, twenty years after Subhash and Gauri's arrival in the United States, Gauri has assumed the role of a respected philosophy professor, "turn[ing] a diagnosis [of willfulness] into an act of self-description" (Ahmed 112). This comes with a sense of "betrayal" to her first husband Udayan, their philosophical discussions of Fanon and Marx "shrewdly cultivated for her

own intellectual gain" (*TL* 234). Gauri ruminates that her choices "had generated alternative versions of herself, [and that] she had insisted at brutal cost on these conversions" (*TL* 240).

And yet, her flight into the assured success of a tenured professor comes with a style of evasion similar to Chang's immigrant suspension. Her foreignness remains a matter of discomfort to the others around her: "she remained, in spite of her Western clothes, her Western academic interests, a woman who spoke English with a foreign accent, whose physical appearance and complexion were unchangeable and, against the backdrop of most of America, still unconventional" (*TL* 236). Her status as a tenured professor is often undercut by her foreignness, as when a chauffeur mistakes her "for the person paid to open another person's door" instead of a client (*TL* 236).

Ever mindful of her foreignness, Gauri cultivates a meaningful distance from the family as well as the nation, and finds "isolation" a panacea to the dysphoric feelings of failed intimacies, public and private:

> Isolation offered its own form of companionship: the reliable silence of her rooms, the steadfast tranquility of the evenings. The promise that she would find things where she put them, that there would be no interruption, no surprise. It greeted her at the end of each day and lay still with her at night. She had no wish to overcome it. Rather, it was something upon which she'd come to depend, with which she'd entered by now into a relationship, more satisfying and enduring than the relationships she'd experienced in either of her marriages. (*TL* 237)

Her "relationship" with loneliness is not merely a deeply satisfying one, but one where there are "no interruption[s], no surprise[s]" of filial connection. It propels her into the hyper-productivity of work that interrupts the steadfastness of intimacy, creating a space outside of the heteronormative patterns of marriage. She enters a string of work-related relationships with various "fellow academics," all men, who continue to facilitate her

distance from attachment. Her work ethic also changes the very shape of her body, and

renders her, yet again, into a willful subject:

> Her body, in spite of its years, was as *stubbornly* intact as the muddy green teapot,
> shaped vaguely like an Aladdin's lamp, a wedge of cork in its lid, that she'd
> bought for a dollar at a yard sale in Rhode Island. It still kept her company during
> her hours of writing. *It had survived her flight to California, wrapped up in a*
> *cardigan, and served her still.* (*TL* 241, emphasis added).

The comparison to a "muddy green teapot" from a dollar store also signals Gauri's

unwillingness to enter circuits of consumption, her choice of clothes and her shorn hair

signifying the domain of a monk or a mendicant. The teapot is a token of survival, albeit

one that is removed from a narrative of remarkable transformation—it serves her "still,"

much like it did during her time in Rhode Island. Only once does the American work

ethic precipitate a relationship that "unravel[s]" her, when she enters a relationship with

one of her female students, Lorna. She finds that the intimacy, emerging in a purely

professional, advisory capacity, satisfies her sense of isolation.

This isolation is also deepened by her immigration status, "impractically"

remaining "a citizen of her birthplace," instead of naturalizing and cementing her rights

as an American citizen. As a "green card holder," she inhabits a nebulous space of

permanent residency, neither returning to India nor becoming an American citizen. One

of the stipulations of the green card is that it can either be revoked by the US government

or given up in a legal act of "abandonment" or "surrender" by the card-holder, thereby

preserving a path to further abandonment. This suspension comes with its own set of

inconveniences: "[i]t meant standing in separate lines when she traveled, it meant extra

questions these days, fingerprints when she reentered the United States from abroad." But

it also cements her distance from Bengal when she is "ushered through" and "always welcomed back" into America (*TL* 235).

While Gauri's professorial work does not articulate an anti-work politics, her work in the philosophy department being an integral part of the discourse of a humanities research university, her isolation refuses any participation in the gendered domestic production of work subjects through a family economy. At the same time, her role in the university demands significant relationships with her students as an "alternative guardian" (*TL* 235), some of whom, in turn, are produced by the university system as knowledge workers.[82] Her knowledge work produces three academic books, "a feminist appraisal of Hegel, an analysis of interpretive methods in Horkheimer, and the book that had been based on her dissertation, that had grown out of a blundering essay she'd written for Professor Weiss: The Epistemology of Expectation in Schopenhauer" (*TL* 234).

Her most recent book, in the novel's timeline, signals the precise nature of her political thinking. Schopenhauer, often considered a proponent of philosophical pessimism, professes a stark mode of "will" that he distinguishes from "intellect" or cognition. The will has no fixed purpose or causation; in Schopenhauer's words, "willing as a whole has no end in view" (Schopenhauer 165). Christopher Janaway, a leading scholar of Schopenhauer, interprets his pessimism as arising from an endless "suffering" that emanates from the "striving" of the will (Janaway 272).[83] The fictional academic

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[82] In fact, one of her students, having professionalized as a tenured professor, begins work on an edited collection about the Naxalite movement in Bengal, and approaches Gauri for help. While Gauri refuses to help him in an official capacity, she listens to his account of the movement to satisfy her own curiosity about its after-lives.

[83] Discussing the question of "freedom from will," Janaway finds that, for Schopenhauer, "the possibility of suffering springs from willing: willing is sufficient to ensure our vulnerability to suffering. And, as we

monograph, emerging out of her formative moment as a student, suggests that Gauri engages deeply with Schopenhauer's philosophical treatises. Gauri's work on expectation, as a philosophical episteme, also guides us to its philosophical twin, that of disappointment. Thereby, her knowledge work, even as it remains staunchly situated within an American capitalist economy, explores a politics of negativity that subtly mirrors her filial abandonment.

Significantly, the devotion to knowledge work of philosophical negativity indirectly produces another kind of willful subject, her daughter Bela who, much to Gauri's chagrin, is a cipher: she is "nowhere. Her name in the search engine leads to nothing. No university, no company, no social media site yields any information. Gauri finds no image, no trace of her" (*TL* 277). Unbeknownst to Gauri, Bela's adulthood is punctuated by self-enforced wandering. Unlike either of her parents, she refuses to enter regimented streams of upward mobility. Her father expects her to attend graduate school after her liberal arts undergraduate degree, but Bela realigns his expectations: "[s]he told him she did not want to spend her life inside a university, researching things. She had learned enough from books and labs. She didn't want to cut herself off that way" (*TL* 221).

For Bela, a mental life is automatically one of isolation, where the symbolic economy of research is an immaterial, and thereby unsustainable, existence. It harkens back to Lahiri's preoccupation with the metaphor of transplanting in *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) that casts immigration as an act of violent relocation. In contrast, Bela

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have seen, the essential fact of willing as such is unchanged by the successful attainment of ends. Thus, the possibility of suffering is an essential feature of human life which cannot be removed whichever of our strivings is successful. The fact that things go well for us never removes our vulnerability to their going wrong. This is the first plank of Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism" (Janaway 272).

enters an agrarian economy of hard manual labor, working alongside migrants from dispossessed communities and sliding downwards to more precarious forms of employment. Lahiri signals an earlier "peripheral economic niche" of excluded Asian American citizens, placing Bela alongside low-wage professions like "truck farming, gardening, domestic labor, restaurants, and laundries" (Wu 2). As Subhash notes, she embraces "a spirit of opposition" which he defines, from his perspective as a model economic citizen, as an interest in an underclass: "[she frequents] blighted sections of Baltimore and Detroit… [helping] convert abandoned properties into community gardens…[teaching] low-income families to grow vegetables in their backyards, so that they wouldn't have to depend entirely on food banks" (*TL* 224). She enters the work life of manual labor *despite* her proximity to knowledge work, which she reads as an inorganic, anti-social existence.

But as the details of her manual labor suggest, Bela inhabits complicated forms of passing that seek to erase the constant safety of her upward mobility by entering these alternate work-networks. She embodies her work in material ways: "the shape and texture of her hands were being altered by the demands of her labor. [Subhash] noticed calluses on her palms, dirt beneath her nails. Her skin smelled of soil. The back of her neck and her shoulders, her face, turned a deeper brown" (*TL* 222). She sheds all traces of her bourgeois identity and femininity, both important aspects for her father, by wearing "denim overalls, heavy soiled boots, a cotton handkerchief tied over her hair…[a] man's undershirt with the sleeves pushed up to her shoulders, dark strips of leather knotted around her wrist in place of bangles" (*TL* 222). However, with the birth of her daughter Meghna, Bela is reinserted into a larger family narrative of Asian American human

capital. Bela's deviation from the narrative of professionalism still upholds the logic of reproductive futurism.[84]

Only Gauri remains a stoic figure of isolation. Confronted with her Naxalite past in the contemporary moment, Gauri finds that the movement has created other melancholic figures like her, particularly the case of the revolutionary Sanyal who commits suicide after a lifetime of futile governmental opposition. The novel ends with an image of Gauri in an eternal present of witnessing, when Udayan imagines her standing in front of him with her hair shining. Gauri's non-reproductive politics stands between the past as well as the future, the revolution as well as the child, preferring the isolation of knowledge work in a neoliberal economy. While Udayan was an unknown "foot soldier" (*TL* 277) in a revolutionary cause peripheral to American life, Gauri is an isolated foot soldier to knowledge work who undoes the reproductive logic of the newly arriving immigrant. She holds her love for Udayan neither as a form of mourning nor as a form of revolutionary potential. Instead of articulating her grief through family, she arrives at a "new solidarity with him…[t]he bond of not existing" (*TL* 320).

Conclusion

The figure of the foreign student evolves in the wake of the 1965 US Immigration Act towards the professionalized and rebranded "international student" of the late twentieth century.[85] While the international student is now a ubiquitous presence on

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[84] Similarly, the lines of affiliation continue to fill out for Subhash as well. With a second marriage, Subhash gains "two sons, a second daughter in addition to his own. There are seven grandchildren" (*TL* 330).

[85] Chih-Ming Wang gives us some invaluable statistics about this shift: "The Institute of International Education…show that while the United States hosted only 6488 foreign students in 1921, the number more than tripled to 25,464 in 1949, despite the interruptions of the two World Wars. The postwar years

American university campuses, with an upsurge of immigration from China and India in the nineteen nineties, the postwar foreign student helps us locate the ideologically saturated historical roots of this contemporary phenomenon. The central value of an American work ethic is routed through the peripheral foreign student as a new knowledge worker who functions as a minor agent of American capitalism. In a postwar economy, the expansion of knowledge work precipitates education and immigration policies that seek to discipline and professionalize the alien student. They recruit the figure into a white-collar workforce to produce an overt and covert moral justification for the supremacy of American economic principles.[86]

Both Choi and Lahiri query the newly arriving student and acknowledge the reality of the American work ethic from the mid-twentieth century as a powerful ideological agent. Yet, these students are never entirely conscripted into the logic of professionalism because their foreignness places them in proximity to two forms of physical labor—manual and reproductive. Chang is tied to a discourse of manual labor despite occupying a university setting; Gauri remains inextricably tied to reproductivity despite her professional accomplishments. Both novels testify to the difficult condition of third world Asian subjectivity, manifesting the invisible and grueling labor lurking within knowledge work. They speak to the problem of the foreign student as a *body* in a knowledge economy that orients itself towards a global capitalist world system. The alien student

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witnessed a steady increase in foreign students studying in the United States, and in the 1970s there occurred a great leap forward, owing to the 1965 Immigration Act, which paved the way for a massive wave of Asian immigrants, many of whom came initially with student visas—and the numbers reached a historic high in 1983, with more than 300,000 students. Despite a brief drop in the early 2000s, as of 2011 a total of 725,277 foreign students were studying all majors in American colleges and universities, and China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan are listed among the top five countries sending students, making up 49.7 percent of the total amount, with Japan and Vietnam taking the seventh and eighth position on the list" (Wang 3).

certainly activates the category of knowledge work, but is never meant to be the direct recipient of its benefits. Choi and Lahiri show us that a shift towards an American knowledge economy involves a strategic fluidity between categories of labor, which is also an enforced division between the domestic and the foreign.

The move from sanctioned narratives of the successful student to contemporary literary narratives of the figure allows us to understand the administration of knowledge work as a form of what Amy Kaplan calls "manifest domesticity" (Kaplan 2002, 580). Kaplan's insightful argument about nineteenth century America is that "the notion of domestic policy makes sense only in opposition to foreign policy and uncoupled from the foreign national issues are never labeled domestic" (Kaplan 581). Therefore, "a sense of the foreign is necessary to erect the boundaries that enclose the nation as home" (Kaplan 581-582). The case of the alien student offers us a succinct portrait of knowledge work, both as a rising economy and a geopolitical stratagem. Much like the blurring of the lines between the domestic and foreign, knowledge work as national product and manual labor as foreign body are deeply encoded in the rhetoric of international education. In other words, the "sense of the foreign" is necessary not only in terms of "enclosing the nation at home," but also in terms of defining the contours of *American* knowledge work.

Choi and Lahiri are mindful of a national desire for such knowledge supremacy and offer us deviations from narratives of progress. Such deviations offer us an important corollary to what Jed Esty calls the "allegory of uneven development," which provides "an encoding of the contradiction between an always underdeveloped or immature economic periphery and an ultimately false but still influential narrative of planetary

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[86] See Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* (2011) for a long history of the American work ethic and its "irrational" devotion to the principle of endless work.

progress and socioeconomic convergence" (Esty 204). Through allegories of precarity, these two novels challenge the "false but still influential narrative" of a peripheral alien entering the dream profession of American knowledge work. Sifting through the predominant stories of the foreign student in America—of repatriation or assimilation—reveals less coherent, more contested versions of the alien student, disrupting the prevailing narrative around foreign labor in an American capitalist world-system.

Chapter Four

Global Janissaries: Terror, Risk, and the Post-9/11 Finance Novel

> While cuts to expenditures and entitlements do mount an assault on domestic security, the at-risk populations—categories that incorporate race, gender, sexuality, youth, cultural marginality (in short various dimensions of difference)— stand as an internal threat to [a] new world order. The removal of security imposes a risk-shift…which treats those who cannot maintain accountability as the equivalent of enemy combatants. Wars on education, drugs, youth, crime, culture, art anticipate in their techniques and targets much of what will become the war on terror.
>
> —Randy Martin, "The Twin Towers of Financialization"[87]

> ...I knew from my experience as a Pakistani—of alternating periods of American aids and sanctions—that finance was a primary means by which the American empire exercised its power. It was right for me to refuse to participate any longer in facilitating this project of domination; the only surprise was that I had required so much time to arrive at my decision.
>
> —Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* [88]

The days following the events of 9/11 were terrifying ones for Muslims in America who found themselves transformed overnight into targets of social and political blame. Much like with Japanese citizens and diaspora during the Second World War, the events of 9/11 call attention not only to a purportedly new form of global terror, but also to old forms of American racial hatred. The Muslim American body became a systematic target of American surveillance mechanisms in the post-9/11 world; from imams to engineers, it was open season on the Islamic body.[89] Scholars have consistently complicated 9/11 as

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[87] Randy Martin, "The Twin Towers of Financialization: Entanglements of Political and Cultural Economies." *The Global South*, 123.

[88] Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. 156.

[89] Legal scholar Leti Volpp notes a remarkable shift in the aftermath of 9/11 that consolidated a public and political consensus about racial profiling, where Middle-Eastern, Arab, and Muslim populations were "identified as terrorists, and are disidentified as citizens" (Volpp 1575). While the American security state imposed severe dragnets of surveillance on Muslim non-citizens as well as citizens, Volpp notes that the prevalence of "extralegal racial profiling" becomes a social norm resulting in "over one thousand incidents of violence—homes, businesses, mosques, temples, and gurdwaras [sic] firebombed; individuals attacked with guns, knives, fists, and words; women with headscarves beaten, pushed off buses, spat upon; children

an event epitomizing American innocence, and canonical literary representations of 9/11 have concentrated on complicating the question of American innocence. Works like Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), John Updike's *The Terrorist* (2006)*,* Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) all describe 9/11 as an event that raises many questions about America's self-projection of innocence, its foreign militarism, and its assumed global leadership in the twentieth century. However, they have paid less attention to how the ethnic body, particularly the Muslim body, has been caught in the crossfire of the security state. In fact, American literary writing about the event has been skewed in terms of racial representation, where mainstream American authors prefer to articulate the existential doubt and dread experienced by mainly-white American citizens. Bruce Robbins argues that the post-9/11 American novel has taken an inward turn retreating into spaces of domesticity. Robbins' central critique is that the post-9/11 novel tends to overlook continuing American injustices at home, recreating a neo-imperial, and often unwittingly nationalist, narrative of blame (Robbins 1096). This chapter suggests that Pakistani authors Mohsin Hamid and H.M. Naqvi renarrate the event of 9/11 through the apparatus of finance to highlight the dramatic slide of the Islamic body from a productive, global subject to an inimical, transnational terrorist. These authors suggest that the promise of American work, and by extension participation in civic life, is undercut by the racialized precarity of the global South professional in the post-9/11 world.

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in school harassed by parents of other children, by classmates, and by teachers" (1580-1581). See also Mahmood Mamdani (2004), Sunaina Maira (2009), and Junaid Rana (2011) for accounts of racial profiling and the Muslim subject in America.

The finance novel has emerged as a major American narrative preoccupation in the twentieth century epitomized by early twentieth century texts like Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912), Sinclair Lewis's *Babbit* (1922), or Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), which tackle the rise and fall of individual fortunes. These texts focus on the greed and socioeconomic fall of unscrupulous characters. While the midcentury period favored novels about the moral corruption of American professionals like the insurance salesman, the nineteen-eighties and -nineties brought about an "overaccummulation of money capital" (Le Berge 3) and the concept of personal finance that changed the novel's relationship to money. This period gave rise to narratives of what Leigh Claire Le Berge calls "scandals of abstraction," where texts like Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) and Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) brought the highly specialized language of finance in conversation with postmodern techniques. These texts invoke older narrative concerns about financial greed and moral bankruptcy, but their formal interest lies in the conceptual similarities between finance and fiction. The evolving abstracted quality of finance capital led Frederic Jameson to note in 1997 that "[c]apital itself becomes free-floating. It separates from the concrete context of its productive geography" (Jameson 251). In fact, Toral Gajrawala notes a contemporary shift "from the register of the megalomaniacal to that of the mundane. No one is deluded by the rhetoric of meritocracy, and the stockbroker need not be insane. The crash is the subject of dinner parties and discussions over drinks ('What of bankers' pay?'), the object of bewilderment, cynicism, even boredom." The change renders the financial world "less morally bankrupt than morally indifferent" ("Fictions of Finance," *Dissent Magazine*).

The moral indifference of finance has an overlooked early twentieth century

racialized precursor that manifests as American ambivalence about the Asiatic body. In her influential study *America's Asia*, Colleen Lye notes that Asia in the American imaginary represents an important moment of "fully industrialized race relations" (*AA*) in which the early twentieth century migrant Asian body is a key abstracted economic figure that vitalizes production and finance capital, reminding us that the so-called abstraction of finance is predicated on vectors like material production and labor migration. The Asiatic body in American literature presents a cipher of finance capital between two totalizing dyads: as an unquestionable asset to modernity and as an indomitable threat to national economies. Lye's characterization of the ambivalent Asiatic body provides a genealogy for the configuration of immaterial foreign labor in the late twentieth century. These two distinct genealogies—of the entrepreneur-financier and the financialized Asiatic body—converge in the formation of the global South finance novel, in which the split between the businessman and the high finance professional is more fungible, and the Asiatic body is an integral functionary of capital. The events of 9/11 have reactivated the vector of alien peril as an antithesis to the seemingly non-violent workings of American finance, recalling early twentieth century speculative narratives of Asian domination and Western degeneration. The twin towers' symbolic destruction is an expression of fundamentalist triumph over the progress of American modernity. Refusing to separate finance from terror, global South writing about finance returns to the question of moral bankruptcy not through the language of financial instruments but through the rhetoric of terrorism. Distancing themselves from the triumphalism of fundamentalism, Hamid and Naqvi offer a nuanced critique of post-9/11 American finance that materializes the abstracted nature of finance capital to emphasize that finance's "productive geography"

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has expanded to global-peripheral actors and regions that remain vulnerable to its abstractions. Much like the Asian migrant laborer, the global Muslim professional in post-9/11 America is both harbinger of post-industrial global modernity and the symbol of total geopolitical annihilation.

These novels are part of a new trend of the global South finance novel that departs from postmodern iterations of abstracted finance. Instead, the contemporary finance novel, including Joseph O'Neill's *The Dog* (2012) and Zia Haider Rahman's *In The Light of What We Know* (2014), are only marginally interested in the mechanics of finance capitalism with its liquidities, derivatives, swaps, and traps, or its force as a possible allegory of American sociopolitical temperament.[90] The new finance novel is far more interested in the transnational professionals who mediate its flows both within and outside an American national economy as what Randy Martin calls an "arbitrager, the one who rides the ripples of volatility, taking opportunity and leaving greater volatility behind" ("The Twin Towers of Financialization" 112). Often traveling to outposts of modern empires—New York, Dubai—or cultural war-zones—Kabul—the global South professional is a peripatetic and distinctly global figure, reminiscent of a colonial officer, who is a complicit collaborator in the inequities forged by corporations and governmental organizations. The finance professional participates not merely in the white-collar labor

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[90] O'Neill presents an Irish American finance professional working in Dubai, coming to terms with his complicity in managing a Saudi empire that systematically exploits South Asian migrant workers. This darkly comic novel plays with questions of sociopathy and finance professionalism, asking if the work of capital gains makes the financier not only morally indifferent to mass suffering but incapable of any feeling. Meanwhile, Rahman indicts British colonialism through NGOs and think-tanks that decimate the sociocultural landscape of Afghanistan in the aftermath of the American War on Terror. While Rahman connects finance, neocolonialism, and terror in intricate ways, the novel is ultimately interested in the legacy of British professionalism and its long history of actively exploiting peripheral regions like South Asia. Both novels are deeply interested in the language of finance, but stop short of connecting American finance and terror.

of managerial work but in the facilitation of risk economies that monetize vulnerability:

> More than moral panic in which fresh fodder is added to the pyre of victimhood, risk renders productive the hitherto unwanted–both justifying social abandonment at the moment of personal failure (three strikes you're out) and constituting industries of accountability around the at-risk (from privatized public goods like schools and prisons to the profitable machinery of measurement and surveillance itself). ("TTF" 112)

In other words, the global South finance professional is conscripted into economic work that privileges the logic of "winning from the losses or depreciations in others' gambit" ("TTF" 112). Not unlike the janissary of the Ottoman empire, a crucial metaphor in Hamid's critique of American empire, the global South finance professional facilitates the eventual unmaking of vulnerable peripheral geographies in the hierarchies of global finance.

Financialization Work and Terrorism

The term "financialization" suggests that the gap between production and speculation has effectively closed, providing an accelerated form of capital accumulation. Gerald Epstein famously suggests that it is "the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies" (Epstein, 3) that completes the dominance of financialization. Randy Martin argues that "[f]ar from creating greater distance between a referential do- main of production of discrete and tangible goods, and a fast and fluid arena of circulation, financialization augurs the mutual imbrication and intimacy of these activities" ("TTOF" 118). In other words, finance hardly operates as a separate, conceptual scheme of capital production, but that it relies on, reacts to, and speculates on

the very foundations of materiality. In fact, Martin makes the startling suggestion that "the introduction of financial instruments bears all the signs of image conscious creative industries" ("TTOF" 118).

Literary and cultural studies scholars interrogate the effects of the "financialization of culture" to observe the persistence of commodity value in representation. In a special issue in *Representations*, C.D. Blanton, Colleen Lye, and Kent Puckett have noted the devastating discrepancy between "real and embodied value" that have resulted in: "some form of commodity critique might remind us that—despite seductive fantasies about the liberation of value, the new immateriality of labor, the primacy of consumption over production, or the end of history—the risk, the loss, even the violence of real and embodied value remain all too real" ("Introduction" 4). The editors's vital suggestion is that value's materiality becomes visible not only in the language of accumulation and speculation, but also in its antithesis, in "risk" that generate violent and often profound loss.[91] While finance is usually yoked to feelings of euphoria or panic, the contemporary finance novel has the tendency to depict feelings that are less extreme and more ambiguous about the exceptionality of financial actors. Instead of treating finance as a discrete entity with its own systems of causation, the language of gain and loss, the addition or subtraction of value, is replaced with an interrogation of cost, material damage, and complicity. Literary writing demystifies the abstraction of financialization into tangible material, calling attention to the racialization of the global South professional as well as the working class as inherently bad post-9/11 subjects.

How do novels about terrorism address the economies of finance capitalism and

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[91] See C.D. Blanton, Colleen Lye, and Kent Puckett. "Introduction." *Financialization and the Culture Industry*, a special issue of *Representations*, vol. 126, no. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 1-8.

American work? The traditional definition of terrorism by the US government is that it manifests as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents" (Quoted in Schmid 45). While this definition has been contested on multiple grounds by a wide variety of policy and human rights scholars, it asserts that terrorism has been positioned as a disruptive activity that interferes with the workings of civil society. Given the nihilistic nature of terrorism, work and terror have been invoked as contrasting forms of allegiance to capitalism, when in fact their monetary interest in vulnerability suggests a discomfortingly complementarity. In fact, *The Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* notes that workplaces have become targets for terrorism, where the predictability of the workday and the collective space of the organization offer opportunities for disruption. Most saliently, the handbook argues that workplaces often serve as a flash-point for terrorist activity, suggesting that in a post-Cold War historical trajectory, capitalism and terrorism have emerged as opposing forces.[92]

The US government has adopted a similarly hard economic logic in characterizing the nature of terrorism. When pitching the urgency of development in South Asia, the government suggested a distinctly globalized solution to combat transnational terrorism. Mrinalini Chakravorty notes that the Obama administration has consistently drawn an inverse correlation between terrorism and outsourced work, where America's ability to create overseas jobs is touted as a significant deterrent to the growth of transnational terrorism. In this narrative, terrorism breeds in the vacuum of economic productivity,

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[92] Michelle Inness & Julian Barling. "Terrorism and Work." *Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Ed. Steven G. Rogelberg, n.pag. *Web*. Accessed July 15, 2017.

offering a lucrative alternative to regularized work. Chakravorty highlights that "the political discourse of terrorism in the West is enmeshed within an economic one of developmentalism. Work—useful, creative, and corporate—is supposed as dialectically connected to its other, terror" (Chakravorty 189). The Obama administration's approach generates two important outcomes—the strengthening of American interests in international markets and the reassertion of American innocence in the War on Terror. Chakravorty's analysis suggests that outsourced American work is another form of diplomacy where the facilitation of employment opportunities is only a secondary outcome; outsourced work enables the exportation of socioeconomic values that privilege American capitalist productivity as a vital center in global South communities at risk of manipulation by terrorism.

Reconfiguring Chakravorty's insight in the context of South Asian diaspora, I suggest that the global South immigrant encounters a similar dichotomy between work and terror not in transnational outsourced work but within the confines of American professionalism. By reframing the dyad of work and terrorism in the context of American professionalism, Hamid and Naqvi force a confrontation between ethnic and postcolonial subjectivity, where the former postcolonial subject must learn new ways to perform the old problem of imperial collaboration. The new mode of the finance/terror novel stages America not as the place of innocence but as the place of "atrocity" and racial conflict (Robbins). As Harleen Singh observes, "[w]hile the media prevalently constructs the figure of the terrorist with the accompanying markers of illiteracy, fundamentalism, hatred, and violence, this figure is rearticulated through postcolonial fiction to produce the disempowered refugee, the disenchanted immigrant, and the dissident citizen" (Singh

26). The global South novel eschews the existential despair and presumed innocence of American 9/11 narratives by calling attention to the stigmatized global South subject *within* America.

Work and terrorism have proved to be a fecund point of intersection for the diasporic American 9/11 novel, where the immigrant professionalized subject remains perpetually open to the charge of enmity. This precarity replays, and thereby extends, the historical plight of Japanese Americans during the Second World War and the dominant yellow peril narrative of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The postcolonial subject joins the ranks of the ethnic peril narrative through a turn to what Junaid Rana dubs "Islamic peril": "[i]n the post-9/11 era, [South Asian and Middle-Eastern] demographic groups became suspect, racialized under a rationale that imagined them as part of a geographic and cultural continuum even though they were divided by nationality, religion, ethnic region, language, and socio-economic status" (*Terrifying Muslims* 52). These novels suggest that finance professionalism offers an opportunity to participate in an enterprise of global risk management. However, the financial language of risk gives way to the racialized stigma of Muslim immigrants as a presumed societal risk. Both Hamid and Naqvi show that the language of financialization—what Randy Martin calls "preemptive" action—precipitates the preemptive formation of the enemy. As Philip Herbst notes, "[c]onveying criminality, illegitimacy, and even madness, the application of *terrorist* shuts the door to discussion *about* the stigmatized group or *with* them, while reinforcing the righteousness of the labelers, justifying [the security state's] agendas and mobilizing [its] responses" (Herbst, emphasis in original). The charge of "criminality" racializes the Muslim professional in these novels as a clandestine, deviant

subject *before* ever having participated in an act of terror. The social and national stigma

of terrorism anticipates that ethnic labor—white-collar or otherwise—will eventually

devolve into acts of vengeance. The dual maneuver of extracting labor from the foreign

body on the one hand while marking that very body for deletion on the other reenacts

America's ambivalence about the Asiatic subject. The global professional testifies to the

internationalism of the American finance industry as the hub of market power, but the

presence of the global within national borders simultaneously stokes fears about the

duplicity of the global South subject.

In Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009), finance professionalism becomes the pretext for examining an

internationalized American work ethic that puts the diasporic mind to work, while

sanctioning the simultaneous surveillance, and often ejection, of the diasporic body. In

fact, Hamid gestures towards the startling similarities between finance and terrorism,

both operating on what Faisal Devji calls the speculative logic of risk. Devji contends

that jihad has assumed a global character that mirrors the operation of the global

marketplace, where much like financial actors in globalization, terrorism has eclipsed

local movements and insurgencies to create a universalized narrative of terror.[93] On the

other hand, Naqvi shows how an ethical dissent from financialized work dramatically

accelerates the racialization of the Muslim as terroristic subject. Both novels suggest that

finance professionalism and terrorism have a curious meeting point in the discontented

Muslim subject who refuses to play by the rules of speculation. Instead, the novels

interrogate the ethics of financialized immaterial labor to expose the paranoid security

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[93] See Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (2005).

state lurking behind the structure of American white-collar work. If finance is the targeted other of terrorism, then the racialized Muslim immigrant is the collateral damage of both the American security state and global radicalization. Hamid and Naqvi challenge the formation of the hard-working, "useful" immigrant by staging the Muslim body's precarious proximity to terroristic subjectivity.

Mohsin Hamid's Reluctant Professional

Mohsin Hamid's second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) presents a dramatic monologue about a former Pakistani finance professional who renarrates his tale of American assimilation and then subsequent departure in the post-9/11 period to an unspecified American listener in Lahore. Addressing the reader directly, the novel registers a complaint against new forms of empire through negative feelings of shame and reluctance. Hamid reverses the traditional immigrant novel about his induction into American work as a successful financial analyst for a valuation firm Underwood Samson. Instead, he ruminates on the consequences of his consultancy work on a global scale and comes to the slow realization that his diasporic professionalism obfuscates a deeper problematic of American empire. Toggling between the local and global, Hamid appraises the complicity of the global elite in strengthening forms of American capitalism through an allegory of financialized white-collar work.

Hamid's novel can be considered both a novel about a South Asian immigrant who embodies the Asian American trope of the model minority and an evocation of a global narrative about financialized work. The author's fluid literary formation hint at the complex, and sometimes counterintuitive, transnational maneuvers deployed by the

novel. Hamid is categorized by the Library of Congress as a US writer, and wrote his first

novel, *Moth Smoke* (2000), while working in New York City. The seeds for this novel

were planted at a creative writing workshop at Princeton by two quintessentially

American writers, Toni Morrison and Joyce Carol Oates. As Rebecca Walkowitz notes,

"*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* introduces global actors who think they are local actors.

But the local is a moving target. National institutions depend on the agency of migrants,

who appear variously as government operatives, financial analysts, international students,

and taxi drivers" (Walkowitz 190). Walkowitz highlights that the very concept of the

nation is unsettled by the transnational knowledge and labor economies that supplement

its formation.

Similarly, Leerom Medovoi introduces a classificatory formulation that he calls

world-system literature to describe a central preoccupation of contemporary global

writing. Stemming from Immaneul Wallerstein's geopolitical distinction between center

and periphery, world-system literature "maps the dynamics of the system as an interplay

of subject and object—power and desire, force and affect—as they are propelled by the

spatial dialectics of territory and capital" (Medovoi 657). Medovoi makes a striking

observation that Hamid's novel "is not so much of or by, but rather *for* Americans. That is

to say, America serves as the novel's geopolitical *raison d'eˆtre* and as the object of its

rhetorical design rather than as its generative cultural ground" (Medovoi 646, emphasis in

original). The move from "cultural ground" to "rhetorical design" shows that the writing

need not be about America but nonetheless enforces a relationship to the nation through a

homogenized global elite. In a tone of self-reflexive contextualization that is the hallmark

of the novel, the narrator Changez offers an account that clarifies the complicated

symbiotic relationship between America and the global in the very first few pages:

> We international students were sourced from around the globe, sifted not only by well-honed standardized tests but by painstakingly customized evaluations—interviews, essays, recommendations—until the best and the brightest of us had been identified…. Students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and invited into the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society, the society we were joining. And for the most part, we were happy to do so. I certainly was, at least at first. (*TRF* 4)

Changez's opening account is one of reciprocity and mutuality, where the international student hones his skills in a foreign country and then begins to serve his host by "contributing his talents to society." But the final sentence—"I certainly was, at least at first"—betrays that his narrative will perform a crucial perspectival shift that challenges the presumption of socioeconomic reciprocity. From the very beginning, the novel upends a canonical global South narrative of immigrant success by invoking the failure of assimilation, both through the uneasy, confrontational tone of the dramatic monologue as well as the narrative's immediate location in Lahore. The central dilemma that Changez sets up for his silent American listener is that, as an immigrant, he is both enamored by and disillusioned with America.

The dichotomy is heightened by both the allegorical logic and infrastructural machinery of corporate professionalism. Changez's work as a financial analyst is the hallmark of his American existence, sustaining his sense of self-worth through an overpowering vision of success. His first foray into the world of finance evokes the register of a neoliberal sublime. The offices of Underwood Samson are "perched on the forty-first and forty second floors of a building in midtown." Amazed by "the power of the view from the lobby," he ruminates that this was "another world from Pakistan," one

epitomized by "achievements of the most technologically advanced civilization our

species had ever known" (*TRF* 34). The hyperbolic vision articulates the continuing

dilemma of the postcolonial knowledge worker. Entering the slipstream of American

modernity brings with it the side-shadowing and counterfactual rehistorizicing of

"another world." If America is indeed otherworldly, it is because Pakistan occupies a

wrenched temporality thousands of miles away:

> Four thousand years ago, we, the people of the Indus River basin, had cities that
> were laid out on grids and boasted underground sewers, while the ancestors of
> those who would invade and colonize America were illiterate barbarians. Now our
> cities were largely unplanned, unsanitary affairs, and America had universities
> with individual endowments greater than our national budget for education. To be
> reminded of this vast disparity was, for me, to be ashamed. (*TRF* 34)

Even as Changez narrates his entry into networks of American professionalism as a

willing subject, he experiences a form of low-grade discontent that relies heavily on the

logic of comparison. Changez's movement between these ambivalent feelings of shame

and pride suggest the stirrings of a geopolitically charged recalcitrance. Timothy Bewes

refers to the ambivalence as the "event of postcolonial shame" where comparative

modernities evince in the postcolonial subject a sense of shame at the discrepancy

between an internal, private self and an externalized, otherized self. While literary critics

have commented on Changez's pursuit of the allegorical Erica, his chimerical lover who

mourns the death of her American boyfriend Chris, who little has been said about

Changez's feelings of geopolitical backwardness as a *professional*. These political

feelings remain buried under the larger rhetoric of excellence in the firm, more so

because Changez embodies the discourse of excellence to perfection. During his early

years at Underwood Samson, a handful of recruits are told by the company man Jim that

they are a "meritocracy" and "believe in being the best." However, the creation of a

meritocracy is presented as a relentless pursuit of excellence. They are presented with an

axiom: "If you do well, you'll be rewarded. If you don't, you'll be out the door. It's that

simple" (*TRF* 35).

The supposedly straightforward evocation of meritocracy could also be redescribed

as a symptom of what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt call, in their eponymous study,

"empire." In their formulation, the organizing principle of empire is totalizing: "[e]mpire

exhausts historical time, suspends history, and summons the past and future within its

own ethical order. In other words, Empire presents its order as permanent, eternal, and

necessary" (*Empire* 11). The novel suggests that the rhetoric of American professionalism

and its parent, the financialized corporation, manifest an empire in new clothes. This

blunt statement about the primacy of meritocracy is in close conversation with Changez's

description of Pakistan's setback—and by logical extension, South Asia's setback— in

the face of neocolonial modernity. Through its narrative conceits—mainly, the dramatic

monologue and the location of the speaker *outside* the space of the American nation—the

novel's larger gambit is to see through the meritocracy that wagers its survival on

vulnerable, "at-risk" regions and populations.

In Changez's cosmopolitan narrative, the nation-state of the Philippines appears as

a space that reminds us of the imperial American history. Given the novel's heavy

allegorical structure, Philippines appears as a timely reminder of the turn of the century

experiment in American democracy. While the novel never alludes to the Philippines'

status as a former colony, it is, tellingly, also the space of Changez's tutelage in corporate

power. Acquired after America's victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898, the island

nation became a contentious foreign policy issue that affirmed the nineteenth century notion of manifest destiny. Anxious to deflect charges of imperialism, President William McKinley and policy makers espoused the idea of "benevolent assimilation" and claimed to depart from the model of colonialism by exporting America's homespun democracy abroad. As Meg Wesling has shown, American policy adopted the rhetoric of civilizational burden reminiscent of Britain's colonial expansion. Hamid takes a similar route through the trope of pedagogical professionalism, where Changez is groomed to wield the corporate power of Underwood Samson.

Echoing the relationship between America and the Philippines, his grooming manifests a performance of imperial mastery, where Changez learns to adopt an American demeanor in the space of the Philippines. In Manila, he experiences contradictory feelings of shame at Pakistan's relative underdevelopment in comparison to a fellow Third World country and pride at his membership in "the officer class of global business" (*TRF* 65). He throws his weight around and wears what he deems as an "extraterritorial smile" (*TRF* 65). His performance of professionalism suggests that the global foothold of American finance replays the schema of colonial power, where the local inhabits an overdetermined antithesis to the global. After spending hours "with suppliers, employees and experts of all kinds…accountants and lawyers," he realizes that he has more in common with the Filipinos who serve his colleagues and him (*TRF* 66). When meeting the "hostile" glance of a passing cab driver, Changez feels a strange kind of "intimate" aggression with the stranger. Unlike the confined, corporate space of the office, the public space of a Manila road activates a what Changez calls "a third world sensibility," a sense of kinship that deactivates the domination of the global (*TRF* 67).

Instead, it activates an affective kinship that shortcircuits Changez's personal history. It interrogates the complicity of the third world professional in the circuitry of American financial and cultural imperialism. The aggressive glance of the cab driver is thus not that of mere resentment, but an expression of imperial betrayal.

The encounter with the stranger precipitates Changez's political awakening, where his own lurking vulnerability transforms into a politicized discontent under American subjection. Instead of focusing on his financial work, he has an epiphany about the willing recruitment of the global South professional as an agent of neocolonialism and the consequent devaluation of the Third World. The mundane incident of "intimate" aggression with the Filipino cab driver begins to color his working world, where his difference as a Pakistani man catalyzes a "strange" realignment of racial difference: "I looked at [a colleague]—at his fair hair and light eyes and, most of all, his oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work—and thought, you are so *foreign*. I felt in that moment much closed to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside" (*TRF* 67). The epiphany is, of course, exaggerated to the point where Changez collapses the difference between Philippines and Pakistan, threatening to create a glib projection of global solidarity. However, the foreignness attributed to his American peer is not merely that of race, but one that highlights a hierarchy of labor operations. His colleague's "oblivious immersion in the minutiae of our work" speaks to an absence of political consciousness in the realm of work. Changez begins to appreciate the structural erasures behind the performance of his work that renders his "Pakistaniness…invisible, cloaked by [his] suit, by [his] expense account, and [his American] companions" (*TRF* 71).

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The performance of professionalism is brought to an abrupt end in his last days in Manila, when he witnesses the events of 9/11 on television and feels an odd sense of triumph, a confession that causes his American listener to "clench" his fists and take on a veneer of "displeasure." Changez cannot fathom his own feelings of resentment: "I was not at war with America. Far from it: I was the product of an American university; I was earning a lucrative American salary; I was infatuated with an American woman. So why did part of me desire to see America harmed? I did not know, then; I knew merely that my feelings would be unacceptable to my colleagues, and I undertook to hide them as well as I could" (*TRF* 73). As Changez tells his American listener repeatedly, he had long trained himself to extinguish his political feelings to "focus on the fundamentals" (*TRF* 98). By doing so, he embodies a subject who passes for a model American employee. However, the Philippines attains significance beyond its status as a former American colony—it threatens to foretell his future as an American neocolonial subject. The novel articulates a politics of reluctance that manifests as a dilemma that places the global South "officer" between the duty of work on one hand and the call to political action on the other. In other words, Changez's discontent does not emerge from direct discrimination at work but through an experience of cognitive dissonance about the implications of financialized work, where his work participates indirectly but consequentially in the undoing of peripheral nations. Post-9/11 America facilitates an allegorical register that amplifies Samuel P. Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis in the nineties. Huntington argued that the post-Cold War world would see increasing civilizational conflicts based on cultural and religious differences, leading to various

levels of low-grade "fault line" conflicts as well as major "core" clashes.[94] Changez

experiences a sense of guilt at having participated in the production of good and bad

global subjects. Changez immediate response is to grow a beard as "protest" in the height

of 9/11, causing great discomfort to his colleagues. This innocent "hairstyle" transforms

him from a model employee into a terrorist. The beard disrupts his "play-acting" and

casts an uncomfortable shadow of the non-Western fundamentalist in the elite hallways of

the valuation firm. His beard is a manifestation of Changez's reluctance, which articulates

an affective dissonance between an expected performance of sociality and an experience

of lived reality. However, it does not lead to an espousal of terroristic violence or a

revenge fantasy, but a refusal to continue the neoimperial, corporate work of valuation.

At a later assignment in Valpraiso, Chile, a city that declined from its own

prosperity due the building of the Panama Canal, Changez enters a mode of passive

refusal to work that takes on an anti-imperial disobedience. Changez cannot respect how

his manager is "immersed in the structures of his professional micro-universe" and finds

that "in this constant striving to realize a financial future, no thought was given to the

critical personal and political issues that affect one's emotional present." Instead of giving

vent to his "deep anger," he pretends to do his work:

> I sensed the vice president was growing increasingly irritated with me… I
> pretended to be keeping myself busy, but as the days passed and my deadlines
> began to slip, he lost patience… my indifference to my work continued unabated.
> There was no longer any possibility of deceiving the vice president; my lapses
> had become obvious, and his reprimands grew increasingly blunt.… I told [him]
> that I refused to work any further. He was baffled. "What do you mean, refuse?"
> he said. "I am done here," I replied. "I intend to return to New York." (*TRF* 144)

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[94] See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, 1993 and *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).

While continuing to be a member of an elite professional class, Changez nonetheless articulates an affinity with what Alan Liu calls the "trailing edge" of knowledge workers, taking a sharp deviation from dissolving union contracts in New Jersey in the early days of his career. Not unlike Herman Melville's infamous Bartleby, Changez voices anti-work feeling that is firm in its expression of refusal. While Bartleby has been canonized with the phrase "I would prefer not to," where he chooses not to do any work outside the purview of his labor as a copier, Changez refuses to do *any* of the work assigned to him. His entire career as a financial professional is haunted by the specter of geopolitics: American empire has reduced his status as both professional and Pakistani national to the status of a corporate foot-soldier. In Valpraiso, Chile, the firm recommends the dismantling and dissolution of a venerable publishing company, suggesting a disjuncture between cultural objects and financialized global value. Engrossed in the work of undoing not only the publishing company but also the very stakes of literary production, Changez has a larger political awakening about the nature of his work: "I was a modern-day janissary, a servant of the American empire at a time when it was invading a country with a kinship to mine and was perhaps even colluding to ensure that my own country faced the threat of war" (*TRF* 152). Entering the aspirational embrace of American professionalism turns him into an "officer of the empire"; as in Manila, Changez experiences a wave of "compassion for those…whose lives the empire thought nothing of overturning for its own gain" (*TRF* 152). Unlike Manila, however, his bad feelings cannot be dispelled with renewed immersion in his work. It becomes clear that we are listening to and reading a narrative of failed development through success, where the global professional moves through the ranks of American finance, only to find

that his expert work facilitates the geopolitical decline of entire regions.

When he does finally quit his job to leave the United States, he transforms into a revolutionary, and possibly fundamentalist, figure of "anti-American" politics, teaching courses on finance at Lahore University where he espouses a divestment from Pakistan's dependency on American financial help. He professes to exercise his "ex-janissary's gaze" to see the world with "the analytical eyes of a product of Princeton and Underwood Samson, but unconstrained by the academic's and the professional's various compulsions to focus primarily on parts" (*TRF* 157). While financial training emphasizes the management of risk and value in discrete packets of information, Changez abandons the heuristics of the arbitrager, i.e. the process of speculating on other people's risk. Instead of being ruled by the logic of the market, he trades his financial knowledge for a broad, critical engagement with the geopolitics of American finance. The act of quitting his lucrative white-collar work shows him that he is an "indentured servant whose right to remain was dependent on the benevolence of [his] employer" (*TRF* 157). The novel suggests that Pakistan remains handcuffed to America through cycles of "aids and sanctions" (*TRF* 156) that extend US hegemony indefinitely. From a Pakistani perspective, the fundamentalism of financialization presents a pressing danger against the sovereignty and integrity of the nation's independence.

Nonetheless, as Harpreet Singh notes, Changez's trenchant critique of American financial imperialism occupies an ironic blind-spot, where he "does not consider how in the grip of capitalist machinery, he too had once evaluated human beings within the cold facts of profit and loss" (Singh 32). In fact, Hamid complicates Changez's transformation into a vociferous American critic through an "investigation into the flimsy nature of

postcolonial nationalist fervor" (Singh 32). The postcolonial landscape of Pakistan is hardly an innocent by-stander in the war on terror, where the people of Afghanistan as well as Pakistan's internal province of Balochistan become the collateral damage of Pakistan's interventions (Singh 31). As a result, Lahore lurks with countless dangers for the silent American listener. All signs in the novel indicate that this Ancient Mariner narrative will end in violence, and Hamid suspends us between this point of life and death, action and inaction, as Changez's menacing friends surround them. The novel's final allegorical gesture is to reveal the metallic "glint" of the American's "business card holder" (*TRF* 184) drawing the relationship between finance and terrorism to an ambiguous but fatal conclusion.

Low-Wage Work and Paranoia in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*

The relationship between finance, terror, and the immigrant professional is given an entirely different trajectory through the dilettantism of H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009). A Pakistani citizen and a product of the Boston University MFA program, Naqvi works in the American finance industry, echoing a similar mix of insider knowledge and literary discontent as other contemporary novelists like Mohsin Hamid, Joseph O'Neill, and Zia Haider Rahman. Written only a few years after Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Naqvi's debut novel features a young gangsta-rapping, Beatnik-wandering Pakistani protagonist who studies literature at an American university and then joins an investment banking firm. When he is quickly laid off from his first Wall Street job, he abandons climbing the corporate ladder of success. Instead, he begins driving a cab in New York City as a form of stable employment. The eponymous "home boy" refers to the naiveté of

young South Asian diaspora looking to "make it" in America. As Rajini Srikanth notes, the novel

> shows us that no one is immune who is marked as Muslim. *Home Boy* depicts the fragility of the Westernized and apparently "assimilated" lives of three young men of Pakistani descent in New York. Drug-smoking, liquor-imbibing, bar-hopping hip-hop enthusiasts, these men are far from anyone's idea of how Islamist terrorists would act or be. Yet their patina of youthful urban cool does nothing to protect them from the swift and terrible hand of the state, which sees in them three potential terrorists bent on destroying the United States. ("The War on Terror" 78)

In this case, the contemporary finance novel turns to the racialization of the global South working class, highlighting a lurking connection between finance and criminality. Naqvi shows that the moral panic of finance and the paranoia of terrorism. Instead of the intricacies of financial instruments, barring a few stray mentions of liquidity exchanges, Naqvi illuminates the inner details of low-wage livery work. While occupational handbooks view taxi and livery drivers as an exclusive category of heavy motor operators, Naqvi's representation of hack work swings between manual labor, service work, and knowledge work. The act of ferrying riders—which is technically customer-oriented service work—is intricately connected to an innate knowledge of the city, one that Shehzad accumulates as a dilettante. Naqvi represents this movement between different kinds of work with textual insertions of the "SAT-style, multiple-choice" hack license examination, creating a visual break from the smooth flow of prose writing:

Which of the following is false?

1. Madison Square Park is located at 25th Street and Fifth Avenue.
2. Times Square is so named because there is a big clock on the tower.
3. Wall Street is so named because there used to be a wall there to keep the Indians out.
4. Manhattan College is not located in Manhattan.
5. Long Island University is located on Long Island.

Throgs Neck Bridge crosses

1. Jamaica Bay
2. Westchester Bay
3. The East River
4. The Harlem River
5. Newtown Creek

Another name for Willowbrook Parkway is

1. Malcolm X Boulevard
2. Jackie Robinson Parkway
3. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Expressway
4. H. Rap Brown Drive
5. Master Fard Mohammed Parkway

(*HB* 48)

These questions show the immense spatial and representative knowledge summoned by a taxi driver. They signal the continuity between the service work of efficient transportation and the knowledge of urban navigation. Furthermore, each of these questions represent not only an innate knowledge of the city's topography but also the lived history of the United States.

And yet, the fall from top-grossing executive to cab driver jumpstarts a narrative of downward mobility that illuminates a cosmopolitan working-class filled with South Asians, Egyptians, Haitians, and other global South nationalities. It highlights a different class of diasporic movement that James Clifford and Pheng Cheah identify as marginal transnationalism. It also highlights the fluidity of local and global actors in scenes of labor. While fictions of finance metaphorically abstract the workings of finance for literary effects, Naqvi only presents us with the social figurations of financial actors—the banker, the vice president, the boutique consultancy firm and its material consequences. In fact, it becomes clear that Shehzad is at heart a student of literature besotted with the

sociocultural fallout of finance. When asked by an interviewer "why banking after

literature," he opines in serio-comic fashion:

> Literature…and banking are thought to be disparate or mutually exclusive but you
> can make connections. I mean, somebody could teach a course called 'Masters of
> the Universe: The Making of the Myth of the Modern Banker.' The course would
> trace the construction of the idea of the banker in fiction, and nonfiction, and its,
> um, resonance in the popular imagination. You'd look at Bonfire of the Vanities,
> and American Psycho… you could even look back to Whitman's Wall Street …
> and then there are canonical treatises on the industry like Barbarians at the Gate
> and Liar's Poker. But that's the long answer. The short answer is I needed the
> money. (*HB* 198)

Ironically, Naqvi sets this self-conscious course description in a novel that is hell bent on

rejecting all forms of financialized work. The subtitle of the course betrays the discursive

energies of the proposal—the figure of the banker is but a mythical construct, wreaking

both literal and metaphorical havoc as in *American Psycho*. The reference to Whitman's

Wall Street also calls attention to Shehzad's own Bartlebyian preference to refuse work as

a form of enslavement.

Instead, Shehzad devotes his energies to enjoying his work as a transnational hack,

finding aesthetic and anthropological novelty in quotidian, urban experience: "[c]ruising

into the city on I-95 at night…or from Hoboken, across the George Washington, was

thrilling each and every goddamn time. It was like discovering Manhattan anew" (*HB*

78). He finds that "each turn promised something else...fistfights in Yonkers…wedding

parties in Chinatown…meet[ing] the great celebrities of our age (78). Yet, this

anthropological delight is rife with risk and no welfare mechanisms: "no Social Security,

pension, paid vacation, or health insurance, even though you risked life and limb every

night." This is no fictional exaggeration, as sociologists have consistently recorded taxi

and livery drivers as the one of the most consistently dangerous occupations, only

outpaced by police officers. The litany of work hurdles is daunting, with it "drunks, druggies, axle-snapping potholes, labyrinthine detours, speed traps, ticket traps, summons abuses" (*HB* 78).[95]

Shehzad remains in close proximity to youthful dilettantism through his friends AC and Jimbo, two fellow Pakistanis with vague, nefarious social connections. However, their proximity to dilettantism and distance from social respectability in post-9/11 America make them visible targets of the surveillance state. An innocent cab ride with his friends to an acquaintance's home turns into internment and interrogation with the FBI. Instead of narratives of upward mobility, where the diasporic subject learns the route to good citizenship through work, Naqvi illustrates the enormous risk of Shehzad's downward mobility and the precarity of his anti-work dilettantism. Few novels of post-9/11 terror have represented the inner chambers of non-citizen interrogation within the Metropolitan Detention Center. In an eight by eight cell, Shehzad mulls that he occupies a space that previously housed "thieves, thugs, pimps, pedophiles, rapists murderers." He chants the lyrics of N.W.A.'s Fuck the Police out of habit, but then realizes that "the anthem's resonance was no longer mere novelty or a boyish sense of affinity with the hood." The detention center brings him face to face with the vulnerability of black life and its resonances with Muslim identity. He begins to make complex connections that consistently refuse to exceptionalize his individual plight. When asked by his FBI interrogator to answer why "terrorists terrorize," he answers, like a good critical theorist, that the Muslim subject is in fact a novice in the realm of terror: "Funny thing is that

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[95] The protest by NYC taxi drivers on January 28, 2017, objecting to Trump's first executive order banning travelers from seven Muslim countries, takes note of the dangers of the occupation as well, and identifies itself as a largely migrant, Muslim demographic.

before 1948, the Jews were the terrorists. Palestinians became terrorists later. They

weren't blowing themselves up though. The Japanese started that, and I suppose suicide

bombing was pioneered much later, in the eighties, by Hindus, the Tamil Tigers.

Muslims…only picked up on it recently—" (*HB* 147). In this impromptu history lesson,

terror emerges as a mechanism of dissident political and ethnic management. Similarly,

scholars like Mahmod Mamdani and Anjuli Raza Kolb have shown how terror, both

within America and without, is consistently invoked as a pathology that must be cured

through coercion.

After days of beating and interrogation, it is perhaps Shehzad's pedantic answers,

and his unusual background as both literature student and investment banker, that secures

his eventual release. The time spent in prison offer him an important revelation: "just like

three black men were gangbangers and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslim men had

become a sleeper cell." (*HB* 153). Junaid Rana makes a similar point about comparative

racialization, noting that "diverse groups of immigrants are imagined [by the security

state] to possess related characteristics that connect them to suspicious activity" (Rana

53). Thereby, the racialized Muslim becomes, as legal scholar Ahmed puts it, a threat in

the same register as "border crossing by Latinos and militancy among African

Americans" (Quoted in Rana 53). Terror is invoked not merely as a propensity to

violence against civil society, but as a fundamental characteristic of ethnic communities.

In the novel, these revelations about the depth of comparative racialization trigger a

self-surveilling gaze that emerges as totalizing paranoia. In Sianne Ngai's definition,

paranoia is a minor feeling that manifests itself as "a species of fear based on the

dysphoric apprehension of a holistic and all-encompassing system" (Ngai 299). Paranoia

is not a projection of individual harm but a diffuse experience that infects the world, much like a conspiracy. Shehzad's paranoia amplifies his feelings of irrational guilt under a racialized surveillance system that forecloses the innocence of all Muslim subject and suggests that the Muslim bodies remain guilty unless proven innocent. Paranoia amplifies the precarity of the Muslim body as an inimical object, revitalizing the Schmittian political binary of friend and enemy. For example, the public space of the subway fills Shehzad with discomfort and dread: "I scratched my temple, studied the floor, pretended to commit to memory the advertising banner…I was conscious of the way I looked, behaved, the way I anxiously scratched my nose, my ear. When they announced "Please report any suspicious activity or behavior" over the speakers, I closed my eyes like a child attempting to render himself invisible" (*HB* 154). He then has a panic attack in another public space, Central Park, when a police officer merely walks towards him. He diagnoses himself to be caught in the grip of a "psychosomatic psychosis, like the hysteria in fin-de-siècle Vienna…the authorities gave me the heebie-jeebies" (*HB* 250).

The terrorist, particularly the suicide bomber, invisibilizes himself by becoming what Jasbir Puar calls a "body-weapon." The threat posed by the terrorist is thereby an embodiment of violence, where the very ontology of the terrorist—his or her appearance—is synonymous with realized or unrealized violence. In contrast, Naqvi hypervisibilizes the non-terrorist, non-combatant raced and classed body as the collateral damage of the American surveillance state. He confesses to his mother that he is "afraid all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. Maybe it's just a phase, maybe it'll pass, and things will return to normal, or maybe, I don't know, history will keep repeating itself …" (*HB* 262). The ellipsis within the text signals

Shehzad's breaking point, where his migratory desire switches gears to what many postcolonial scholars are beginning to call "the rhetoric of return": the embattled global South subject returns home to either an energized neoliberal state or ongoing domestic crises.[96] While "return" certainly offers the prospect of rejuvenation and the rediscovery of one's homeland without a structural change in oppressive structures, it offers primarily a necessary exit from regimes of American surveillance and vilification. Shehzad's racialization as a deviant subject disrupts his brief insurrection against financialized white-collar work, forcing an exit from any form of American work. While narratives of finance professionalism offer a temporary illusion of meritocracy and power in global South novels, Shehzad's eventual exit back to his homeland—a privilege that allows him to comprehensively reject the American dream—is a reminder that professionalism is inextricably linked to the racialization of the ethnic subject.

Much like Hamid's novel, *Home Boy* alters the development of the global subject by creating a reverse bildungsroman that "invert[s] the immigrant narrative" (Medovoi 645). Shehzad's paranoia precipitates a voluntary return to Pakistan, even after miraculously landing a second Wall Street job moments before his departure. As Shehzad sheds his life in New York City, he encounters an obituary described as a "portrait of grief." The deceased individual, a young Muslim professional, is described like a quintessential man in the gray flannel suit—an insurance agent, highly educated, cultured, and filled to the brim with an excellent work ethic. Titled "No friend of fundamentalism," the obituary conjures the binary of what President Bush inaugurated as "good Muslim and bad Muslim" (Mamdani 2004), but implodes it by presenting the

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[96] See Ragini Tharoor Srinivasan "Unmoored: Passing, Slumming, and Return-Writing in New India" (2016) and Ulka Anjaria ""The Realist Impulse and the Future of Postcoloniality" (2016).

young professional as a relentless work object. The obituary also presents a moment of side-shadowing where the deceased man is an eerie, unrealized doppelganger to Shehzad's abandoned professional life. It meditates on the vulnerability of the ethnic body to endless violence as *both* good and bad Muslim, asking whether Mohammed "Mo" Shah will ever be properly mourned. While Shehzad offers a silent prayer to the man before leaving the United States forever, the obituary suggests that "'Mo' Shah" will remain invisible in a larger historical tableau.

The novel's epilogue offers an important coda to Shehzad's narrative, shifting to a second-person address of an unnamed immigrant landing in JFK and taking a cab out of the airport. The young person is full of optimism and dreams of achieving success in America, reinforcing a sense of fatality about the immigrant's impending failure. On the heels of Shehzad's exit, the unnamed immigrant's elation takes on a tragic hopefulness: "You are elated. *This is it, you think, America, land of the free, from sea to shining sea*" (*HB* 273, emphasis in original). In shifting the first-person perspective away from Shehzad towards a proverbial every-immigrant, Naqvi illustrates both the magnitude of the American dream and the regimes of racialization that will undercut the myth of American freedom. While the immigrant expects a narrative of self-improvement and upward mobility, the arrival—on a "BEAUTIFUL SEPTEMBER DAY!" (*HB* 274) as the radio announces—points to the high probability of failure and unfreedom that undergirds the dream.

Conclusion

These novels offer a mode of counter-professionalism that inhabits a central role of American work to examine the racial inequalities fostered by professionalism. The global South professional learns that post-industrial financialized employment heightens the alienation of the white-collar worker by asking for an erasure of racial feeling. Both Changez and Shehzad refuse to remake their Pakistani selves into immigrant Americans despite the promise of American success because they realize that their place in finance is predicated on the monetizing of vulnerability, beginning with the acceptance of own racial precarity as Muslims.

Even as *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Home Boy* are invoked as ethnic fiction about 9/11 and its after-effects on racialized bodies, the novels also gesture towards the overlooked global connections between financialized work and the rhetoric of terrorism. The global South finance novel argues that so-called peripheral regions often bear the inimical effects of First World constructions of labor as well as terror. When tackling representations of financialized work, literary writing reminds us that the effects of participating in immaterial labor continues to have lasting material outcomes. Global south finance novels show us that despite finance's abstracted structure in the social world, the "financialization of culture" (Blanton et al) has material costs that become hyper-legible through political feelings like reluctance and paranoia. The intersection of the finance and terror novel produces a new consideration of a *financialized* terror novel: the subgenre of the finance novel pivots from abstracted, First World capital to material consequences of terrorism on Third World and ethnic bodies.

Harleen Singh argues that 9/11 novels written from a postcolonial perspective are

better equipped to understand the event not as an "end to civilization" narrative but as a moment of strife in an already fractured world. While they remain equally critical about the postcolonial security state's rhetoric around terrorism and development, their main target is the sheer reach of Americanization that decimates far-flung local economies in the name of shoring up national development. These novels demonstrate that both American professionalism and a faith in the social ideal of work cannot address the racialization of immigrants in a post-9/11 world. In fact, the alt-right nationalist resurgence in the management of ethnic bodies as always already terrorists—travel bans for Islamic countries, racist vigilante executions of South Asian immigrants, the increasing probability of protectionist laws against H1B guest worker visas—intensifies a systematized post-9/11 paranoia around a purportedly unstable ethnic subject.

Hamid and Naqvi present a stark portrait of diasporic life in post-9/11 America, suggesting that American sociopolitical life must reckon with the serious critique articulated by the dissenting ethnic body without discounting it. Both novels choose a comprehensive exit from both American life and future citizenship as a radical gesture of refusal to be conscripted into the status quo of high finance. Even as they acknowledge the concept of a return to the homeland as a flawed proposition, especially given Pakistan's crumbling democratic infrastructure, they present the idea of exit as a radical literary trope that violates one of the standardized rules of the American novel: "that [literary representations of historical] atrocity abroad can serve as the motivating event behind a 'coming to America' story" (Robbins 1099). The intersections between finance and terror show that global South fantasies of assimilation and upward mobility are constantly confronted with the regime of the security state. And yet, while these diasporic

novels can choose to exit the American racial landscape, they also acknowledge the continued arrival of thousands of immigrants hoping to secure a better life. This new mode of the post-9/11 novel is a timely reminder that the promise of American freedom must be fiercely protected by addressing the complex regime of racialization around the Muslim body.

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