

Sacrificing Citizenship

On Muslims and Assimilation in a Neoliberal Frame

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The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice—in other words, the history of renunciation.

—Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Neoliberal de-democratization produces a subject . . . who may be more desirous of its own subjection and complicit in its subordination than any democratic subject could be said to be.

—Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-democratization”

Desiring subjection is the very thing *democracy* makes possible.

—Eva Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*

The Muslim Question

I start with these epigraphs because together they suggest that available forms of personhood, citizenship, and, indeed, so-called civilized being rely on a historically shifting relationship of subjects to their own subjection. Liberal democracies, authoritarian regimes, and interrupted decolonial formations around the globe all organize such a relation differently. The abject attachment to one’s own subjection cannot be explained away by well-worn theories of “false consciousness” if—to echo Sigmund Freud’s key insight signaled above by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer—libidinal renunciation is the very basis of social relations themselves. When does such ordinary renunciation, the basis of sociality, lapse into subjection? What kinds of renunciations are required of subjects minoritized or racialized in a given polity? In this article I analyze how renunciation and sacrifice

are useful categories for thinking through both the operations of minoritization, specifically of Muslims in the United States, and how these same categories also help us think past received terms of a racializing and xenophobic discourse. Following Freud, libidinal renunciation traverses the conscious and unconscious realms; it is not reducible to a decision but is attached to vectors of desire and promises of fulfillment. The projects of “civilizing” unruly beings, of socializing “barbaric” instincts, and of assimilating minority populations occupy conjoint economic, political, and psychological operations. For the “others” living within Europe, this phenomenon used to be called the “Jewish question,” a phenomenon that has increasingly morphed, in contemporary Western democracies, into the “Muslim problem.”¹

This “problem” was a salient feature of the political discourse in the 2016 election in the United States. One critical moment of that year’s Democratic National Convention would go viral. On the convention’s fourth day large screens once again displayed the words “Hillary’s America,” and soon Hillary Clinton appeared on those screens announcing, “If you want to see the best of America you need look no further than army captain Humayun Khan.” She spoke of Captain Khan being born in the United Arab Emirates, immigrating with his parents to the United States, and enlisting in the army after graduating from University of Virginia, and she continued:

In June 2004 he was serving in Iraq. One day while his infantry unit was guarding the gates of their base a suspicious vehicle appeared. Captain Khan told his troops to get back, but he went forward. He took ten steps toward the car before it exploded. Captain Khan was killed, but his unit was saved by his courageous act. Captain Khan was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. He was just twenty-seven years old. “We still wonder what made him take those ten steps,” Khan’s father said in a recent interview. “Maybe that’s the point,” he went on, “where all the values, all the service to his country, all the things he learned in this country kicked in. It was those values that made him take those ten steps. Those ten steps told us we did not make a mistake in moving to this country,” his father finished.²

Not only did those ten steps assure deadly assimilation into the space hollowed out for a full-fledged national subject, but his father’s words being voiced verbatim by Hillary Clinton also continued the logic of assimilative displacement. Khizr Khan is the grieving father who, a lawyer, has carried the American Constitution on his person at all times; whether as a form of talismanic protection or as a sign of accomplished assimilation remains unclear. He also spoke, in the interview Clinton cites, of taking his sons for regular visits to the Jefferson Memorial and there reading with his son

the words about fighting tyranny. In a separate interview Mr. Khan noted of his son that his fellow soldiers “did not call him Captain Khan. . . . They called him ‘our captain.’”³ Ten years later, in the interview Hillary Clinton cites, Khan makes sense of his son’s otherwise senseless death by means of long-held values gleaned from America’s story about itself.

In a political atmosphere where Donald Trump had promised a registry for Muslims and massive deportations of immigrants, the entrance of the Khan family on the political stage was a politically urgent, if not efficacious, corrective. What interests me about this case is not the patriotic rhetoric that is the bread and butter of political spectacle and pageantry but the series of displacements necessary for this rhetoric to do its work of suturing and assimilating, an American tale of self-improvement fatally reduced from twelve to ten steps. That the ten steps that led to Humayun’s tragic death become meaningful for a patriotic narrative is par for the course, but in the case of this Muslim American soldier those ten steps became critical for a national story about Muslim American assimilation, and in this media narrative Humayun’s parents, Ghazala and Khizr Khan, enter as grieving subjects. The ambivalence surrounding the very question of assimilation already inheres in the facts of the story, some as old as the very history of racial minorities in America. First, the soldier’s uniform, signifying commitment to patriotic ideals and also willingness to die for them, might secure assimilation. This promise has been made to Muslim Americans most recently, but it has a long history: it was also offered to African American soldiers during the Civil War in particular, and also to Native Americans and other minorities over the long history of US warfare. Second, death itself might, tragically and finally, ensure assimilation, and if not death then at least Muslim American grief, which is surely like the grief of any Gold Star family.

Yet unlike the grief of nonimmigrant Gold Star families, Ghazala and Khizr’s grief carries supplementary meanings, as a variant of “racial melancholia,” that structure of feeling among ethnic minorities that Anne Cheng refers to as “both technology and nightmare of the American Dream.”⁴ Yet the racial dimension of the Khans’ melancholia was to be simultaneously acknowledged and then displaced onto a narrative of racial and cultural assimilation, both a kind of whitening by means of death and an expansion of the racial circle of deaths that matter.⁵ Within this necropolitical discourse the word *death* could barely be uttered, replaced by the word *sacrifice* that, itself naming a process of substitution and displacement, took its place: Humayun sacrificed his own life for his country, and by extension, Ghazala and Khizr sacrificed their son for their country. While the language of sacrifice has circulated since time immemorial for rendering meaning unto death, how does sacrifice operate as a form of racial and cultural assimilation? How does the figure of the sacrificial

subject haunt the politics of populism in which assimilation has become a lightning rod of cultural politics?

The soldier is, perhaps, an ur-form of the sacrificial figure in nationalist discourse, but by no means are modern forms of sacrifice reducible to this figure, and it would be a mistake to assume so, since sacrifice is a social fact that encompasses far more than the business of making war. I would like to dislocate the sacrificial figure from the particular figure of the soldier in order to understand the multiple roles sacrifice plays in the politics of assimilation, roles that exceed the narrow ideological terms of the media theater of politics that requires the soldier as the ur-figure of sacrifice. Moreover, the general figure of the sacrificial victim becomes, in my analysis, a broader heuristic with which to understand not only the assimilation of Muslim minorities in the United States but also the psychological, economic, and political operations that produce a xenophobic white working class that, in a generalized rejection of all kinds of difference, also opposes Muslim minorities.

I myself arrived at the question of sacrifice and the assimilation of Muslim minorities years before I had heard of Ghazala and Khizr Khan, in the days after September 11, 2001, in the United States. That was also the last time that in the United States Muslim American assimilation became a highly visible concern, as hate speech and hate crimes against Muslim communities quickly surged. Within my own family, in light of certain racist incidents, there was increased concern with ensuring that we display some decal of the American flag on our car or clothing, precisely at a moment when we were made to feel alienated from the flag. When more than one family member explained in the same conversation the strange looks they had been getting on the streets and their purchases of flag decals for their cars, it seemed to me a kind of renunciation, an enforced repudiation of the sense that we were discrepant from the culture at large. Donning the image of the flag—on a vehicle, on one's person—was intended to conceal that feeling of discrepancy from a watchful public even as it became an ever-present reminder of that discrepancy to oneself. The double binds of this attempt at assimilation were in plain sight, at least for those wearing the flag as a form of protection. An Afghani restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the time displayed a large American flag next to its name, strategically covering over the word *Afghanistan* in the phrase “Cuisine from Afghanistan.” At a moment of heightened nationalism, the flag became for many Muslim Americans a talisman against violence in all its multifarious forms: physical attack, racist slur, subtle and overt discrimination, doubts as to one's true allegiance, and so on. No doubt the flag also communicated, in some instances, a fervent nationalism on the part of some Muslim Americans, and in others it may well have failed as a talisman altogether.

The difference between that historical moment and the contemporary moment is that warnings about incipient fascism have now entered mainstream discourse. But in 2001 leftist invocations of fascism and its deep congruence with capitalism came across as largely rhetorical, and it was inevitable that critique had to take on the terms that displaced these confluences onto pseudocultural debates about the “clash of civilization,” the “West and the rest,” and so forth. If these right-wing attempts to make sense of the globe reify the us-versus-them logic of civilizational discourse and assume cultural and racial difference to be resolved only by means of bombardment, deportation, drone attacks, and detention camps, these same right-wing truisms also generated enormous political and academic work on the left demonstrating how categories held so strictly apart are mutually implicated. Given the global rise of right-wing populism, and well before America’s 2016 election, the Left’s insistence on mutual constitution of seemingly disparate categories—demonstrated by tracking overlapping histories or by tracking the work of signification itself—to me started to feel like an overly familiar stance whose explanatory power was incontestable but whose explanations did not sufficiently displace the given terms. In a politically divided climate, how does one allow one’s own terms of analysis both to acknowledge the political division and to think past it at the same time? I am interested in how the “problem” of assimilation and Muslim minorities can be a test case in learning how to see past the polarizations, including the polarizations within and across populations, in which both the Left and the Right invest great energies.

Misrecognition

The discourse on Muslim assimilation in both Europe and the United States has now become ever-present and repetitive. It evokes, of course, a historically earlier concern with the so-called Jewish question, and scholars such as Saba Mahmood and Aamir R. Mufti have done some widely divergent critical work that connects current forms of minoritization with their nineteenth-century prehistory.⁶ What does the solicitation to assimilate signify, precisely? How do we understand the demands that it makes on the subject in difference? How do we begin to understand the psychic life of the political-economic problem named by the phrase *the Jewish question*?

Assimilation signifies the mark of a religious and cultural difference, but more often than not it also marks racial difference.⁷ Whether rendered as praise by liberals or as cultural crisis by conservatives, assimilation calls attention to the rift of difference that is deemed threatening to the universalizing discourse of citizenship. The very call for assimilation raises the specter of the radically foreign; as an imperative it presupposes a particu-

larity that is fundamentally threatening. Within recent scholarship much of the work on assimilation of Muslim minorities takes up the question in the context of France, a country with one of the largest Muslim populations in Europe. Scholars such as Joan Wallach Scott, Sarah Mazouz, John Bowen, Nacira Guénif-Souliamas, Alex Hargreaves, and Didier Fassin have done brilliant work questioning the very notion of assimilation (or, in French, *intégration*) through fields as diverse as philosophy, history, anthropology, and political theory.⁸ This scholarship provides keen and subtle insights into multiple aspects of the discourse on French integration/assimilation. These scholars all agree that in France talk about assimilation consistently reproduces the very difference that it claims it wishes to surpass, and in this production of difference the discourse contributes to a nationalist mythos around the French Republic's unique form of universalism and secularism. One of the questions that this rich oeuvre of scholarship around assimilation leaves unanswered for me is how one might conceive of concrete psychological, economic, and political linkages *between* those who demonize the Muslim minority populations and the Muslim populations themselves. This is one of the stakes of my argument here, to understand how populations otherwise politically opposed to each other are also bound to each other by means of neoliberal forms of subject formation.

Academic fields in the United States, such as ethnic studies, post-colonial studies, and African American studies, have been locations of ongoing and widely varied conversations about the very constitution of difference.⁹ Since Frantz Fanon, and arguably since Sigmund Freud (and before him Georg Hegel), the mutual constitution of categories of dominance and subjection has become well established. Even a conservative theorist like Carl Schmitt builds his reflections on sovereignty on the fundamental dyad of friend/enemy that must become the bedrock for statecraft as well as political theology.¹⁰ This behooves us to consider the latest turn in racial and cultural politics in the West, where Muslims are the enemy du jour, singled out and attacked by right-wing movements that are on the rise globally.

My wager is that Schmittian formulations of friend/enemy and their surrogate concepts, such as Islamophobia, have enormous power, but they also have to be supplemented with an understanding of the material conditions in relation to which the racist epithets appear as forms of misrecognition. Such misrecognition works in two directions: the person leveling the racist insult misrecognizes not only the person they are targeting but also themselves. I have in mind xenophobic supporters of Brexit and the working-class and middle-class white populations who support Trump—they misrecognize their own relations to their material conditions of existence. My invocation of Louis Althusser's definition of ideol-

ogy, as the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,¹¹ on the one hand conserves the ideological nature of the calls for assimilation (which is, at bottom, a mediated form of the alarm at difference), and on the other hand traces this ideological misrecognition to material conditions of existence as they exist in practices, state apparatuses, and relations of production.

I would like to emphasize here the term *relation*, and not just in the sense in which the word is familiar to us as the mutually constitutive relation between black and white, Christian/Muslim, and so on. That is to say, I intend *relation* to refer to such mutual constitution and such forms of self-consolidation by means of others, but I also emphasize that such narratives are produced in tandem with one's own relation to material conditions of existence. It is this latter relation, available to consciousness as an imaginary one, that situates some subjects as strange unruly specimens in need of assimilation into some imagined and idealized form of dominant culture. It is, in other words, the imaginary relationship to one's material conditions that feeds xenophobic and racist hatred, on the one hand, and that, on the other hand, issues the call to assimilation for Muslim minorities as one of the key rites of passage for participation in the liberal state. Whether leveled as a racist slur or cast as an invitation to become similar to the dominant culture, such stances occupy a similar imaginary.¹² The slur and the invitation share the same psychic, political, and economic space.

Perhaps this is why the preoccupation with assimilation comes from both the left and the right. The laws regulating the wearing of headscarves and burkinis (France), the building of new minarets (Switzerland), and the liberal "outreach" to Muslim immigrant communities (England) are all part of a constellation around the cultural assimilation of so-called outsiders. Moreover, it is no accident that, in literary studies, for example, the most salable narratives about migration are those that depict a sentimental struggle toward assimilation. South Asian diasporic fiction seems particularly afflicted with this tendency, consoling its largely white readership that underneath the brown skin of their doctors and lawyers lives a potential white American whose struggles resemble their own. If the racialized subject had been seen as an exemplar of a species, this bourgeois fiction attempts a facile correction of that misrecognition by marshaling interiority and narratives of belonging, to assure the reader that the specimen at issue here is really a variant of the majority: immigrants are relatable; their heart is really white, and they are therefore specimens of the same species as the reader. A careful analysis of the entwining of class and race in this fiction's games of desires would take up at least an essay of its own. In the space I have here I merely want to indicate a tendency within South Asian American fiction to foreground renunciation as a privileged form of

assimilation, usually a sublated form in which being true to one's racial/cultural particularity winds up carrying the truth of one's ever-present Americanness.¹³ Rarely questioning the logic of narcissism that assumes assimilation as a desirable end, such fictions do one better by assuring us that immigrants are always-already assimilable.

Narcissism

The preponderance of this concern about assimilation has a long history in the West, as I have suggested, that stretches back to the so-called Jewish question in Europe. The easing of restrictions on Jewish populations across Europe, from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, was concurrent with the consolidation of the liberal state's demand that its subjects split off their existence as citizens from their private religious existence. The public/private split became isomorphic with the state/religion split, and, as the liberal narrative assured, all citizens would appear before state law as abstract citizen-subjects (the public), and before their Gods as concrete individuals (the private). Karl Marx, in "On the Jewish Question," astutely calls this logic out to be a sham because, as he argued, "the democratic state, the real state, needs no religion for its political fulfillment. It can, rather, do without religion because it fulfills the human basis of religion in a secular way."¹⁴ The secular state is, in other words, analogous to the sphere of religion, serving as a Christ-like intermediary between humans and their freedom. Thus the putatively secular liberal state embeds religion all the more firmly in the fabric of society by means of the private/public divide, and neither side, in Marx's searing analysis, is outside the sphere of religiosity.

The subject split between citizenship and a religious fold is but a moment in the historical unfolding of freedom, yet the liberal state is poised to make invisible the inequities it claims to have addressed, thereby endowing them with the obdurate force of natural divisions. After the Jewish Holocaust had catastrophically shown one result of liberalism and the enlightenment reason that underwrote it, Adorno and Horkheimer, in "Elements of Anti-Semitism," put the problem thus: "By assuming the unity of humanity to have been already realized in principle, the liberal thesis serves as an apology for the existing order."¹⁵ Marx had called out for a true emancipation that would abolish the distinctions between religion and state, public and private, and make possible a collective existence of people as a species-being. The so-called Jewish question, in other words, was more than about religion; it was about one's whole social being, which, under capitalism, is abstracted from and then made formally equal for the purposes of the state. Just over a hundred years after Marx was writing, the Jewish question resolved in the Holocaust. And soon there-

after, the post-Holocaust management of Europe's Jewish question, in displacing Palestinians from their homes, only performed once again the racist logics of the question itself.

Decades after the Second World War, the world remains, as Adorno and Horkheimer described it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, "radiant with triumphant calamity."¹⁶ The contemporary calls for the assimilation of Muslims in Western societies happens against this historical background, and the signs of fascism we witness now are not a return of the repressed, because the ground from which it springs was never demolished. The calls for Muslims' assimilation are a continuation of an ongoing tradition of producing and regulating difference. The Muslim, like the Jew not very long ago, is a figure of nonidentity, constantly hailed as a figure not entirely congruent with the abstract citizen and yet by that very hailing reified as intrinsically different, a logic of differentiation that may one day situate any citizen in an ambiguous relation to the state.

In his essay "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," Adorno notes, "The question of why people love what is like themselves and hate what is different is rarely asked *seriously* enough."¹⁷ In light of this widespread psychological, political, and cultural impulse to love what is like oneself, the concern with assimilating Muslim immigrants takes on a special significance. Adorno consistently associates fascist-capitalist propaganda, his object of analysis, with a fundamental narcissism: the sense of belonging to the in-group endows one with a feeling of being higher and purer than those who are excluded. The call for assimilation conceals this narcissism and casts itself as a liberal project, since it holds out the possibility of bringing the outsider in, of effacing the offensive differences and granting the outsider the privileges of being on the inside. This is, at least, its putative promise—a promise of narcissistic fulfillment.

The double bind here is, of course, that Muslim Americans, subject to forms of racial injury, may well find themselves captivated by the promises of assimilation, whose libidinal charge is well known.¹⁸ As Freud notes in his classic 1914 essay "On Narcissism": "It seems very evident that another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love."¹⁹ As Fanon's detailed analysis of racial injury in *Black Skin, White Masks* demonstrates, narcissistic injury, in all of its varieties, is one of the most pervasive ways in which the racialized person's psyche is disfigured by the dominant culture. Freud's account of narcissism suggests that a certain tendency toward regression necessarily haunts narcissism, even when narcissists take not themselves as an object of love but an external object: a lover, an ideal ego, a cause, or any combination of these. This is because even when libido is directed toward an object and not toward the self, that

object might represent some aspect of oneself that was once loved or an aspect that one never possessed but wished to possess: “The ego ideal is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego. The subject’s narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value. As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shown himself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed.”²⁰ This incapacity to give up a familiar libidinal position, of an infantile primary narcissism, is the source of regression.²¹

In his account of mass psychology, Freud would return to his thinking on narcissism to speculate that what binds a collectivity together also causes it to act out in regressive and destructive forms. He defines a *mass* as “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in place of their ego ideal and consequently identify with each other.”²² Critical to this narcissistic identification is a renunciation of one’s own self-interest, a kind of self-sacrifice, if you will. Something must be given up to gain the privilege of being on the inside. Along with self-interest, what individuals renounce once they integrate into a mass is their own difference from one another; what the ego loses in a sense of its own uniqueness is made up for in a magnified sense of invincibility and power. Already in the earlier essay on narcissism Freud had clarified that “a man who has exchanged his narcissism for homage to a high ideal has not necessarily on that account succeeded in sublimating his libidinal instincts,” which is to say that these unsublimated libidinal instincts, while diverted, remain in some critical fashion unchecked.²³ Striving toward an ideal and regressing toward an infantile libidinal position can be one and the same from a psychoanalytic point of view.

With respect to an ego ideal, self-renunciation is the very means of libidinal attachment, whether to paradise, the *führer*, or liberty and freedom. This means that, psychoanalytically speaking, there is no contradiction between being self-sacrificing and being narcissistic. This also implies that renunciation is a general process that affects the entire population, though differentially. It includes Muslim minorities and it also includes the libidinal politics of contemporary populism, in which a white majority celebrates together the expulsion of “foreign” elements within its midst. Freud’s conceptualization of narcissism as an operation concerning individuals but also concerning group psychology is remarkably supple, lending insight into populations that might be politically opposed but share analogous forms of interpellation and subjection. The white working class and also the bourgeois white racist participate in the narcissism at the heart of group psychology and so does the Muslim minority; one could say the white racist and the Muslim subject are bound together,

and are in a bind due to a kind of displaced racial narcissism. This psychological dimension has its political and economic corollaries, and I will analyze them shortly.

For national culture, assimilation—a fundamentally narcissistic project—is often a call for such renunciation and self-sacrifice, sometimes explicitly so. Moreover, renunciation is the very basis of what Freud called civilization, hence Adorno and Horkheimer’s succinct statement in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that “the history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice—in other words, the history of renunciation.”²⁴ If, for Freud, sacrifice lies at the very origin of the social and the sacrificial victim becomes assimilated into the collective by means of ritual, how do we read the kind of self-renunciation required for cultural assimilation and its attendant narcissistic pleasures, on the one hand, and the production of majoritarian politics (whether xenophobic or liberal, with its own attendant narcissism), on the other?

Sacrifice

Some clarifications seem critical to make at this juncture, about method as well as about definitions. I have been shuttling between histories—the Jewish question of the nineteenth century, the Holocaust, 9/11, the Clinton/Trump campaigns of 2016—and before I delve into the ancient past in a reading of Adorno and Horkheimer’s interpretation of Odysseus (an interpretation that was itself motivated by World War II), I would like to say a few words about my historical assumptions.

I take as a heuristic Freud’s insight that libidinal renunciation is at the basis of what has been called *civilization*; as a heuristic it is similar in its theoretical function to what Louis Althusser would claim in his essay on ideology, that ideology in general “has no history.”²⁵ This is to say, like ideology, renunciation is transhistorical if we are considering merely the fact of renunciation. The mechanism and specific processes of renunciation, however, are historically contingent, and today, when considering the “Muslim question,” to understand it we must attend to contemporary realities like neoliberalism, xenophobia, and racism. The notion of citizenship at the heart of the Muslim or Jewish question itself indicates a historical process, and citizenship’s partial basis in renunciation is worth considering now more than ever, when it is being steadily eroded by neoliberal techniques of governance (more on this below).

My historical method takes inspiration from the Frankfurt school, in particular from Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, and this influence means that the distant (or near) past can be brought into proximity with the contemporary moment as mutually explicative of each other. Such proximity emphasizes epistemology—or insight—and does not suggest

historical continuity but, rather, takes no position on continuity because there is no Archimedean point in history from which to decide on continuity or discontinuity across, for example, the place of renunciation from Homer to Khizr Khan. So while I remain committed to history and to understanding historical contingency, I am not committed to historicism if historicism means that the distant past cannot elucidate the present and vice versa.

With respect to defining my terms, *renunciation*, put simply, is the surrender of one's own libidinal satisfaction for the sake (the renouncer hopes) of experiencing a fuller *jouissance*. In the Freudian scene of subjects who seek to gratify their narcissism by striving toward an ideal, a striving forward that is also a form of regression, renunciation promises the pleasures of primary narcissism. Under particular historical conditions renunciation can take the form of self-sacrifice (a particular variety of renunciation). This kind of libidinal attachment does not in itself guarantee the shape of one's politics: self-sacrifice might well take the form, for example, of a hunger strike against unjust conditions of existence. Or, to take a politically opposite example, in Hannah Arendt's account of totalitarianism, self-sacrifice manifests as a collective suicidal tendency that underwrites totalitarian rule. Arendt argues that, obeying the logic of a putatively suprahistorical law or force, people under totalitarian regimes "may today be those who eliminate the 'unfit races and individuals' or the 'dying classes and decadent people' and tomorrow be those who, for the same reasons, must themselves be sacrificed. What totalitarian rule therefore needs . . . is a means to prepare individuals equally well for the role of executioner and the role of victim."²⁶

Reading Arendt's account of totalitarianism psychoanalytically—that is, explicitly against the grain, given her antipathy to psychoanalysis—means to read it as a detailed account of collective regression. By aligning oneself with a suprahistorical force such as the march of history or the operations of nature, one's invincibility can even take the form of self-sacrifice: you outlive death by dying in the service of a force that is, paradoxically, both a collective ideal (e.g., an Aryan nation) and an inexorable result of history. The political unconscious of totalitarian regimes is such that it offers its populace a chance to "cheat" death by sacrificing oneself.

In the totalitarian social forms that Arendt analyzes, terror is the operative principle. We can deduce—continuing to use language that Arendt would frown upon—that the libidinal renunciations once required of all "civilized" subjects in any social formation here take the historical form of the will to kill for an ideal that is the corollary of the eagerness to sacrifice oneself. This suggests that sacrificing another and sacrificing oneself are intimately linked as social and psychological operations. In Trump's America, this takes the form of racial resentment among white

communities that vote against universal healthcare and vote for gun laws, cuts to education, and the deleterious environmental policies that disproportionately affect these very communities.²⁷ Self-sacrifice, too, can operate by means of aggression. Surely the aggression underlying self-sacrifice is not restricted to the totalitarian or Trumpian frame and also includes instances of people sacrificing themselves in the name of justice, protest acts that channel aggression already present within a social formation. Moreover, the continuities across totalitarian formations and liberal democratic formations under capitalism are as important as the discontinuities.

David Harvey notes the authoritarian tendencies of our contemporary era of neoliberalism, not only in the Cold War collusion of Western liberal democracies with authoritarian regimes (or, indeed, sometimes their very birth in the global South) but also its deep antidemocratic and authoritarian tendencies wherever this political-economic rationality takes hold.²⁸ Eva Cherniavsky and Wendy Brown have both written extensively on what remains of citizenship after the erosion of the demos by neoliberalism.²⁹ I turn to the problem of citizenship under neoliberalism later in my argument, but even before the rise of neoliberalism there were already signs that midcentury European fascisms arose out of the very capitalist-democratic formations to which they appeared opposed. Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* remains one of the most detailed accounts of these affinities between capitalism and fascism; according to this account, these affinities have as much to do with Enlightenment reason as they do with the historically transformed nature of sacrifice and renunciation.

Adorno and Horkheimer's account of the renunciations at the heart of the modern subject's historical emergence proves instructive for understanding the place of the contemporary discourse around assimilation, whether cast as a liberal project or decried as an irrelevancy in a fit of populist rage. In their reading of Odysseus in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, it is self-sacrifice itself that holds the key to subjectivity under modernity.³⁰ Reading assimilation through Adorno and Horkheimer reveals this to be at bottom a solicitation to become a sacrificial victim: "In Homer the gift which accompanies hospitality falls midway between exchange and sacrifice";³¹ assimilation is one name for such a gift, another instance of sacrifice taking on a secular form. For the subject in difference the alternatives are stark: either to self-sacrifice or to become victim to forms of political exposure, that is, to become "civilized" or to risk being cast as a pariah and exposed to all kinds of danger. Assimilation is akin to forms of libidinal renunciations that Freud associated with the very possibility of the social, or "the introversion of sacrifice."³² Moreover, where Odysseus is concerned, he outwits gods and monsters through sheer cunning,

and his cunning rests on his capacity for self-sacrifice—he escapes being sacrificed by sacrificing himself, similar to Arendt’s description of the subject of totalitarian politics. After all, “the sacrifice itself . . . appears as a human contrivance intended to control the gods, who are overthrown precisely by the system created to honor them.”³³

The troubles Odysseus faces are each resolved with a fundamental renunciation: in the Cyclops episode he must deny his own identity and in fact call himself “Nobody” in order to survive; immune to Circe’s spells, he seduces her by renouncing his position as a being coeval with nature; and so on. At each narrative turn he preserves himself by renouncing his self. At the same time, the denial of nature in oneself sets the stage for the domination of both human and nonhuman nature. The destructive nature of this domination is revealed most tellingly when a bloodbath ensues at the end of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus mercilessly kills the suitors who had been trying to woo his wife. Then, upon hearing of some maids who had proven unfaithful to the household and susceptible to the suitors’ charms, Odysseus orders the maids to clean the blood and gore recently spilled by him in the hall and then be marched out of the house to be killed themselves:

As doves or thrushes spread their wings to fly
home to their nests, but someone sets a trap—
they crash into a net, a bitter bedtime;
just so the girls, their heads all in a row,
were strung up with the noose around their necks
to make their death an agony. They gasped,
feet twitching for a while, but not for long.³⁴

Odysseus’s judgment knows no mercy. Adorno and Horkheimer close their reflections on Odysseus by lingering on this dramatic moment of the hanged maids who “gasped, feet twitching for a while, but not for long,” concluding that these are “subjugated women, who, under the aegis of justice and law, are thrust into the realm from which Odysseus the judge has escaped.”³⁵ This realm is one of debasement, exposure, and eventual death. In other words, for Odysseus the very cunning that preserves him is the ground from which violence can be enacted toward others.³⁶

If assimilation is a call to self-sacrifice, to become like Odysseus, it also implies that it is a hailing to become the cunning subjects of modernity, who are masters of their own passions and yet subject to extraordinary forms of regression, indulging in the most extreme forms of domination and violence. How dark is a political moment that holds out *this* ideal to immigrants and minorities as the means to ensure some supposed protection from a fundamental exposure to violence.³⁷ My wager in making this claim might seem wild, but two key aspects of Adorno and Hork-

heimer's analysis of Odysseus are helpful in situating this claim: first, their reading of sacrifice situates it as a historically distinct process; second, Odysseus himself is a dialectical figure. The claim that assimilation is an invitation to an Odyssean form of being might not seem so far-fetched if the historical character of sacrifice and the dialectical figuration of Odysseus are considered together.

So first, sacrifice itself names a historical process in Adorno and Horkheimer's account, one that is radically altered by enlightenment reason. In the chapter titled "The Concept of Enlightenment," they note,

The substitution which takes place in sacrifice marks a step toward discursive logic. Even though the hind which was offered up for the daughter, the lamb for the firstborn, necessarily still had qualities of its own, it already represented the genus. It manifested the arbitrariness of the specimen. But the sanctity of the here and now, the uniqueness of the chosen victim which coincides with its representative status, distinguishes it radically, makes it non-exchangeable even in the exchange.³⁸

Adorno and Horkheimer go on to demonstrate a radically antinostalgic view of myth, magic, and mimesis. But at this textual instance the particularity of the sacrificial victim, the thing that makes it different from being a mere representative of a specimen, is what makes that victim "non-exchangeable even in the exchange." In a later historical era, the fetish character of the commodity will affect the conditions of knowledge such that the very nature of sacrifice will change. As Adorno puts in elsewhere, "In the concentration camps it was no longer an individual who died, but a specimen."³⁹ Racism and nationalism are particularly destructive forms of identity thinking, coercively assimilating things in the world into concepts. Such thinking attends political orders that perpetuate forms of life that I call *specimen-being*, to coin a term drawing on Adorno and Horkheimer's reflections on the modern peculiarities of racism.

In administered society, the particularity that might remain inassimilable, that critical difference of the thing from its concept, might well be a saving grace, but never in a fashion that stands outside the conditions of knowledge and never without its own pitfalls. It will not do to hold out difference as itself a kind of virtue. After all, it is critical to remember that Odysseus is a rigorously dialectical figure, both victim and perpetrator: at one point in their analysis Adorno and Horkheimer describe the fleeing Odysseus who hubristically announces his real name to the wounded Cyclops as already bearing "features of the Jew who, in fear of death continues to boast of a superiority which itself stems from the fear of death."⁴⁰ Self-renunciation, death, and the narcissism that makes one aspire to being in the in-group are features of the dominant as well as the dominated.

There is yet another dialectical turning we might note in Odysseus if we bring the lessons of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* into our contemporary neoliberal moment: not only would it make sense that Odyssean forms of being—modernity’s template for a gratified personhood—are held out as an ideal ego for immigrants, but this solicitation to self-sacrifice is held out to everyone. Wendy Brown, in *Undoing the Demos*, discusses one of the symptoms of neoliberalism as a political and economic ordering of subjects that situates the body politic as a whole as a sacrificial reserve. She is not concerned with Adorno, Odysseus, or the dialectic, but like Adorno, she takes up the subject of a particular (and peculiar) “form of reason”—neoliberalism—that is currently reconfiguring the world. Neoliberalism converts the political character of “democracy’s constituent elements” into economic ones. Heretofore noneconomic spheres and activities are increasingly monetized and economized, and democracy is itself endangered by these processes. At the close of her bleak and powerful account that critically draws on Michel Foucault’s work on neoliberalism, Brown analyzes how ordinary citizens are expected to take part in “shared sacrifice” for the betterment of macroeconomic health. These shared sacrifices might take the form of losing one’s job or benefits, of curtailed investment in education, infrastructure, public transport, or public services, and so forth. Brown writes, “Regardless, as active citizenship is slimmed to tending oneself as responsabilized human capital, sacrificial citizenship expands to include anything related to the requirements and imperatives of the economy.”⁴¹ The neoliberal call for self-sacrifice, generalized to the whole populace, threatens to repress political dissension; its austerity measures assume and produce identification with the supreme power called the economy, whose life-giving benefits are not guaranteed to us in spite of such sacrifice.

Eva Cherniavsky develops this line of thought in her book *Neocitizenship: Political Culture after Democracy*, analyzing the implications for citizenship itself when neoliberalism aims to “*dissolve* the relation of subjects to governments”—that is, she continues, neoliberalism “operates to *disabuse* a people of the notion that the institutions of government maintain any obligation to their collective welfare.”⁴² Providing an insightful corrective to Wendy Brown’s more nostalgic tendencies (Brown’s account of neoliberalism assumes it is a fall from democratic grace), Cherniavsky notes that “the hallmark achievement of political modernity” is democracy’s seductive promise that “the ruler and ruled are the same,” making it historically possible “to cathect subjection as its obverse, as our emancipation from arbitrary and externally imposed authority.”⁴³ Such a reality is certainly borne out by Arlie Russell Hochschild’s recent ethnography of poor, mostly white communities in southwestern Louisiana (a stronghold of the Tea Party), tellingly reviewed in the *New York Review of Books*

under the title “Inside the Sacrifice Zone.”²⁴⁴ Taken together, Brown’s, Cherniavsky’s, and Hochschild’s accounts of the erosion of citizenship under neoliberalism imply that, within a neoliberal ordering of life, it becomes difficult to say whether people are sacrificed or they engage in self-sacrifice. The distinction between the two becomes difficult to sustain, for example, when the same population that denies climate change and presses for antiregulatory legislation is subject to the very ravages of environmental pollution perpetuated by these stances. This is why Brown argues that “neoliberal de-democratization produces a subject . . . who may be more desirous of its own subjection and complicit in its subordination than any democratic subject could be said to be.”²⁴⁵ With Cherniavsky’s analysis in mind, we can say that neoliberalism produces subjects who take the democratic subjects’ attachment to their own subjection to a new extreme, one that threatens democratic forms themselves. As in Freud’s account of narcissistic fulfillment, where narcissism and self-sacrifice did not constitute a contradiction, and in Adorno and Horkheimer’s account of Odysseus, where vulnerability and invincibility operate in tandem with each other, for subjects under neoliberalism it appears that sadism and masochism are indissociable, especially when citizenship no longer confers the protections that liberalism had promised.

Brown’s account of sacrifice as part and parcel of a neoliberal ordering of people and profit is the contemporary background against which the solicitations to assimilate Muslim immigrants are taking place. To return to the Althusserian cast of my initial formulation, neoliberalism is the grounding condition against which contemporary solicitations for Muslim assimilation have to be read. A dialectical reading of sacrifice like the one Adorno and Horkheimer offer has enormous analytical potential for considering the work of substitution, displacement, and violence (all aspects of sacrifice) that attends so much of the politics around racial and cultural difference.

Understanding self-sacrifice as the very formation of modern subjectivity has politically salient implications: in addition to freeing us from thinking that the minority subject’s difference is in and of itself a redemptive or interruptive feature, it creates a productive possibility of thinking solidarity across the outsider/insider divide by means of the figure of sacrifice—if one takes up generalized sacrifice as something that ought to be critiqued, across collectivities, differences, and divisions. As Adorno and Horkheimer explain, “The representative character of sacrifice, glorified by fashionable irrationalists, cannot be separated from the deification of the sacrificial victim, from the fraudulent priestly rationalization of murder through the apotheosis of the chosen victim.”²⁴⁶ Such “priestly rationalization” of sacrifice occurs every time a war widow stands at another State of the Union speech, or when the neoliberal priests of the Chicago

school of economic theory justify the curtailment of public goods and services. Such fraudulent apotheosis would have us believe that the shared sacrifice after an economic meltdown has somehow elevated the sacrificial victim who must now make do with less as a result of the sacrifice. In the case of the Muslim minority, it suggests that the assimilated Muslim will benefit fully from the secular democratic institutions and juridical structures that protect citizens even as citizenship is itself being eroded through neoliberal techniques and austerity measures, measures that have only proven to incite xenophobia.

In other words, there is a complex relay between the self-sacrifice necessary for the operations of neoliberal rationality and the calls for immigrants' assimilation. Even Hillary Clinton claimed during her 2016 campaign that Muslim citizens are critical to the polity because they might serve as eyes and ears for the majority—that is, their participation in civil life is important because they protect the majority from bad Muslims.⁴⁷ So let me be clear: the sacrifice involved in general monetized sacrificial citizenship on the one hand and immigrant assimilation on the other are not equivalent sacrifices, but they are affiliative or analogous ones. What these two forms of self-renunciation entail is that, while the white majority is solicited along with everyone else to sacrifice for the sake of the economy, that self-sacrifice has the nature of a universal demand made to the universal citizen-subject (however spectral under neoliberalism); for Muslim minorities, however, the self-sacrifice entailed in assimilation works against the fulfillment of what Marx referred to in his essay on the Jewish question as species-being—instead, assimilative self-sacrifice perpetuates the existence of Muslim minorities as a specimen-being.

Assimilation might well be the most cunning form in which the regime of specimen-being reproduces itself. Reworking Marx's critical insights for our neoliberal moment means taking stock of this process, in which the minoritized subject is produced consistently as a subject in difference, but with a key shift from nineteenth-century liberalism in that the state no longer offers the biopolitical protections it once did. Because the withdrawal of these democratic and representative protections happens for everyone, and the call for assimilation consistently produces minority subjects as specimen-being, Marx's larger point about the formal adequation of people to capital, and to the bad faith underlying the racist framing of the Jewish question, remains relevant today to the Muslim question. The psychoanalytic understanding of renunciation in *The Odyssey*, as a means for inculcating a destructive form of cunning, points both to the psychic life of capitalist abstraction, to forms of sadism that attended the discourse on the Jewish question itself (and continue today in discussions of the Muslim question), and to the solicitation (addressed to all) to take part in a potentially destructive form of collective narcissism.

While sacrifice for the sake of the economy and sacrifice for the sake of imagined acceptance into a larger collectivity are obviously forms of renunciation that are inflected differently from each other, what these two forms of self-sacrifice have in common is what all sacrifice entails—as sacrifice they are marks, in Adorno and Horkheimer’s words, “of an historical catastrophe, an act of violence done equally to human beings and to nature”; both populations, subjugated in different ways, are solicited to internalize a behavior pattern “by which they reenact against themselves the wrong done to them in order to be able to bear it.”⁴⁸ The introjection of a self-annihilating agency is common to Muslim minorities as well as to the xenophobic majority that views Muslims as a form of specimen-being. Indeed, the differences between these two positions are clearer and easier to grasp than their similarities. First, xenophobes are offered libidinal satisfaction by the drumbeat of the racist political rally (a scene of mass regression with a terrible and repetitive history), a general sanction for the expression of their racism, and a privileged refusal to sacrifice for those “others” whom they believe are, to use Slavoj Žižek’s language, stealing their *jouissance*.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, minority subjects are offered the impossible and abyssal project of assimilation at a time when its promises cannot be delivered by the very political and economic order that demands it.

It would be politically shortsighted, however, not to consider the terms of affiliation across these different forms of sacrifice. Considering these terms of affiliation is not a call for empathy or sympathy but an inquiry into how a particular economic and political order gives rise to analogies and figures that prove instructive. Both Muslim Americans and xenophobic Trump supporters who aim to rid the country of them are offered similar narcissistic satisfactions by means of sacrifice. The solicitation to self-sacrifice on the part of minority subjects (in the call for assimilation) is part and parcel of a dialectic of modernity that requires self-sacrifice as a normative ideal for bourgeois subjectivity, holding out narcissistic satisfaction as a promise to all.⁵⁰ Insofar as self-sacrifice is writ large, it creates the conditions for thinking possible lines of solidarity across difference. But sacrificial citizenship is also poised to accentuate and reify racial and cultural difference, magnifying xenophobia and buttressing white supremacy on the one hand, while on the other hand condemning minorities to the regime of specimen-being through the false promise of assimilation. Hence the affective divisions in contemporary life: for one population, the substitutive satisfactions of openly espoused racist rhetoric and the easy pleasures of publicly voiced and enraged sadism; for another, the grief of not being able to pass and the grief of successfully passing.

Notes

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1. See Bayoumi, *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?*
2. PBS News Hour, “2016 Democratic Convention, Day 4,” 5:43:23–5:45:07. For the full segment concerning Humayun Khan, including his father Khizr Khan’s speech, see 5:43:20–5:52:48.
3. McCrummen, “Looking for Logic amid the Pain.”
4. Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*, xi.
5. I am deliberately echoing Black Lives Matter here. In the expansion of the racial circle of deaths that matter in the discourse on assimilation, it seems that nationalism remains the limit on lives mattering: Muslim American deaths would matter, but Iraqi, Afghan, Somali, Yemeni, Palestinian, and Rohingya deaths would seem not to matter in this discourse.
6. Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age*; Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*.
7. Interestingly, in the early twentieth century Arab American migrants in America campaigned to be counted as “white” in the census. This would lead to an ongoing debate and contestation within Arab communities about their racial formation in the United States. See Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*. In January 2017 the US government rejected a proposal by the Arab American community to add a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) category to the 2020 census. Harb, “US Census Fails to Add MENA Category.”
8. See Shohat and Stam, *Race in Translation*; Scott, *Sex and Secularism*; Scott, *Politics of the Veil*; Mazouz, *La République et ses autres*; Bowen, “How the French State Justifies Controlling Muslim Bodies”; Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves*; Guénif-Souliamas, *Des Beurettes*; Hargreaves, “Beurgeoisie”; Hargreaves, *Multi-ethnic France*; and Fassin, “Compassion and Repression.”
9. Scholarly work on Muslim American populations is wide ranging in its discussion of the differential nature of this minority population, including its racial diversity: from African American Muslims, to the South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Arab diaspora. The experiences of these various populations, including the calls for their assimilation, are differentiated by race, histories of migration, class, etc. When I refer to Muslim Americans I do not intend to treat the population as a single undifferentiated category, but I am interested in the symptomatic way that *Islam* and *Muslim* circulate within cultural politics as signs of unruliness. For scholarly accounts concerning Muslim Americans, see Rana, *Terrifying Muslims*; Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*; and Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim*.
10. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.
11. See Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”
12. Rey Chow discusses a corollary process she calls “coercive mimeticism” whereby the ethnic subject is contained through solicitation to be authentically ethnic: coercive mimeticism is “a general cross-ethnic mechanism that provides the connection among otherwise disjointed events such as pedagogical cultivation and circulation of arcane knowledge; the activist clamor for institutional space for under-represented disciplines” and governmental biopolitical efforts to contain ethnic subjects. The paradox of “coercive mimeticism” is that while it demands and encourages “authentic” ethnic performances of the self as its own mimicry, it also engenders “the

profound sense of self-hatred and impotence among ethnics.” Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 127.

13. How this fiction articulates with the discourse around Asian American model minority citizenship is a question for future research.

14. Marx, *Selected Writings*, 11.

15. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 138.

16. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1.

17. Adorno, *Culture Industry*, 143.

18. Khan, *American Family*, is an extended account of being captivated with America and all it is supposed to stand for. Classic literary narratives of assimilation are some of the subtlest accounts of desire. See Larsen, *Passing*; Silko, *Ceremony*; and Ellison, *Invisible Man*.

19. Freud, *Standard Edition*, 14:89.

20. Freud, *Standard Edition*, 14:94.

21. This might be one, albeit crude, way of formulating the problem of right-wing populisms currently emerging in Europe and the United States, as symptomatic of a narcissistic injury caused by the loss of an older form of hegemony (colonialism, superpower status, etc.).

22. Freud, *Standard Edition*, 18:116.

23. Freud, *Standard Edition*, 14:94.

24. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13.

25. Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 107.

26. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 349.

27. Several recent books have analyzed this phenomenon, with varying emphases on racial resentment. See in particular Metz, *Dying of Whiteness*; and Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*.

28. Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 37–38.

29. Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Brown, “American Nightmare”; Brown, “Sacrificial Citizenship.”

30. For an excellent account of sacrifice in Adorno and Horkheimer, see Bargu, “Odysseus Unbound.” Also see Fleming, “Odysseus and Enlightenment”; Porter, “Odysseus and the Wandering Jew”; Hewitt, “Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment?”; and Rabinbach, “Why Were the Jews Sacrificed?”

31. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 39.

32. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13.

33. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 40.

34. Homer, *Odyssey*, book 22, lines 468–74.

35. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 62.

36. This emphasis on the relation between sacrifice and self-formation in Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* contrasts with René Girard’s account of sacrifice in *Violence and the Sacred*, where sacrifice resolves societal crises in which distinctions within society have become harder to perceive. Since the discourse on assimilation tends to operate by producing the difference it seeks to efface, in Girard’s terms it can be read as a safeguard against societal purgation. While Girard’s account is enormously helpful for understanding historical instances of mass violence, Adorno and Horkheimer’s account attends to the affective cultivation of the modern self with an eye to understanding its epistemological and historical implications. For an insightful account of Girard’s usefulness to understanding forms of racializing, see Chow, *Entanglements*, 81–106.

37. In a similar vein, Jasbir Puar has argued that gay and lesbian populations can be assimilated into the army and the nation as long as they consent to committing

violence against Muslims/Arabs, newly pitted as the “sexually intolerant” enemy of lesbians and gays. I agree with Puar’s assessment yet remain interested in exploring the dialectical nature of the historical aggression required of and visited upon minorities, including Muslims. This will become clearer below. See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*. Also see Rastegar, “Emotional Attachments and Secular Imaginings.”

38. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 6–7.

39. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 362.

40. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 54.

41. Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 211.

42. Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*, 2–3.

43. Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*, 136.

44. Rich, “Inside the Sacrifice Zone”; Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land*.

45. Brown, “American Nightmare,” 702. Also see Cherniavsky’s important critique of this statement by Brown: “To suggest that the citizen has passively succumbed to her own disenfranchisement is to bracket the larger question of where and in what fashion she might (yet) act as a citizen; it is to proceed as though the relation between modern states and the populations that they govern were essential, rather than historical. And to anticipate or celebrate the rising of the sovereign populace is to imagine an oppositional movement predicated on the very synthesis that the non-representing, neoliberal state is in fact dissolving.” Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*, 139.

46. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 40.

47. Two years after her 2016 defeat in the presidential election, Clinton has veered farther to the right, arguing in an interview that Europe must curb immigration (as if it has not done so already): “I think Europe needs to get a handle on migration because that is what lit the flame. . . . It is fair to say Europe has done its part, and must send a very clear message—‘we are not going to be able to continue to provide refuge and support.’” Her remarks were immediately welcomed by Giorgia Meloni of the Brothers of Italy party, a protofascist organization that has also embraced Stephen Bannon. See Stevens, Specia, and Kingsley, “Hillary Clinton Says Europe Must ‘Get a Handle’ on Migration.”

48. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 41.

49. Ayerza and Žižek, “It Doesn’t Have to Be a Jew.”

50. I began this article with the example of a soldier not only because this figure brings into relief the fantasies of a shared national culture but also because this figure crystallized the psychic-political-economic operations that have interested me in this article—these same operations incentivize the working classes in the United States to join the army.

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