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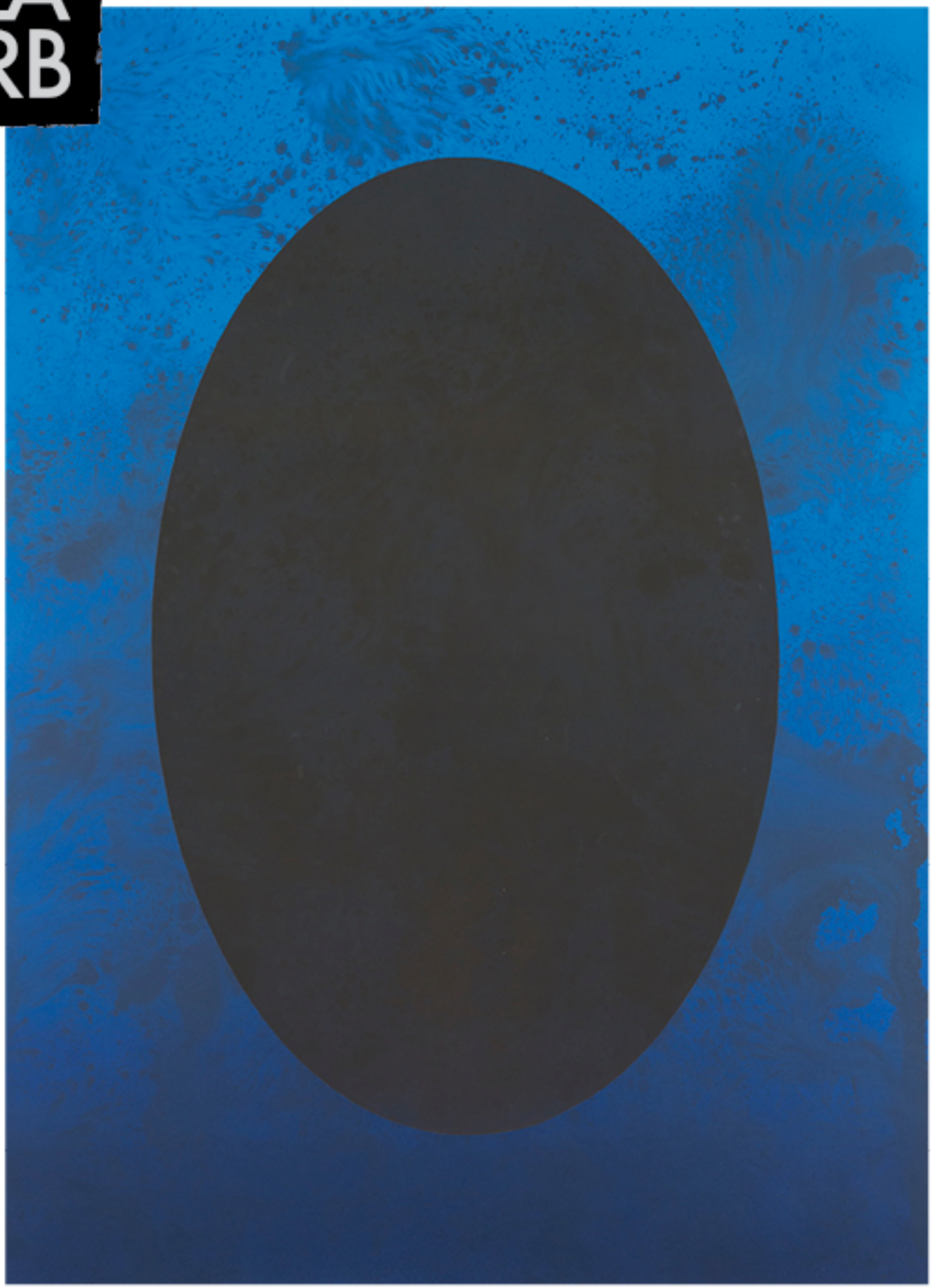

Sayre Gomez
Untitled Painting, Orange Over Black Over Cerulean to Indigo, 2015
Oil and acrylic on canvas
84 x 60”

Courtesy of Sayre Gomez and Galerie Parisa Kind

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— INTRODUCTION —

From the editors of *Marginalia*

When constructing stories of the past, we often highlight certain events as pivotal moments. In most cases these occasions, so-called turning points, are mere conceits, handy symbols of societal transformations that were years in the making. Hundreds of years from now, should we be lucky enough to avoid destroying ourselves by then, historians may look back on a little-discussed event to make sense of the world we presently inhabit. The Chicago Theological Seminary sold its property to the University of Chicago for $44 million, and in 2011 the seminary was knocked down, the lot scraped clean, and in its place was built the Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics. There may be no clearer metaphor for the transformation of the West. But like many historical conceits, this moment was years in the making.

As people interested in intellectual culture, historical study, and religious discourse, we often feel odd and out of place. Our society commonly relegates these topics to the margins. We collected some recent pieces published in the *Marginalia Review of Books* that help us make sense of our transforming world. We think of them as little voices crying out in the wilderness, inviting our society to turn its gaze — even for a brief moment — to examine books and art that help us to consider our trajectory as a people.

Our first piece explains how society and economy have seemingly collapsed together. It disrobes the myth that the market can provide everything humans need and want. Ellen Muehlberger considers the use of contemporary metaphors in helping us understand the past. Specifically, she questions the validity of describing those who adopted a Christian identity in the Roman Empire with the metaphor of "coming out" in use in contemporary discussions of sexual identity. Deeana Klepper reviews Sara Lipton's *Dark Mirror*, which charts the rise of anti-Jewish iconography in European art.

Nick Ripatrazone shifts our conversation to the modern period with a reflection on the ways that fiction helped us navigate a crisis of disillusionment in humanity during the 20th century. Monica Miller and Christopher Driscoll talk with K. Merinda Simmons about her work on the problems of post-blackness and other issues of authenticity and identity. In the most-read piece in our magazine's brief history, Bruce B. Lawrence revisits Marshall G. S. Hodgson's momentous three-volume publication, *The Venture of Islam*, on its 40-year anniversary and shows how Hodgson altered our understanding of Islam, and what politicians and the public could still learn from it today.
The final piece of this collection brings us back to where we started, at the intersection of religion and economics. Samuel Loncar describes the religious beliefs that underlie much of life in Silicon Valley and how these beliefs are having a corrosive effect upon society at large.

Angela Roskop Erisman, Editorial Director
Charles Halton, Managing Editor
Simon Rabinovitch, Senior Editor

Milton Friedman Drove Out Leviticus

Charles Halton

Karl Marx summarized his assessment of the newly declared Commonwealth of England with the simple phrase, "Locke drove out Habakkuk," referencing Oliver Cromwell's use of the Old Testament that fueled his revolution. Yet Marx noted that, as soon as the dust settled, the ethical structures within this rhetoric were promptly set aside, and the bourgeoisie continued their kleptocratic reign within a structure even more amenable to their purposes than before. Puritans, martyrs, and revolutionaries were replaced with Hanoverian businessmen and their political accomplices.

Technologically, we're a universe away from the time of the Lord Protector. Structurally, we're about the same. Populist congresspersons drawl homespun phrases and draw up breakfast table talking points but then decamp for private equity funds and petroleum conglomerates after they leave office. Members of the political establishment channel the yearnings of the underclass in their speeches and then boomerang the benefits of change back to themselves and their campaign underwriters. We expect duplicity and naked self-interest when it comes to winning elections and maintaining ruling coalitions; few of us are so optimistic to believe that public officials would put political careering behind serving the common good. And yet, for most of human history these traits have been seen as moral defects. But Narcissus is no longer an example of folly. He's been rebranded as a symbol of good, an engine of prosperity, and a mechanism for human benefit. He's been ingrained into the fabric of the system that affects our lives more deeply than most any other: the economy.

If Marx were around today he'd likely say, "Milton Friedman drove out Leviticus."

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Apart from the innovation of cooking food, the transformation from a patronage-based society to a market-based economy has perhaps been more consequential for human civilization than any other. Several things had to happen for this transformation to take place. With stunning beauty and detail, Andro Linklater's *Owning the Earth: The Transforming History of Land Ownership* discusses one of the most central: the transfer of land in feudal holdings and common collectives

to private ownership.

When workers toiled feudal fields, the fruit of their labors enriched their overlords while the workers themselves operated in a subsistence economy. Communally-owned lands, on the other hand, suffered from the phenomenon that every school kid has experienced in group projects: a minority of folks do most of the work while the benefits of labor are equally spread around. It's no surprise that land yields under both of these systems were anemic. (Mennonite farms were exceptional since they were both communally owned and wildly productive.) Adam Smith understood better than almost anyone that, for a country to prosper, it must make efficient use of its land. Industry and commerce are not the cornerstones of the economy. Rather, "the Produce of Land [is] either the sole or the principal Source of the Revenue and Wealth of every Country." To maximize a country's wealth, its citizens need to find a way to maximize the production of their land. This could happen, according to Smith, only in a structure loosed from the imposition of feudalism and the inequity of communal ownership.

Smith argued that, for his country to prosper, it had to sever the relational bonds that existed in commerce. Business should be entirely separate from personal and emotional connection. In feudal systems, the lives of master and serf were endlessly entangled and generationally hitched. A tenant owed the landholder his labor, and the landowner protected and provided for his tenants. This relationship was so deep that in some cases a feudal lord was expected to pay for a tenant's wedding and act as a judge in settling disputes that arose between those living on his land. In most cases, landowners inherited their property and tenants farmed the same fields as their fathers. Landowners also had to maintain friendships with their peers in order to provide avenues of sale for the products that came from their estates. What kept all of this going was the good will of each party. A lord cared for his tenant, and in response the tenant worked for his lord and the bonds of friendship between peers facilitated exchange. Smith called for the obliteration of this system and argued that exchanged should be overseen not by good will within human relationship but by the rule of law which enforced contracts made within an impersonal labor market.

The genius of the system Smith advocated lies in its transformation of basic human interaction. No longer would economic decisions be made on the basis of good will toward another person. People would act in accordance with obligations arrived at through contracted negotiation. This transformation provided space for the most important of Smith's insights, the one that became one of the foundations of Western civilization as we know it today: each party negotiates a contract with the goal of maximizing his or her self-interest. Smith was as explicit as he could be about the wholesale transformation of society this involved: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." Smith sought to "purify" the marketplace of personal favor so that individuals were set free to think not of each other but of themselves.

In Smith's mind, this selfishness was neither naked nor callous. He believed that the pursuit of personal happiness would lead to general happiness. But in order for a contractually based society to function properly, justice and fairness must be upheld. Smith built upon John Locke's vigorous defense of private property that, nonetheless, did not assert this right as absolute. For Locke, a person owned what was produced or acquired from his or her labor because people's bodies are theirs, owned wholly by themselves through natural right. Even so, private property was understood to have limits. Locke stated that land could only become one's exclusive property "when there is enough, and as good left in common for others." He also believed that property rights must yield to fairness: "[N]o man could ever have a just power over the life of another, by right of property

in land or possessions, since it would always be a sin in any man of estate to let his brother perish for want of affording his relief out of his plenty…God the lord and father of all has given no one of his children such a property in his peculiar portion of the things of this world but that he has given his needy brother a right to the surplus age of his goods."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau said something similar when French society transitioned from feudal possession to private ownership. He wrote that governments should absolutely protect a citizen's rights to life and liberty but should only guard private property as was needed for a person's safety and existence. Beyond subsistence, he believed that the government might need to limit a property owner's rights: "[T]he right which each individual has to his own estate is always subordinate to the right which the community has over all." Many leaders in the early years of the United States embraced the thinking of these three individuals. An adapted version of Locke's conception of private property that excluded slaves from personhood flourished in America for a while but, once land started becoming scarce, Locke's qualification that exclusive property should exist only when there was enough to go around slowly fell away. Nonetheless, the themes of justice and fairness that elevated the good of the community above the property rights of the individual remained firmly in place.

In 1785, while he served as the ambassador to France, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to James Madison in which he outlined grave concerns over growing inequality back home in the United States. He felt that rights to private property must be subordinate to fairness and justice and that large land holding should be distributed: "The consequences of this enormous inequality producing so much misery to the bulk of mankind, legislators cannot invent too many devices for subdividing property." He went so far in his desire to break up large estates that he proposed legislation to outlaw entails and primogeniture and to "tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise." In this latter desire, Jefferson matched exactly the sentiment of Adam Smith, who wrote, "It is not very unreasonable that the rich should contribute to the public expense, not only in proportion to their revenue, but something more than in that proportion."

Over time this emphasis on justice faded until rights to property eclipsed everything else in the English-speaking world. When the British Empire abolished slavery in 1833, the government paid twenty million pounds in compensation to slave owners for their loss of property. The slaves themselves — human beings theoretically entitled to fairness and justice — got nothing. When the United States debated this issue, one of the most influential congressmen of the day, Daniel Webster, gave a speech on March 7, 1850 in which he said that the protection of property, even "property in persons," was "the great object of government." After this speech, Webster lost the support of his New England constituency but was hailed in the South as courageous. Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that Webster inverted Locke's formulation that justice provided the basis for private property, since Webster argued that the freedom and very autonomy of a person's life must be sacrificed to uphold rights to property. Emerson said that this was the entire argument of those upholding slavery. They kept Locke's definition of private property but carved out its foundation. Private property was *the* sacred right that governments were required to protect; justice and ethics didn't figure in the equation.

In a strange turn of events, one of the most influential economists of the modern political era advocated an approach shockingly similar to that of Daniel Webster. Friederich Hayek was an Austro-Hungarian Nobel Prize winning economist who taught, among other places, at the University of Chicago and who also received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom. He departed from Locke — and from the foundational principles of the founding documents of the United States — by

rejecting the idea that a person was born with inalienable rights. He thought that human freedom could be bought and sold and that a person could, if he wished, "contract himself into slavery." Hayek went on to say, "Freedom is not a state of nature, but an artifact of civilization." Hayek believed that the market economy, rule of law, and private property spontaneously arose from an agreement of society. Locke and Smith saw social fairness and natural justice as the glue that held together the workings of the invisible hand. Hayek, however, was unequivocal in doing away with these concepts: the market should not concern itself with fairness and justice because they do not exist as entities in themselves. The subtitle of volume two of Hayek's book, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty: The Mirage of Social Justice*, makes this abundantly clear.

In place of fairness and justice, Hayek said that the outcomes of the marketplace reward everyone accordingly. To be sure, this reward is not equitable but, in Hayek's view, this was for the good. Inefficiencies were the keys to making the market function properly by directing and diverting activity to where it needed to be, so he asserted that governments should intervene in the process as little as possible, if at all. Hayek did make an allowance for the government to give the poor "some minimum of food, shelter and clothing, sufficient to preserve heath." But the real purpose of society, in his mind, was to grow richer, not to promote justice and fairness.

Naturally, some will acquire a disproportionate share of wealth as nations grow richer, but this too is good. Hayek believed that the marketplace should reward winners without limit because, in a quasi-Darwinian sense, those people are more fit than the rest. These "betters" in a society should be the ones to foster and patronize culture. Even those who merely inherited their wealth instead of earning it, the progeny of the betters, are more able to lead society because they are advantaged over their peers due to "selection through inheritance from parents." They have the genetic and environmental makeup of winners. What's more, Hayek thought that society would benefit from wealth and ideas "filtering downward from the top of the pyramid." What he desired, and what his economic model of radical deregulation and almost completely unfettered capitalism was designed to create, was an aristocratic society.

Another Nobel Prize winning and University of Chicago economist, Milton Friedman, advocated a very similar approach. He had disagreements with Hayek and avoided voicing such bald contempt toward society's "losers," but in many ways Friedman was a more optimistic face of Hayek's libertarianism. In his book, *Freedom and Responsibility*, he formulated what would be called the Friedman Doctrine, which asserts that corporations should have no social responsibility apart from making money: "There is one and only one social responsibility of business — to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud." Like Hayek, Friedman believed that the flows and inefficiencies of money are what should guide the invisible hand. Social fairness and natural justice should not factor in.

Hayek and Friedman are perhaps the most influential figures in contemporary economics. Their arguments regarding minimal governmental intervention, low taxes, and letting wealth concentrate in the hands of economic winners have largely won the day. We have achieved the aristocratic society they pined for. On January 20, 2014 Oxfam released a report stating that the world's richest 85 individuals had a combined wealth of $1.7 trillion, which is equal to the wealth belonging to the poor half of the world's inhabitants — 3.5 billion people. The rich are growing and consolidating wealth so quickly that Forbes readjusted this ratio three months later on March 25, 2014 and stated that the wealth of the richest 67 individuals was equal to that of the bottom half of the planet's population.

What has gone largely unnoticed in our political and economic conversations is how sharply Hayek and Friedman's school of thought departed from that of the founders of modern capitalism as well as the political formation of the United States. For both of these groups, the foundations of society and the things that make capitalism possible are social fairness and natural justice. They believed, along with Smith, that one can dehumanize a transaction partner and be solely concerned with maximizing one's own economic well-being only if society as a whole actively humanized the community by upholding fairness and justice. If society abdicated this role, our communities would devolve into a *Lord of the Flies* type of savage dystopia. We must note the many lapses in the areas of justice and fairness that filled the lives of the intellectual founders of the United States and scarred the political structures they created. Many of the framers of the Constitution were slaveholders and thought that inalienable rights applied only to white men. But, in spite of this and many other obvious flaws, their underlying concerns were still largely positive.

For instance, most of the founders of the United States wanted to avoid monopolistic control of the market and politics. They believed that large concentrations of wealth would not only stagnate economic growth but were also unfair and unjust. James Madison accurately predicted that, as the population grew, the rural economy would become dominated by "the great Capitalists in Manufacturers & Commerce and the members employed by them." Madison expected the country to keep pace with these developments and pass "equalizing laws" which included measures that would actively dismantle the structures that enabled the permanency of inherited wealth. In this respect, Madison's thoughts are very similar to a vision of society embedded within the Hebrew Bible.

Leviticus 25 outlines an observance called the Jubilee in which every fifty years land was to revert back to its original ancestral family. The practical purpose of the Jubilee was to protect families from the permanent sale of their land. The Jubilee law isn't primarily about property in the way we think about it — in terms of housing, that is — but about equal access to economically productive tools. Leviticus 25:30-31 makes a rigid distinction between city dwellings that do not revert to their previous owners and "open country," or agriculturally productive lands, which do. The modern analogy would seem to be breaking up corporations every 50 years and distributing the productive elements to the people. A bit like what venture capital firms do, except firms would be given away to the workers rather than sold off to other corporations and wealthy individuals. Theologically, the Jubilee communicated that land belonged to God and not people; God was letting the Israelites reside on it for as long as they upheld fairness and justice. In other words, Leviticus envisions a sort of egalitarian Utopia in which every Israelite (male) is entitled to a share of economically productive land that would never permanently depart from his family's use. If a person lost title to his land, for whatever reason, it would eventually revert back to him or his offspring.

The author of Leviticus expressed a clear-eyed knowledge that societies have an inevitable inertia toward monopoly and concentration of wealth and power. Leviticus 25 imagines a structure that dismantles these concentrations every fifty years and gives land back to its original families that have been displaced. Roughly once a generation society was to be reset — the wealthy disgorged and the poor enfranchised. This sounds remarkably similar to Madison and Jefferson's desires to dismantle large estates and inheritances. It's almost as if the founders of the United States were reading the Hebrew Bible. As a matter of fact, they were. It is no coincidence that a quote from Leviticus 25 is included in the two line inscription running around the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof Lev. XXV X By Order of the ASSEMBLY of the Province of PENSYLVANIA [sic] for the State House in Philada." Liberty, according to Leviticus 25 and for many of the founders of America, exists within an egalitarian

society in which land, and concomitantly wealth, is widely distributed.

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Shortly after she became the leader of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher slammed a copy of Friedrich Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* upon the table and instructed party leadership: "*This* is what we believe in." It is disorienting to think that this statement could come from the lips of someone who said at the opening of the 1998 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland:

> *The Old Testament lays down in Exodus the Ten Commandments as given to Moses, the injunction in Leviticus to love our neighbour as ourselves and generally the importance of observing a strict code of law. The New Testament is a record of the Incarnation, the teachings of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Again we have the emphasis on loving our neighbour as ourselves and to "Do-as-you-would-be-done-by".*
>
> *I believe that by taking together these key elements from the Old and New Testaments, we gain: a view of the universe, a proper attitude to work, and principles to shape economic and social life.*

Maybe Thatcher interpreted the Bible in light of her Hayekian impulse toward privatizing everything, thinking that actions springing from a motivation to Do-as-you-would-be-done-by should take place outside of economic and social structures and reside exclusively in the hearts of individuals. Maybe she thought the Jubilee was a relic from a defunct Commonwealth of Israel and Jesus's teaching on loving one's neighbor in the Sermon on the Mount should not be applied to economic life. Maybe she was just a good utilitarian and thought that biblical visions of society must give way to best practices. Her last sentence seems to preclude these options. My guess is that Thatcher had her economic and political beliefs and then hurriedly wedged her religion into the gaps.

Thatcher is not alone in this. Most of us do the very same thing. We have seen the empirical results of neoliberal capitalism and they are clear. In a breathtakingly short time, our society has gone from being pulled by the power of the horse to overflowing with gene therapies, cheap food, vaccinations, and a plethora of jaw-dropping technologies. We also sit on the edge of ecological ruin and billions of people subsist in grinding poverty. We can't say that all of these things are directly attributable to capitalism, but many are. We see neoliberalism's fruit and we are persuaded that it is right because the size of our homes have doubled, we tote designer handbags, and we drive air conditioned cars. We look past the social and environmental damage that neoliberalism has caused even when its philosophies come into direct conflict with our religious and ethical sensibilities. We have embraced it as our guiding principle because it has delivered to us the goods and services we desire. Yet we have not fully considered the impact that our economic environment has upon our interpersonal, emotional, psychological, and spiritual lives.

What are the long-term effects of living within an economy that has rid itself of structural justice and is controlled purely by the peregrinations of money? What happens to us — as human beings — when we "purify" the market of feelings of good will and replace them with self-interest? What does it do to those of us who, regardless of our particular religious or philosophical perspectives, are journeying to orient our lives outward to god and others instead of curving inward and focusing

on our own benefit (as Martin Luther put it). Contemporary capitalism has selfishness as its lifeblood and its doyens preach for a marketplace founded upon amoral decisions cut free from the emotional complications of relationships in order to maximize self-interest. And we are surprised when people living in this system act like spoiled brats?

Remember when the country was debating the Affordable Care Act and the business community told us that if it passed it would cause a nuclear apocalypse? Well, we're still here. We remember within their hyperventilation the reaction of the CEO of Papa John's pizza in which he said that offering health insurance to his employs would raise the price of his products by 10-14 cents per pie and would cost $5-8 million annually. He went on to say that if the act passed he'd cut workers' hours to avoid having to offer them health insurance. Let's keep in mind that, at that point, Papa John's had operating expenses of $1.131 billion and their typical pizzas cost $12-16. Offering coverage to their employees would have raised expenses by 0.4-0.7% and bumped the cost of the average pizza about 0.86%. (All of these figures come from Forbes.) Now, all of this may have been political bluster — the CEO of Papa John's was a major supporter of Mitt Romney, and Papa John's spends $5 million per year to slap its name on the Lousiville Cardinals' football stadium, so $5-8 million is a fairly trivial amount for them. (As an aside, in that year Papa John's advertised that it was giving away 2 million free pizzas which amounts to $24-34 million in forgone revenue. Also tangentially relevant is CEO John Schnatter's share of Papa John's stock, which at that time was worth almost $300 million, on top of a salary of around $2.5 million a year.) Even if it was bluster, in what kind of psychopathic universe could an argument be seen as remotely sensible which asserts that a dime per pizza is worth more than the health of the humans who make them? It's a universe dominated by neoliberal capitalism.

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The underlying problem with neoliberalism is that its operating philosophy is almost identical to the outlook of N.W.A.'s *Straight Out of Compton*. The hook is what everyone recalls — Ice Cube's mantra, "Life ain't nuthin' but bitches and money." Less memorable is the way Easy-E responds to this: "So what about the bitch who got shot? Fuck her! You think I give a damn about a bitch who got shot? I ain't a sucker." At first we are led to believe that life is only about two things: women and money. Then we find out that women are expendable. Chuck Klosterman describes this as "weapon-grade nihilism." We could say the same about an economic theory that leads CEOs to value stadium naming rights above the health of thousands of human beings.

It could be that the CEO of Papa John's is just a cold-blooded misanthrope, but I doubt it. I imagine that if he and I sat down for a few beers that we'd have a decent enough time together. His threat to deny his workers health insurance is merely the outworking of Milton Friedman's economics.

Some might argue that a company is more profitable when its workforce is healthy, so companies should have an interest in offering health insurance to its employees. Already we should note that this logic is purely utilitarian and devoid of any ethical consideration. This might be true in some cases but it probably depends on the industry. It may hurt the bottom line to lose a productive investment banker, but if a pizza thrower becomes ill, it might be cheaper to replace him than to heal him. Under Friedman's scheme, a CEO has the fiduciary responsibility to do exactly that: "There is one and only one social responsibility of business — to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits…" And before we know it we're right back to Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* except that the management practice of Brown's slaughterhouse now has the moral backing of the Nobel Committee.

Western civilization used to view morality and ethics, most often backstopped with religious belief, as the essential ecosystem for society to function properly. That is, Locke and Smith believed that the only way for individual self-interest to lead to general wellbeing was if society at large worked to uphold natural justice and social fairness. On an individual level, people could act in self-interest but only if the community acted to promote wellbeing for the whole. Accordingly, they believed that political decisions must be made from an ethical basis. We no longer believe this. The flow of money within competition is all there is and all we need. These twin forces will fix our problems and deliver to us the world we desire. Society is economy.

There may be no clearer metaphor for the transformation of the West than the moment when the Chicago Theological Seminary sold its property to the University of Chicago for $44 million. The seminary was knocked down, the lot scraped clean, and in its place was built the Milton Friedman Institute for Research in Economics.

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A wholesale dismantlement of capitalism is, at this point, not possible. Nor it is it likely desirable even if it were. Capitalism has yielded great benefits which all of us, even the marginalized poor, enjoy to some extent. Linklater argues in *Owning the Earth* that we need to claw our way back to a system-wide vision of justice and fairness that the early formulators of capitalism regarded as essential. This means that the government must become more active — not less — in its regulation of and intervention in the economy. And their interventions must pointedly help the poor and break up the powerful with the aim of creating a more egalitarian union. This is good and right, but I think we need to do more.

It's not enough to agree with Locke and Smith that social fairness and natural justice are the essential foundations of the market and that justice must ultimately come before the property rights of individuals. As our society, god willing, embraces a more moderate form of capitalism, we as individuals need to cultivate a stance of active resistance toward the selfishness embedded within it. This involves constantly recognizing the moral deficiency at the heart of classical capitalism — the self-interest motivator — and the entire ethical bankruptcy of neoliberalism. It requires that that we dream of a better way to organize society and hold out other options as real, viable choices to keep capitalism honest and in check. Competition is what produces innovation and better delivery of needs and wants, right my capitalist friends? Without the real threat of its eclipse, capitalism will trend toward the oppression of the masses as the wealthy and powerful exponentially increase their holdings and squeeze more profit (or, as Marx would call it, uncompensated labor) out of the capital in their control.

This is going to be difficult. Benjamin Kunkel didn't overstate it by much when he observed: "The US remains a society in which Marxism can be advocated only a little more respectably than pederasty." It shouldn't be this way. We need to be able to talk about Marxism and other social systems without fear of recrimination if only to keep capitalism on its toes and inclined, even slightly, to a more ethical way of functioning.

To protect ourselves from capitalism's perniciousness, we must also embrace Karl Marx's call to reestablish the relational basis of exchange. This includes religious folks. There's no reason why dialectal materialism should remain the private property of those whose metaphysic includes only the material. After all, the Pope recently joked, "[T]he communists have stolen our flag."

There are a myriad of ways that we can go about humanizing economic transactions. We can join co-ops or subscribe to a Community Supported Agriculture program. We can purchase fair trade products, get our friends to cut our hair, do business with companies that are in the B-Corporation network, and so on. There are even simple things we can do in the normal course of our days like show genuine care toward store clerks instead of regarding them as agents of a faceless corporate entity.

What Linklater makes clear is that a good bit of capitalism and almost everything to do with neoliberalism actively undermines religious and secular ethics that have as a central feature the care of other persons. By design, capitalism turns our motivation in economic transaction away from care of others to exclusive care for ourselves. It also dehumanizes persons and transforms them into utilitarian units and exploitable resources like uranium or timber. Dishearteningly, most seminaries and religious colleges have followed this trend and have Human Resource departments. Once might counter that this is only a name, but names have significance. This term communicates the idea that the workers within these institutions are valued as long as they contribute economically. They are not persons. They are resources, albeit of the human variety.

Instead of participating in one of the great tasks of religion — imagining a better world and working to enact it — these institutions have stopped dreaming and have embraced the realpolitik of the world as we know it. They are gently baptized iterations of GE. And we shouldn't think that this is a problem only for those people that disagree with us — it is common in liberal and conservative institutions alike. General Theological Seminary fired almost its entire faculty when the faculty went on strike after its request that justice be brought to a toxic work environment, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary dismantled various humanizing elements like tenure that create long term relationships and turned professors into temporarily contracted economic units so that they may be more easily disposed of when their usefulness wanes. What seminaries need are intelligent leaders with ethical insight and courage. Martin Luther Kings working to inspire a better world, not Henry Kissingers carpet bombing the present one. The presidents and boards of these two institutions, along with hundreds of others like them, appear to be more heavily influenced by the reigning economic practice of the present than the religious writings that the denominations they work for say they believe in.

We can no longer speak of being a Christian and a capitalist or an ethically sensitive humanist and a capitalist. At most, we must see capitalism as a necessary evil that we work to contain. But more importantly, we must see ourselves, for the good of our own psyches and as well as for the ultimate flourishing of others, as people united together in active resistance to the corrosive self-interest at the heart of capitalism and the nihilistic structure of neoliberalism. It is only as we continue to study the history of economics and ethically deconstruct it that we can begin to understand the influence economic systems have upon every part of our being. Linklater goes a long way in helping us to this end. Now it's up to us to extend this conversation and work toward something better.

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Metaphor and Its Limits

Ellen Muehlberger

Douglas Boin starts his new book by revealing a secret about himself: though he is an archaeologist of the early Roman empire and has studied the history of Christian communities like that in the Roman port of Ostia, early Christians themselves make him "uncomfortable." As a scholar trained to enjoy Homer, to take pleasure in the clever arguments of Roman senators, Boin finds Christians to be "an impenetrable clique, obstinately different," even "pathological" for the "way they stick together as a group." When presented with the grandeur of ancient Rome, he wonders, why would anyone choose to turn away from its ideals? Why would Christians be so willful and strident in their opposition to Rome's beautiful life?

He admits that part of his prejudice was inspired by the way other historians have depicted early Christians and the story of Christianity's rise. It is an improbable story: a small apocalyptic cult forms around the memory of an executed leader and, though that leader fails to reappear as promised, his followers over the course of four hundred years become an accepted religion and eventually the most dominant cultural force in the Roman Empire. The earliest explanation for this success was offered by Christians themselves, who thought that Christianity could not help but take over the world, because its divine truth so obviously surpassed the false, limp religions of Rome. The eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon avoided the question of religious truth when he offered a different explanation in his famous book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: Christians succeeded in making the Roman Empire theirs because they simply refused any other outcome. Their intolerance of others, their insistence on a Christian-centered identity, and their zeal to convert their neighbors to this way of thinking was a powerful force — so powerful, the tragic narrative goes, that even the great idea of Rome, the eternal city, could not hold out against it. For Gibbon and the many historians who followed in his line of thinking, these strident Christians are the people who forced Roman religion and Roman culture out of favor, and they are the ones that make Boin "uneasy."

Were such Christians the real force behind Christianity's eventual dominance in the late ancient world? Boin's answer in *Coming Out Christian* is "no." There must have been other Christians, less opinionated and less visible, whose engagement with Roman culture was what led to Christianity's success. It was because of them that co-emperors Licinius and Constantine issued a decree in 313 C.E. granting legitimacy to Christianity. These other Christians have not drawn the attention of historians in the way that more aggressive writers like Ignatius of Antioch or Tertullian have but, as Boin implores the reader on several occasions, "it's time we listened to all of them." To tune our ears to such Christians, we need to use as a metaphor the concept of coming out — in our time, the process of revealing one's true sexual orientation (or, more recently, one's true gender); as Boin applies it to the ancient world, the process of allowing one's Christian identity to be seen by others.

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Boin's ambitions for this metaphor are grand, if signals from the start of *Coming Out Christian* are any indication. A quotation from John Lewis Gaddis, planted at the head of the book like a flag, tells us that in "science, history, and art," any pursuit of new knowledge "depends on metaphor." The introduction then casually mentions only two historians, who we follow as they walk among the ruins of ancient Rome, touching her material remains and explaining Christianity's triumph over her. One is Edward Gibbon, the English historian I mentioned before and whose view the book rejects. The other is Boin himself. The claims to grandness grow louder outside the book, in the online ephemera meant to herald its arrival. In the week leading up to its release, Bloomsbury tweeted that the book "overturns centuries of misunderstanding." In the week after its release, Boin published a teaser article at *The Huffington Post* ("How Christianity Really Started") in which he claims that seeing the ancient world through the lens of coming out changes "virtually everything we have been taught about Christianity."

Metaphors are excellent tools for comprehension, to be sure. Seeing a familiar pattern in what is unfamiliar is often the first step toward understanding something new; that pattern can be a handle to hold on to as we explore new and unpredictable territory. Metaphors are able to do this work because they are similar to the target to be explained, but they are by design not identical. Two things are compared, but the two are never a perfect match. Every metaphor comes with limits, places where it stops yielding information, and that is just a feature of the tool: no metaphor can truly account for the thing it is said to be like.

As Boin works through his narrative, the vocabulary of modern sexual orientation — its essentiality, its realization, and its revelation to others — is used to account for historical developments in early Christianity. The language of "coming out," of "passing," of "being closeted" is applied to ancient people without any analytical translation that could accommodate the long jump from the modern to the ancient world. Boin depicts the strident Christians who shouted their Christianity from the rooftops, demanding that others recognize them as "queer" and acquiesce to their rejection of normative Roman culture. But then there were "the quieter ones," those who were Christian on the inside but lived "hyphenated lives," understanding as they did that being Christian was a matter of "juggling" more than one identity and choosing when to reveal what and to whom. Though some had "public pride" about their identity as Christians, others "were still stepping gingerly around family and friends," because as Christians, they "had not yet worked out their identity issues." I cite all of these phrases from the first few chapters of the book in quick succession to give a sense of how much they determine the book's approach. Instead of being a helpful handle to hold as we explore the complexities of ancient Christianity — a metaphor with acknowledged limitations — "coming out" and the history of gayness that the term imports provide both the vocabulary and the

implicit framework for representing Christianity in the ancient world.

One could think of all of these as just instances of the author being clever — oh, the satire, or even the camp, that lies latent in describing ancient Christians as if they were twentieth-century homosexuals! — but Boin clearly means to do more than just provoke. The concept of "coming out" is necessary to his argument, as it provides the solution to the unresolved historical problem that sits uncomfortably at the center of the book. That problem is simple: if quieter Christians did exist, they left very little evidence of their carefully-calibrated lives. In fact, evidence of Christianity of any sort, strident or respectable, is rather thin for the first three centuries of the common era. But, if there were masses of Christians who simply chose not to be public about their identities — that is, Christians were careful about when and whether they "came out" — then that problem goes away.

Consider this vignette. In chapter three, "The New Neighbors Who Moved In Next Door," Boin wonders why, if the apostle Paul established a community of Christians at Corinth, there is no evidence (beyond the letters compiled in 1 and 2 Corinthians) that they ever existed. He reasons that it is not because the group was insignificant, or because Paul's correspondents were members of a minor movement only beginning to conceive of itself as a unique entity, or because all such Corinthians were poor and thus unlikely to leave a material mark on the historical record. It is instead because

> *All of them, especially the wealthier ones, chose what to reveal about themselves — to their friends, to their neighbors (and consequently, to us) — so as not to attract unwarranted suspicion about who they were. Not all of Jesus's followers were martyrs. Many of them lived in the closet, and that's why we can't find them.*

The closet here has stopped being a metaphor and has become an earnest explanation of the lack of evidence for a Christian community in Corinth. Of course they were there, and they identified as Christians, but we cannot see them because they decided to conceal this identity and to blend in.

In this and in another chapter, "The Quieter Ones," Boin marshals as much evidence as he can about this group of Christians: four named people, along with several nebulous groups, all of whom we know about because of the complaints that louder Christians made about them and their lukewarm ways. I think it is because Boin recognizes the thinness of this evidence that he adds two more chapters about other minority groups who gain political capital by engaging with, rather than rejecting, Roman ideals; for him, the devotees of the Egyptian goddess Isis as well as Jews both show how respectable, "quieter ones" may have gained influence in Roman society.

He may well be right. Non-strident Christians may have had a significant positive effect on the perceptions that non-Christians held about Christianity. But there is so little evidence for such a claim that it is almost impossible to discuss. And trying to locate these Christians by importing a modern set of terms as if they describe an ancient reality comes at a heavy cost. Trusting in the metaphor of coming out to explain the lack of evidence for the early Christian movement leads Boin to write in ways that make "Christian" out to be a fully realized identity that its users could deploy at will, for their own self-preservation, even as early as the first century; any other identity is less realized and can be discarded if the user does not need it any more. This is not, of course, an explicit claim of the book, but it is the freight that comes with the vocabulary of "coming out," which is conventionally (though not uncontroversially) understood as a strategic revelation of the truth of one's core self.

Readers become especially attuned to the burden of that freight when Boin speaks about how Christians deal with other identities they might have or use. In chapter two, he explains that in the second century, "Jesus's followers were arguing over whether to identify as 'Christians' or to keep identifying as a Jewish group," an observation which suggests that appearing Jewish was a consciously adopted ruse. Later in that same chapter, he tells the story of two soldiers in Spain who happened to be Christian yet participated in a small sacrifice for the emperor. Boin's coming out metaphor forces a single perspective on these men and their actions: they were truly Christians but "found a way to tone down their identity to appear less threatening." To pull this off meant one had to be a "skilled juggler, able to embrace Roman culture without any qualms about sacrificing the essentials of his faith." The third chapter discusses a carved gem that depicts the crucifixion on one side and has names "conjured up from an underground world of hexes, curses, and spells" on the other. Such an object is not, in this model, evidence of a Christian practice that should expand our view of ancient Christianity. Rather it "shows us two Roman subcultures overlapping: the followers of Jesus and the practitioners of magic."

But the followers of Jesus often *were* practitioners of what some people might call "magic." They were also, many of them, what we would call Jewish; in a way, they were all Roman, too. How such identities came to be thought of as different and mutually exclusive is a fascinating story, but in this book, they are essentially different already. "Christian" is the only true and non-negotiable identity. If "Christian" appears to us to overlap with any other category we might apply to ancient society, it is only because the Christian involved has decided to "pass," or to "build bridges," to soften his real identity in order to appear as something safer. That is, the coming out metaphor perversely confirms the essentiality of "Christian" in the ancient world. It is deep, while other identities are just surface.

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As conservative as this book is about this question of identity, it is even more conservative about the cause of Christianity's political success. The process by which Christians gained a place in the Roman Empire peaks when the emperor Constantine "comes out Christian" himself. The story told here about Constantine follows closely the lines first traced by Constantine's biographer, Eusebius. He was the first to speak of Constantine's conversion to Christianity; he is the one who tells the story of the sign that appears in the sky and brings Constantine victory in battle; he is the first to interpret the declaration of 313 C.E. as a confirmation of Christianity's ascendance; he is also the historian who preserves the speech known as the "Oration to the Saints," which figures heavily in Boin's reconstruction of Constantine's coming out. But the matter of whether, when, and in what sense Constantine was Christian is not simple. The idea that a single person, even an emperor, can change an entire culture is controversial. The material evidence from Constantine's reign strongly suggests that he had a far more complex relationship with Christianity than Eusebius's triumphant narrative allows. And, when one looks closely, even Constantine's motivations for issuing the 313 declaration with Licinius are maddeningly opaque.

All such nuance is lost in the model of "coming out," where Constantine is figured as a "an emperor who was openly Christian" and "a living sign that, at least for this one minority group in Rome, things could and did get better." In this way, despite the fact that all sorts of non-Christian religious imagery and practice continued to be part of Roman culture under Constantine and after him, Boin reassures us that the emperor's true identity can be known because Constantine himself had revealed it: "One thing's for sure: it's not as if Constantine was trying to pass as something he was not….[he] had come out Christian."

The limits of the coming out metaphor become even more clear when we think beyond the religious expression of a single person and begin to think of the rise of Christian tradition over time. Despite the intimate view of Constantine's subjectivity that it seems to give us, the metaphor of coming out does not explain how the presence of closeted, moderate Christians in the first three centuries motivated Constantine to grant them the status of a legitimate religion. Did such Christians do their work behind the scenes, organizing deftly to change the emperor's mind? Was Constantine impressed by their quiet, almost Roman, decorum? And what can account for the next hundred years after Constantine, in which emperors and other Christians really do convert their neighbors when they can and advocate the use of compulsion to do so?

The last two chapters of *Coming Out Christian* attempt to engage this phase of Christianity. They explain that the violence that ascendant Christians committed against other religions — indexed by the destruction of the synagogue at Callinicum in 388 and the Serapeum or Temple of Serapis in Alexandria in 391 — was the result of those too-strident Christians who insisted that militancy and intolerance were the only dispositions a true Christian could have toward others. Are such late antique Christians to be understood as insisting that all Christians should be out and proud, and thus as people who drag persistently moderate Christians out of the closet? And how, after so much change inaugurated by "the quiet ones" did the louder ones take over and force the public culture of the later empire — dominated by Christianity — to be one giant in-your-face pride parade? These last questions are absurd, of course, but they point to where the metaphor of coming out breaks down as an explanation of ancient religious change, particularly for the time immediately after Constantine.

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All metaphors have their limits. What, then, is the harm if this one does not live up to its hype? In its reliance on a single, uncomplicated move — applying the language of a modern phenomenon to an ancient one — *Coming Out Christian* bears a resemblance to a genre of writing that, to my knowledge, has not yet been named but is ubiquitous, especially in new media journalism. This genre depends on the belief that subjects that appear difficult to understand are not, in reality, difficult at all. They simply require a shift in perspective, a tip, a tiny key to unlock them.

This genre treats all kinds of topics, from the very serious to the merely selfish: the list of lifehacks that promise to make airplane travel magically easy is, in a certain way, a cousin to the large x-ray screen that demonstrates the futility of racism, ageism, and homophobia to a beaming street audience; though they occupy a very different register, these are both distant relatives of the ad that promises to get rid of belly fat using one weird trick. In reality, air travel is boring and tiresome; bigotry is so deeply embedded in our culture that it cannot possibly be eradicated with one video, heartfelt though it is; and everyone wants to be rid of their gut, but the truth is that adult human beings have belly fat. Even though we know on some level that difficult problems never have easy answers, this genre of writing — call it tipsterism, new perspectivalism, or hackstoriography — is still very attractive. If it seems unfair to group *Coming Out Christian* with this kind of writing, I direct readers to the listicle Boin rendered from the book and posted to Buzzfeed in the run-up to the book's release, titled "Six Things about Jesus' Followers that Will Sound Familiar to the LBGT Community." Its message is that if contemporary Christians who want to discriminate against LGBT people would only look at their past, they would see that they, too, were once discriminated against; for their part, LGBT readers can "savor the ultimate irony" of knowing this about early Christians even as some contemporary Christians seek to discriminate against them.

Writers want their work to be attractive, of course, but they also try to educate, to entice readers to consider ideas more ramified and complex than what they previously knew. Boin certainly aims to educate; it is clear he wants to guide a broad group of readers to a new understanding of early Christianity. But *Coming Out Christian* works against such an education because it falls prey to the convention of the genre I described. It trains its audience to see early Christians as a mysterious and special movement whose history — at first glance, disturbingly complex — is actually quite clear and comprehensible, if only one uses a certain, slightly improbable metaphor.

Because that metaphor is here applied without provisions, it takes away the hard, open-ended questions we as writers should be leading audiences to consider, like "What was a 'Christian' and when did people start thinking of themselves that way?" and "How and when was 'Christian' understood as different from 'Jewish' and 'Roman'?" Or "Is what we call Christianity even a recognizable thing in the first few centuries?" and "Do emperors really change history, or are their actions just a convenient icon for much larger processes?" And the question undergirding all of these: "What answers can we possibly have for these questions given the fact that most of the evidence we would use to answer them survives because it was selected by later Christians, who had a particular narrative about how their religion came to be?"

The questions I've just raised are not simple, but they are important, whether one asks them only to understand the ancient world or also to gain insight on the modern world by comparison. None of these questions can even be contemplated in an intellectual project that depends on a metaphor to do the work of investigation, analysis, and persuasion. Seeing that something unfamiliar bears a familiar pattern is the first step in comprehension, but it should not be the last. When we invite readers to join in thinking about topics as significant as religion, identity, and political power, we can offer them deeper, more cautious, and even more strenuous exploration.

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A Deep Earthquake: Late Antique Sexuality and the Rise of Christianity

Susanna Drake

Anyone who has ever visited an exhibit of ancient Greek or Roman art is familiar with the ubiquity of erotic imagery in ancient visual culture. Sexual images adorned the objects of everyday life: from plates, cups, vases, and jewelry boxes to furniture, wall paintings, mosaics, and lamps. As Kyle Harper observes about domestic ceramic lamps that have survived two millennia in great quantity: "The Romans not only had sex with the lamps on — they had sex by the flickering light of lamps that had images of them having sex by lamplight on them!" Although these erotic lamps were trending in the second and third centuries CE, they fell out of fashion around the turn of the fifth century, the material signifiers of a revolution in sexual morality spurred by the Christianization of the empire.

Harper charts this revolution in his vivid and confident book, which has much to teach the student of late antiquity and the historian of sexuality, especially in its insistence on the imbrication of discourses of sexuality with Roman law, practices of slavery and prostitution, and theological debates about fate and free will. Harper is at his best when he is drawing on his broad knowledge of Roman history and reading in tandem seemingly disparate cultural artifacts: the ancient novel, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, alongside Stoic cosmology; Justinian's anti-prostitution legislation alongside the Christian stories of penitent prostitutes; the adultery legislation of Emperor Augustus (*lex Iulia*) alongside erotic lamps. "The mélange," Harper writes, "is deliberate, for it helps us resist the temptation to ascribe supremacy to any one witness or class of witnesses."

Harper has a penchant for identifying how the transformation of sexual morality reverberates in ancient fiction. He begins his study with an analysis of the second century Greek novel, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and ends with the seventh century legend, the *Life of Mary of Egypt*. The second century novel was composed in a cultural context that celebrated eros and its relation to freedom, social status, reproduction, and marriage. Leucippe and Clitophon are separated by fate, and their chastity is challenged on numerous occasions, only to prove triumphant in the end when they are reunited and married. As in other romances of the time, the protagonists of the story are freeborn and aristocratic. In the High Roman Empire, freedom describes not only one's free status but also one's bodily integrity and sexual respectability.

The other side of this coin, as Harper helpfully reminds the reader in what becomes the refrain of the book, is slavery and its associated industry, prostitution. A thriving and lucrative flesh trade flourished in the centuries that witnessed the rise of Christianity, and the violable, vulnerable bodies of slaves served as the abject counterparts to freeborn bodies.

The seventh century readers of the *Lives* of the penitent prostitutes, including the *Life of Mary of Egypt*, lived in a remarkably different world than that of Leucippe and Clitophon. The tales of repentant prostitutes focused not on the preservation of a chaste heroine's (Leucippe's) inviolability but on the transformation of sinful, corrupted flesh into a transcendent body of redemption. These "antiromances" perform "the severance of sexual morality from its social moorings and place the individual eternally before the judgment of God. " In the *Life of Mary of Egypt*, Mary — the lusty harlot turned phantasmal desert ascetic — is figured not as a social creature of the *polis* but as a "transcendent moral subject who stands apart from the world and all its demands, isolated before the divine judge."

Whereas one may be tempted to view the late ancient transformation in sexual morality as a gradual process in which Christians adopted the postures of Roman conservatives (especially the Stoics), Harper insists that the Christianization of sexual morality represented a "discrete and categorical rupture" with the past. He argues, persuasively, that this rupture occurred in the fifth century (a later date than previous scholarship has suggested), and that it culminated in the sweeping legislative reforms of Justinian in the sixth century.

The rise in Christian sexual morality also corresponded with the Christian invention of the free will (a correspondence, I might add, that has been explored well by previous scholars). Sex, Harper argues, was "integral to the development of the concept of free will," and the development of the "radical notion of individual freedom" facilitated the grand adjustments of Christian attitudes toward marriage and sexuality.

In four chapters, Harper describes the complexities and reverberations of the paradigm shift in sexual morality. Cosmos replaces city. A chilling and severe attitude toward sex replaces the "frank eroticism" of the High Roman Empire. The theological concepts of sin and salvation override the social concepts of shame and reputation. These ideological shifts, moreover, accompany a transformation in the Roman legislation on sex and sexuality. Justinian's criminalization of same-sex love and forced prostitution are, Harper maintains, the legal expression of a Christianization of sexual morality that can be traced back to Paul's letters.

Harper persuades in the aggregate — the grand sweep — and he successfully and subtly integrates an account of the Roman legal system into the history of sex (one of the stated goals of the book). But, in arguing for such a distinct before and after, Harper sacrifices, or at least smoothes over, complexity and multivocality. Insufficient attention is paid to the diversity of attitudes toward eros, marriage, and sexuality among those who identified as Christians, and differences among Christians are obscured to bring the arc of Christianization into clearer focus. By limiting his analysis mainly to the writers of Christian orthodoxy (e.g., Justin, Clement, John Chrysostom, Augustine), Harper paints a picture of an "early Christianity" more coherent than was most likely the case. In his insistence on the "deep earthquake in human morality" wrought by Christianization, Harper may sever too quickly some of the threads that connected early Christians to their Greek and Roman contexts.

One of the shortcomings of the book is Harper's conspicuous lack of engagement with other scholars in the main sections of his argument. The strident argument occasionally comes at the expense of acknowledgement of his intellectual predecessors (with the exception of Peter Brown, Paul Veyne, and Michel Foucault). In the section on Paul and sexuality, for example, a closer engagement with the work of other scholars who have written on Romans 1 (Stanley Stowers, Dale Martin) would have brought Harper's argument for Paul as innovator into sharper focus. Harper is a creative and careful reader of the primary texts. A similar treatment of the secondary scholarship would surely have enriched the book even more.

The shifting attitudes toward bodies, gender, marriage, and sexuality in late antiquity have fascinated scholars for some time now. *From Shame to Sin* contributes to this discussion in important ways, most notably in its insistence that we use a wider frame to assess the impacts of Christianization — a frame that includes not only the theological tractates and sermons of elite church leaders but also fiction, artifacts, and Roman law. These other cultural texts, as Harper demonstrates, have much to teach us about the populations (including slaves and prostitutes) often overlooked in previous studies of early Christian sexual morality.

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Displaced Anxiety: Medieval Christian Representations of the Jew and Christian Self-Reflection

Deeana Klepper

The past few years have seen a stunning increase in violent attacks directed against Jews and Jewish institutions in Europe, leading *The Atlantic* to publish the provocatively titled, "Is It Time for the Jews to Leave Europe?," in their April 2015 issue. In February of this year, an otherwise qualified Jewish candidate was nearly rejected from a seat on the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council Judicial Board because of some council members' concerns about her ability to be objective and fair given her Jewish identity and involvement in Jewish organizations. Just over a year ago, *Marginalia Review of Books* hosted an extended discussion of David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, a study of the ways in which Anti-Judaism has functioned as a central organizing principle in western culture since antiquity. The implication of Nirenberg's book is that, unless we confront this reality, the periodic upheavals of irrational anti-Jewish rhetoric and anti-Jewish violence are unlikely to stop. Unfortunately, modernity's Jewish question seems once again depressingly relevant.

Christian antagonism toward Jews may seem to be forever entrenched, but Sara Lipton's new exploration of the rise of anti-Jewish iconography in western European art challenges the notion of static anti-Judaism throughout the two millennia of European Christianity. The continuity between late medieval and twenty-first-century visual caricatures of Jewishness might lead us to presume that there is something eternal about those depictions. But, in spite of a long tradition of anti-Jewish rhetoric in Latin Christianity, Lipton shows us that there were virtually no visual signifiers for the Jew before the eleventh century. When Jews were depicted in art, they looked like everyone else. The now standard depiction of the Jew as hook-nosed, angry, twisted, wearing degrading clothing, grasping at money bags, and so on emerged gradually over a substantial period of time in the high and late Middle Ages. Before the year 1000, European art did not distinguish between Jewish figures and others. Shortly after the year 1000, artists suddenly were distinguishing Jews by their hats, facial hair, and similar markers. These early representations were distinctive but not necessarily hostile or negative.

The change came about just as Christian devotional culture was increasingly using art and visual experience a s a path toward God. This turn toward the use of outward senses wrought theological discomfort in some Christian circles as expectations of faith and interior knowledge competed with the compelling draw of exterior sight. The Jew, "paradigmatic exemplar of physical vision and its misuse," became "the primary medium through which Christians explored and expressed their changing ideas about knowledge, vision, and representation." In other words, the first images distinguishing Jews from other figures were not primarily about Jews at all. From the beginning,

Christian artists used Jewish visual markers to say something about or to the *Christian* viewer.

The foundational work on representations of Jews in medieval Christian art is *Le juif médiéval au miroir de l'art chrétien* (*The Medieval Jew in the Mirror of Christian Art*) by Bernhard Blumenkranz (1913 – 1989). An Austrian Jew who left Vienna for Paris in 1937, Blumenkranz fought in the French Army, was captured and held in a detention camp in the south of France, and escaped to Switzerland in 1942 with the help of a Swiss priest. After the war he returned to France. His extensive writing on Christian-Jewish relations bore the unmistakable shape of his experience — of both anti-Semitism and Christian benevolence — and the sense that Christian theology was primarily responsible for European attitudes towards Jews historically and in the present. As its title indicates, *Le juif médiéval* treated representations of Jews in medieval art as if they were a straightforward mirror of Christian thinking about Jews.

Lipton — writing in a very different historical moment and with the benefit of decades of new and nuanced research on both Christian-Jewish cultural interaction and on visual culture — reminds us that the Jew may serve as a reflection of a Christian state of being rather than a Jewish one. A central premise of this book is that Christians used visual depictions of identifiably different Jews as a "dark" reflection of all that they found troubling about themselves and their society. And while negative depictions of Jews in medieval art may not have begun as a reflection of Jews' actual state in society, eventually perceptions of Jews came to be shaped, at least in part, by those artistic representations.

Anyone familiar with Lipton's work on the Bible Moralisée will find the multidirectional premise familiar. Although *Dark Mirror* clearly flows out of that earlier study, the material is far broader, covering multiple genres, pushing geographical and chronological boundaries, and presuming a much broader reading audience. Like David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism*, this is a book not only for scholars and their students but also for the general public. And because Lipton writes so well, it will actually work for all of those audiences. But the tone of Lipton's work is quite different. Nirenberg tells a story about continuity and tries to explain the longevity of especially pernicious aspects of Christian thinking about Jews. Lipton instead tells a highly contextualized story that is, in the end, a bit less pessimistic. She specifically wants to counter the notion that "anti-Semitism, 'the longest hatred,' was somehow static and unchanging, that religious or ethnic hatred is inevitable, and that pictures merely reflect the world around them."

The book is organized both thematically and chronologically, with each chapter representing about a half century of time and focusing on some new element that enters into the art of that period. More than that, each chapter deals in some way with visual culture, and Lipton weaves observations on acts of seeing or being seen throughout. The structure is complex, and to get the most out of the book, the reader has to keep multiple threads in mind. The primary argument that makes its way into each chapter concerns the special role of *envisioning* the Jew as witness — Jews are depicted as seeing, failing to see, or being seen. The primary sources Lipton uses exhibit, for the most part, very careful planning and construction; the artists and their patrons obviously invested considerable effort and expense to bring them into being. This is a book that requires viewing as well as reading, and the publisher has admirably included images crisp enough for us to follow Lipton's eyes as well as her words.

The earliest sign to mark Jewish figures as different is the pointed hat. If there is no evidence that the Jew's hat reflected contemporary practice (and Lipton casts firm doubt on the notion that it did), then why assign it? In Bernward of Hildesheim's eleventh-century Gospel, the pointed hat was used to mark out not only Jewish figures but also the non-Jewish Magi. Resembling a bishop's miter,

which of course resembles Aaron's priestly garb, the hat here seems to indicate a position of wisdom, authority, and respect rather than any negative quality associated with Jewish unbelief. Some wearers of the hat (the Magi) see the Christ child as God. Some wearers of the hat (Jewish elders, priests, magistrates) most definitely do not. Lipton argues that the hat draws a visual bridge between Magi and Jewish authorities, encouraging the Christian viewer to note the differences and to choose the side of faith, not in place of vision, but along with vision.

Before long, the hat-wearing "gazing Jew" associated with the wisdom and authority of Old Testament prophets, patriarchs, and elders, was used to signify Jewishness in new contexts, including "an entirely new figure in medieval art — the Jew who sees but only imperfectly perceives." The blindness of the Jews was a mainstay of Christian theological writing, so Lipton's observation that the blindfolds come off of representations of the Jew in the twelfth century is especially interesting. The unseeing gaze of the unbelieving Jew becomes an important component of Christian teaching for Christians. Her discussion is richly illustrated and fits in well with what we know of the trope of Jewish unbelief in miracle tales in this period. How better to prove the legitimacy of a miracle than to have an unbelieving Jew witness it, either as villain or convert?

As the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries gave rise to increasingly disturbing portrayals of Christ suffering on the cross, we start to see increasingly negative images of Jews witnessing the passion. For the first time, Jews wear distorted features, a physical representation of spiritual degradation. "No longer merely imperfect, ignorant, indifferent, or reluctant witnesses to Christian truth, Jews now take center stage as visibly and viscerally hostile enemies of the faith. Rather than simply failing to see or acknowledge the truth, they now either glare with active antipathy at Christ and Christians or deliberately and ostentatiously look away." It is during this period that we first come to see what is now thought to be the quintessential medieval representation of the Jew: "thick lips, heavily lidded eyes, and large, thick noses." These Jews scowl. They are angry, even threatening. Lipton is quick to point out that even with the advent of the hostile Jew, most manuscripts continue to depict Jews without any obvious markers of difference or with benign markers. The appearance of disturbing anti-Jewish imagery at this time does not mean that most art carried such depictions. An entire chapter devoted to the art at Chartres Cathedral makes that point quite well. Sometimes Jews are identifiable, sometimes not. Sometimes attributes associated with Jews as enemies of Christ and the Church are utilized explicitly to mark out non-Jewish enemies of Christ and the Church as well. And sometimes there are what Lipton calls "missed opportunities": places where hostile visual rhetoric might have been deployed against Jews and is not.

By the mid-fourteenth century, the primary indicator of Jewish identity in Christian art was the grotesque Jewish face. Lipton links this transformation with the culture of the schools and scholastic discourse on the physiology of the Jew and Jewish difference from gentiles at the biological level. But just as Christian merchants bear signs of the Jew in Chartres Cathedral, now we find not only Jews marked by facial and bodily distortion but Christian sinners and fools as well. They wear their faithlessness not just on their sleeves, in marked out dress, but in their very form.

Having brought us through the development of anti-Jewish iconography in Christian art, Lipton pauses to consider why these depictions are applied exclusively to male figures. Lipton suggests that the Jew's purpose in art, to serve as "a reliable figure of and witness to Christian truth and triumph and to royal power," was an inherently gendered role: "…from the Christian perspective, Jewish 'testimony' rested upon Jewish scripture, law, and ceremony, which were seen as the unique province of the Jewish male." Furthermore, medieval assumptions about the fluidity of female nature seem to have given women something of a pass; the characteristics associated with femaleness trumped

characteristics associated with Jewishness. Only in the later part of the fifteenth century did that tradition begin to change, when we see Jewish women appear as full participants in crimes of ritual murder.

The final chapter on Jews and viewers in Gospel crowd scenes from 1350-1500 reinforces the argument about the role of the Jew as chastiser of the Christian viewer and the association of this process with urbanization, intellectual culture, and the transformation of medieval society. Lipton uses Leon Battista Alberti's treatise *On Painting* (1435) to great effect as demonstration of the self-conscious deployment of new techniques of seeing and being seen in urban art of the period. These innovations were designed to create a sense of immersion in salvation history for Christian viewers, and this mix allows the figure of the Jew to serve even more effectively as agent for Christian introspection. More than this, though, Lipton argues that the Jew as witness in earlier medieval art created a model for this kind of "seeing and being seen" in a moral sense, something characteristic of fifteenth century urban culture.

Not many people could successfully navigate such diversity of material as Lipton does in this book. She incorporates visual and textual evidence with equal skill and mastery, she has a sophisticated understanding of the theological and ritual contexts necessary to interpret it, and she engages in conversation with relevant scholarship in Christian-Jewish encounter, interreligious polemics, and visual culture. This is obviously a work many years in the making. We need more nuanced discussion like this about the complicated way Christians have engaged with and constructed the idea of "the Jew."

The Boston Baroque recently performed Bach's St. John Passion, and music director Martin Pearlman arranged a panel discussion before the performance to address the question of anti-Judaism in the piece. A Bach expert on the panel argued that, by interspersing the admittedly anti-Jewish words of the Gospel account with arias in which the Christian sinner takes on the identity of the faithless Jew, the piece was not really about the evil of the Jews but the evil of humanity. I found this response highly disturbing. Even if the target of reproach is the Christian who acts or thinks "like a Jew" rather than the Jews themselves, the Jew is still serving as the vehicle for repentance. Is there no path for Christian remorse and atonement without traveling through the Jew? Anti-Semitic acts are not an inevitable outcome of formalized anti-Jewish rhetoric, visual or literary. But the undeniable return in the twenty-first century of old anti-Semitic tropes and of anti-Jewish violence, including outright murder, requires that we take the inheritance seriously. The contrast between the stunning beauty of much of the art discussed in this book and the developing hostility evident as we look across time puts the question on the table. As Nirenberg reminds us, our entire European cultural heritage is laced with anti-Judaism. Lipton's work asks us to confront the reality of anti-Jewish imagery — to come to an understanding of how and why certain negative images were constructed, and in doing so, perhaps, to disarm them.

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"To Celebrate the Best Parts of His Nature:" Fiction and the Discourse of Man

Nick Ripatrazone

William Faulkner began his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech in appropriately grand fashion: "I feel that this award was not made to me as a man, but to my work — a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before." His sentences become more abstract and poetic as the speech continues. The address is a stark contrast to his sometimes acerbic, often dismissive responses seven years later as the Writer-in-Residence at the University of Virginia.

Stockholm and Charlottesville are quite different venues, and an acceptance speech is not the same as question-and-answer sessions with undergraduates, but I have always found Faulkner's Nobel speech pure performance. Mark Greif, author of the expansive *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973*, agrees. Before Faulkner reached worldwide acclaim, he had first been "reclaimed by the South as an honorable son, not a gutter-minded embarrassment." His finest cheerleader was Robert Penn Warren. Unlike most writers who undergo a midcareer renaissance, Faulkner "was available to join in this recasting and act out the role of grand old gentleman and house writer for the crisis of man."

This is not to say that Faulkner was being fake in Stockholm. Greif, co-founder of *n+1* and a professor at The New School, notes "the speech was extremely meaningful to those who encountered it in 1950." Meaningful, and as Greif shows, inevitable. Similar connections and larger epiphanies pepper Greif's comprehensive volume. I am typically wary of works of literary-historical criticism that draw direct lines and lead to unified theses, but Greif's approach is measured and credible. *The Age of the Crisis of Man* offers a master narrative for a major theme of midcentury American fiction.

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This crisis of man "had been a thundercloud continually forming new shapes since World War I." Greif deftly traces multiple strands of thought, including the neo-Thomistic thought of Jacques Maritain and Robert Maynard Hutchins, the Protestant theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, and the *Partisan Review*, "the journal of the New York intellectual core." The New York intellectual cadre enabled French existentialist thought to reach American publications. Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas brought existential thought "toward a moral responsibility represented in the figure of Man and the vexing relations between each individual specimen and an abstract ideal."

Greif's comprehensive background for the discourse of man ends with what he calls the "one true masterpiece" of this early period, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Greif uses the 1951 publication of Arendt's book as the moment when "pressures from the discourses of man had been transferred to other spheres of representation — including the demand that artists answer the problems of the age." The discourse of the crisis of man was about to reach the pages of fiction. Whereas critical considerations of the crisis of man ranged from sentimental liberalism to the allegorically religious, the novel had an "obligation to humanize a fallen mankind." Greif is skeptical that we would place such a humanist responsibility on contemporary novels. Yet the midcentury was plagued by "excitement and almost desperate expectations for individual novelists (with the near-religious belief in the novel's office), coupled with unremitting pessimism about new novels as a group."

Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway filled that space first. Like Faulkner, Hemingway used the "parameters of the novel" as a way to "render an abstract, universal man, and then celebrate the best parts of his nature." "Tantalizing biographical evidence" suggests that "Faulkner's Nobel speech may in fact been at the origins'" of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Despite their lofty goals, Greif argues that both writers failed not as storytellers, but as prophets of the crisis of man; their protagonists become mere "imitation[s] of Christ."

Greif's reading of Faulkner and Hemingway is imperfect. He frames Faulkner with a heavy-handed presentation of his brief, knowingly obtuse Nobel speech and implies that Faulkner the novelist manipulated his characters in the same way. Hemingway's Catholicism is curiously never mentioned; his own fragmented faith makes his representations of Christian archetypes feel more inevitable than Greif suggests. These are minor missteps, as Faulkner and Hemingway are only transitions to fuller discussions of Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison. Bellow's *Dangling Man* makes "progress on the abstraction 'man'" but is "vastly outdone" by Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which supplants abstraction with dramatization. In Ellison's novel, "black normalcy, black perspicacity, intelligence, and complexity" are assumed.

Greif's treatment of Bellow and Ellison forwards his larger argument, but his investigation into the fiction of Flannery O'Connor and Thomas Pynchon is noteworthy. Greif might be forgiven for his silence about Hemingway's quiet belief, but O'Connor's Catholicism is more complicated. Greif praises "her absolute resistance to secular answers — confounding, mocking, refusing them — and yet her four-square dependence on the discourse of man and the questions it assigned to fiction writers, made her etch an incomparably lucid tracing of what was and was not possible for 'faith' in her era." O'Connor's harried stories show the "complications of a return of religion to midcentury meditations on man's 'nature and destiny.'" In contrast to the typical identification of her as a Thomist (she self-identified as one in 1952), Greif thinks she is Augustinian, one heavily influenced by French and German theologians.

Treatises on O'Connor are legion, so why include her in this discussion? O'Connor was an intellectual enigma who "so frequently painted herself as a savage and an outsider that it is worth insisting on the sophistication of her knowledge as an intellectual." O'Connor was one of the earliest American writers to examine Heidegger, but her program was not philosophy or theology. As a fiction writer, O'Connor was concerned with bodies, and Greif identifies her rise as a critical, almost paradoxical one: "she reached a very timely and modern question of the twentieth century by a supposedly untimely, off-kilter, and traditional means and rationale" — that of Catholic approaches toward the corporeal. O'Connor was not interested in perfect bodies. Rather, she "seem[s] to communicate a pure sense that only an opened body can let a Holy Spirit enter" such as the flayed husband in "Parker's Back" and the dying family in "A Good Man is Hard to Find." O'Connor wrestled the crisis of man from abstraction and placed it in bedrooms, in automobiles, and on tractors.

O'Connor is followed by Thomas Pynchon. The sequence is chronologically reasonable enough: Pynchon's seminal early story, "Entropy," was published in the Spring 1960 issue of *The Kenyon Review*, a magazine in which O'Connor published often until 1956. Yet for all his useful examination of O'Connor's idiosyncratic literary Catholicism, Greif does not mention Pynchon's shared religion. Pynchon was raised Catholic in Glen Cove, Long Island. Former Cornell classmate Jules Siegel infamously told *Playboy* that Pynchon "went to Mass and confessed, though to what would be a mystery." Like much of Pynchon's life, his Catholicism is a puzzle (when Siegel queried the difficulty of *V*, Pynchon responded, "Why should things be easy to understand?").

Pynchon's literary Catholicism has received scant discussion. Pynchon is best understood as a Catholic jester writing in the tradition of John Kennedy Toole and, of course, O'Connor. That the two writers have great divergences of geography and content should not negate their shared interest in the union of the absurd and the mundane. Pynchon might be considered the synthesis of the Catholicism of Marshall McLuhan and Andy Warhol, whose communions of saints spanned the electric and artistic worlds. Whether Pynchon is practicing or lapsed is irrelevant to this particular discussion. His fiction is saturated with a Catholic comedic sense.

Greif examines Pynchon's novelistic interpretation of technology, the final area of concern for the midcentury crisis of man. He contextualizes Pynchon's rise as occurring when "high technology had come home from the factory and been domesticated." Within those mundane spaces, "'man' as a being and a concept is put into jeopardy for Pynchon … [through] the changing status of the *parts* of men, and the insertion of inanimate *things* into their bodies and daily habits." Production and consumption are supplanted with "'cycling' and recirculation." The rise of communication technology creates "leftovers and remnants," and this noise creates a "further denudation of values. Stories and personal relations mix with leftover or forgotten objects, and are leveled down to the same neutral status, out of human control." Greif finds this occurring within *V*, but thinks Pynchon's best dramatization of the technological transubstantiation with the crisis of man unfolds in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Greif elevates Pynchon more than most, considering him "the major American author most affected by World War II" other than Norman Mailer and James Jones. Greif acknowledges that Pynchon criticism is its own maze, game, and fandom, but thinks his "work exists not primarily to be deciphered but to be experienced, and, if anything, *situated*." I certainly share Greif's anxiety that Pynchon criticism might sometimes be an exercise in remaking the author in one's own image. That said, there are certain observations that I need to add to Greif's discussion. As a cradle Catholic who practiced well into his college years (and possibly beyond), Pynchon's appropriation

and subversion of Catholic iconography, ritual, and symbolism would be consistent with his engagement of popular culture errata. *The Crying of Lot 49*, no matter one's critical predilections, is a work that builds toward a unifying system, however parodic. Pynchon even published excerpts from the novel as "The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity."

Pynchon's jest is different than O'Connor's, but he is still concerned with bodies. Oedipa Maas's search for personal and spiritual meaning in the novel is muddled by the sheer amount of contemporary references, from Tupperware to *Perry Mason* to The Paranoids, a parody of the Beatles. The information entropy of the text matches the acronym of W.A.S.T.E., an underground mail-delivery system that appears connected with Tristero, a multinational postal conspiracy. Oedipa follows every lead, however absurd, with an almost religious devotion (she tries to track down the original script of a pornographic Jacobean revenge play for mention of Tristero, leading another character to ask, "Why Since the ellipses is only to note Driblette's speaking, we can omit it. is everybody so interested in texts?"). Words and signs are delivered outside of accepted channels, and like her husband Mucho's used car lot, they result in "residue" and "loss." Pynchon is an electronic prophet; Greif calls it "the problem of *recycling* … Pynchon's unusual sensitivity to the survival and persistence of forgotten materials, to new technologies of ephemeral production and unmoored signs and simulations."

That Pynchon places a woman at the center of this crisis of man — a crisis to communicate and find meaning — is significant. The other writers presented in this study, however progressive or experimental, still place men at the center of this crisis. While it is true that Oedipa appears under the distant pull of a man, her deceased ex-boyfriend Pierce Inverarity, she is the detective of the text, the character who makes meaning. Greif comments: "The question *Lot 49* investigates but does not answer is whether there are other ways to use the systems of circulation, for those who have *already* been 'disinherited,' cut out of the hopes of man — or, for someone like Oedipa, where to turn when you are overincorporated within society and feel its unreality, and start to escape it … The problem of answering has everything to do with the way in which the mood of *Lot 49*, besides its sophomoric comedy, is one of unremitting anxiety — and why the unofficial systems of mere circulation seem malevolent at every turn." *The Crying of Lot 49*'s anti-ending is the only appropriate conclusion to the wearied discourse of man. Rather than being a thin novel of nonsense, Pynchon's book fits in the lineage of this significant discourse that "gives a picture of the people who are too poor or ethnic to be 'recognized' (as in Bellow), who had to plunge outside of history when it didn't include them (as in Ellison), who find religious revelation (the 'Word') in broken-up bodies, artifacts, and prostheses, and not in any sanctioned church (as in O'Connor)."

The Crying of Lot 49, then, is a book of searching, a book of faith. Oedipa acts on the faith that not only do words matter, but that there is a Word, and that texts can lead her there. That she does not find what she seeks does not devalue the search. Greif explains that the "lot" of the book's title extends to the "disposition, or fate, or humbled fatalistic destiny of persons and things and dreams that once began with the greatest hopes." The malleability of Pynchon's ending, the passing-off of meaning to the reader, is "as populist as the crisis of man's search for universal man was not … It is enmeshed in the details of mundane technologies, wasted artifacts, daily communication, as the crisis of man's grandiose discourse of technics was not." Pynchon's methods and non-meanings are the perfect counters to midcentury conversations whose collective reach was consistently rebuked by its own seriousness. Pynchon's fiction helped evolve the discourse of the crisis of man from a concern with totalitarianism and over-mechanization to a lack of humanity, a "multiplicity" of self that is as worthless as the noise in Pynchon's southern California. Pynchon, along with

Bellow, Ellison, and O'Connor, took the "abstract discourse of man into the realm of practicality and discovered its missing portions." Their answers "went far beyond its original exponents' suppositions."

Greif's exemplary work is the best document of this midcentury evolution; an affirmation that despite the philosophical and historical origins of the discourse of the crisis of man, it was in the form of the novel that this crisis found its best laboratory.

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Conversations in Black with K. Merinda Simmons

Monica Miller and Christopher Driscoll

MONICA MILLER AND CHRISTOPHER DRISCOLL: Tell us a little bit about yourself and your intellectual trajectory and genealogy. You're a scholar situated within the fields of English as well as Religious Studies, but you're also an interdisciplinary thinker with an identifiable common thread of interest within and among the domains of identity, difference, theory, and method — all of which require exploring a wide variety of data sets. What sorts of questions emerge in your scholarship and how did you arrive at co-editing *The Trouble with Post-Blackness* with Professor Houston Baker?

K. MERINDA SIMMONS: Trained in literary theory and now working as a professor in religious studies, I do actually remain wary of the quick and casual ways in which something called "interdisciplinarity" is invoked in the academy. Scholars are often called interdisciplinary if they simply have several areas of research or interest. While it certainly holds more political currency than the "generalist" designation we would have avoided just a handful of years ago, the two descriptors share a similar fate in which a scholar's content areas define her work more than her brand of analysis or critical approach to those very areas. So, while I do indeed work across a variety of data, as you mentioned, I try to keep central the question that guides my research in each of those domains. That question takes different shapes, of course, but it is typically on the order of the following: *How does "authenticity" come to be identified and authorized in discourses of or about power?* Thus, I am interested in the rhetoric of authenticity as a legitimizing tool that consolidates or contests dominance in one way or another.

This was the lens through which I read Touré's *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness?: What It Means to Be Black Now*. And it is one of the main questions that Houston Baker and I returned to in our

conversations about that very book. We found quickly that our shared critiques and frustrations with the text were in keeping with a discussion that we very much felt needed to be had about the state of contemporary popular political discourse about blackness and American society, and we ultimately decided that the post-blackness label provided a perfect occasion to begin that discussion in earnest with a bigger group of thinkers.

You're also the author of *Changing the Subject: Writing Women Across the African Diaspora* (2014), as well as *Race and Displacement: Nation, Migration, and Displacement in the Twenty-first Century* with Maha Marouan and also a member of the Culture on the Edge international scholarly collaborative. With all of this in mind, give us a sense of where, when, why, and how *The Trouble with Post-Blackness* makes both its appearance and intervention within the academic context as well as current social and political context within the US. We're thinking here of the tension posed between the limited life options emerging from the proliferation of murders of young black teenagers at the hands of police as well as an intense moment of black recognition and exceptionalism by way of President Barack Obama's ascendency to the White House.

One of the main interventions that the book makes, to my mind, within the contexts you mention comes in its implicit (and at times explicit) insistence that those doing work in race studies — whether as academics or activists — complicate the notion of "self-determination" that post-blackness proponents hold up as an unproblematic gold standard of racial performance in America. In order to critique appeals to an authentic way to be black, Touré interviews what he calls "105 luminaries." I am sympathetic to, and would even echo, his starting point — that something called blackness is not reducible to a pure or identifiable state. However, the fluidity and flux that he wants to stack up as worth consideration and even emulation (one of his chapters, after all, is entitled "How to Build More Baracks") are represented only by people of political and economic access and prestige. Complex, boundary-breaking identity performances are not exclusive to one cohort or another — indeed, I would suggest that what we have come to call identity is necessarily constituted by exactly these moments in which regulatory boundaries come into focus through a subject's conformity to or contestation of them. That said, the consequences of these very performances that traverse boundaries and enunciate their own fluidity are quite different across various contexts. It is one thing for Oprah to celebrate being "rooted in, but not restricted by" blackness. It is quite another for the (one in every three) black men in America who will be processed through the prison industrial complex.

Thus, where "blackness" is a moniker (with significant heuristic value and political efficacy) around which people might rally in any number of domains, a post-black call to identify that very moniker as a possible restriction — and, what's more, a restriction that one can simply choose not to be fettered by — strikes me as short-sighted at best. Jelani Cobb's understanding of Ferguson, MO as a metaphor for America itself (rather than the police there being the simpler metaphor of racial oppression) comes to mind. As long as last year's events in Ferguson are representative of the systematized, structural ways in which racial identifications are made and acted upon in the US, "what it means to be black now" is decidedly not something determined by prestigious luminaries. Or, at least, if that *is* the group determining the stakes of Touré's subtitle, it seems only to add oil to the hegemonic American machine that forwards the interests of elite slices of society in the name of broad-scale democracy. Surely one's scope is limited by the pragmatic concerns of book length and cohesion, but I do think post-blackness in the way Touré presents it is a byproduct and subsequent offering of privilege.

Moving along to the impetus behind the book — how did you and Professor Baker initially imagine this collection coming together in terms of form, content, and data? The voices that make up this volume are varied, interdisciplinary, and wide-ranging — how does this assortment provide different models, methods, and sources for the topic of study?

We thought it might be a good idea to bring a number of different kinds of approaches and perspectives to the table inasmuch as we think there are numerous reasons to trouble or critique the concept of post-blackness. When we began talking about possible contributors, we had in mind a clear intellectual rallying point — the problems with post-blackness as a moniker for the contemporary nexus of American politics, economics, and ideology for African Americans — but wanted the essays in the volume to come at that point from various angles. To that end, there are represented in the collection a variety of disciplinary and analytical starting points. Contributors are specialists in English and literature, African and African American studies, anthropology, classics, journalism, and diaspora studies, just to name some of the discourses included in this book. Readers will also be confronted with several genres of academic and nonfiction writing. Professor Baker and I hoped to present the trouble with the notion of post-blackness as a multi-faceted critique, launched from multiple vantage points.

In light of the above question, and although nicely addressed in the Introduction, we cannot help ourselves from asking what role Touré's (also a co-host of MSNBC's The Cycle) book plays in the construction of this volume's thesis, approach and aims/goals? In the Introduction to *The Trouble with Post-Blackness*, you begin by writing, "I should make one thing clear from the outset: this volume is not about Touré. His recent *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness? What It Means to Be Black Now* did give rise to a productive conversation between my co-editor and me, one that sowed the initial seeds toward thinking about a collaborative project addressing this topic." How does his work play and *not* play a role in this volume coming together? In using his work as data — did you and Professor Baker see something symptomatic in Touré's work that speaks to similar and larger moves made in both academia and other publics?

Fair enough. It makes good sense to ask and talk about Touré a bit — I've already brought up his book a few times just in this interview. What I meant by saying that the book is not *about* Touré is that the guiding questions for the collection — and certainly my own interests in this discussion — are not so much to do with Touré qua Touré but in what his roles as media personality and cultural critic/commentator say about the state of popular discourse about race and politics. That is, I struggle with the ongoing attempt by so many talking heads on cable news outlets to keep the spotlight on individual success stories within black communities. As I discussed a bit above, this emphasis on the transcendent power of the individual avoids a long, hard look at social structures that keep inequality in place, often in seemingly neutral ways. There is a presumption that if people tap into their inner *humanity*, without regard to the strictures of race or ethnic background, they will be able to determine their own fates and leave behind the restrictions of sociopolitical identifications. I find deeply problematic, however, this capitalistic brand of social justice speak.

Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness does also seem to engage in some of the same shorthand employed by too many academicians engaged in identity studies right now. Namely, similar to how Touré begins with a critique of authenticity, only to proceed to list and describe three "primary dimensions of blackness" and end his discussion with a chapter entitled "We Are Quintessential Americans," scholars will often make nods to race or gender or sexuality or other identifications as being socially constructed, only to proceed to discuss "Blackness" or "Women" (just for a couple of examples) as unproblematic and clearly identifiable signifiers. So, in a few different arenas, Professor Baker and

I find the Touré text to be a constructive entry point for examining larger mechanics of the current discourse on race and performance, within both pop culture and the professoriate.

Let's discuss for a moment the Introduction to this volume in which you wrote a piece titled, "The Dubious Stage of Post-Blackness — Performing Otherness, Conserving Dominance" — which is, by the way, beautifully written and robustly executed! Give us a sense of what sort of work the title of the Introduction is doing in setting the stage for the ensuing conversation in the volume. You begin with epigraphs by Jean-Francois Bayart on identity (as no such thing, only "operational acts of identification") coupled with words from Pierre Bourdieu that situate the ambivalence of the "intellectual" as "holders of capital," even if they are "dominated among the dominant." Why use these authors and positions to set the stage for the book and unfolding dialogue?

Thanks for your kind words about the Introduction. What I'm getting at with the title of the essay is that, in a focus on the performed nature of identifications marked "other," scholars and cultural critics often play into the very system of dominance they purport to deconstruct. They make quick disclaimers, of course, that remind their readers that certainly whiteness or masculinity or heteronormativity or what-have-you is no less performed or manufactured than spaces marked "marginal," but then go on to refer to those spheres where power is consolidated as obvious or identifiable categories, even if categories all the same. The effect of this scholarly shorthand is the perpetuation of a general claim of whiteness as somehow not-raced, for example. Despite the great work that has been done to disabuse us of that very presumption, it implicitly enters the conversation and remains up and running in claims that present "humanness" as something that transcends racial identification. It is in this way — by treating "human" or "American" as special and outside the signifying spaces of what we identify as race — that proponents of post-blackness use the normative logic of white supremacy.

As I note in my essay, I took the Bourdieu quote from a colleague's blog post, the ensuing discussion of which I use to frame my own argument. Some may take issue with the scholars I quote at the beginning of the essay in order to talk about the categories of blackness and post-blackness, as they are both white French thinkers. However, I think if we take these epigraphs seriously and consider the implications of these ideas, we cannot help but think about identifications of power on an ever-shifting scale. Too often, a dichotomy between the academy and "the real world" informs how scholars think about the work we do. When this happens, standpoint epistemologies take the place of incisive analysis about the ways in which academic/political/social/intellectual capital informs those very epistemologies when presented in scholarly domains. This myopia is at work in much cultural criticism about identifications understood as marginal, and it is also certainly present in the discourse of post-blackness. In both cases, the privilege that informs these discussions of otherness (at least as played out on the stages of academic institutions and cable news outlets) is ignored.

In our estimation, your new book offers a fascinating theoretical and/or methodological tension posed between the tone, approach, and direction taken in the Introduction in particular, and the perspectives taken by some of the contributors. On one hand, we are reminded by a thinker like Bayart in that there is no such thing as post-blackness (or even blackness itself), only operationalized acts that make such terms and realities possible — and yet this volume takes a position *against* a certain kind of discourse that seemingly seeks to erase the very term that has become almost metaphysical in many ways (blackness). In this way, many of the pieces in this volume want to make the claim that something like "blackness" matters, cannot be obscured, erased, and reduced, and must remain an explicit part of the

conversation. How is the discursive vying for the perspicuous and categorical *self-evidence* of blackness (in that it's something we have *not* gotten beyond, past, and as such, must remain on the table as something real) that takes place and shape in this volume different from, say, our comfort with (almost uncontested) terms and categories such as postmodernism and postcolonial? Scholars don't — although sometimes they do — seem too worried that we're not really *post* in these sorts of ways. What stakes are involved in keeping *blackness* verses *post-blackness* on the table of conversation?

I think I see the tension to which you're referring — some essays do take a protectionist stance toward "blackness" as an important category of identity, whereas my own emphasis lies in rhetorical turns and their implications. Despite the analytical differences apparent at points in the book, however, there is a consistent insistence on taking stock of context and historical specificities that I find really productive. Whatever one's particular approach to troubling the concept of post-blackness may be, the challenge to consider how "blackness" has been understood and deployed in various domains is an important one.

For my own part, the point is not about staking a claim in whether there should or should not be the term, as your question seems to imply. I don't think that's the point for Touré or others who advocate for post-blackness either, inasmuch as the attempt to rework how we think about blackness is hardly a call to do away with the label. Following Bayart, the term itself has not become metaphysical — people with certain interests utilize it in that way, perhaps, but that is suggestive of the politics surrounding such uses of the term and has little to do with some kind of meaning the term might be thought to possess in its own right. I would also take issue with the idea that to say we've not gotten beyond or past something called blackness is to say that it must remain on the table as *real*.

I would hesitate to pinpoint an "it" that we might get beyond, in fact. I do not see blackness as an entity hovering outside discourse and just waiting for people to recognize it or call it what it is. That very impulse to identify it as such, I think, is what casts the term within conversations about metaphysics. Instead, what happens if we look at blackness as a tool within a rhetorical toolbox, a tool like any other? This tool, when identified or used in certain ways (in the case of Michael Slager's treatment of Walter Scott, as something inherently dangerous or easily discarded), can have fatal consequences. In the hands of Huey Newton and Angela Davis, the tool consolidates power in otherwise disenfranchised spaces. When used by Touré, the tool accommodates self-definition. The attempt to "get beyond" a label implies that there is a way to get outside of language or discourse, and I find that troublesome.

In a similar sense (if I'm understanding your question correctly), I don't think that scholars should be worried about what people are or are not "post" (modern, colonial, or otherwise). Our job as scholars, to my mind, is to be interested in how such labels are utilized and what consequences these utilizations entail. Sure, the categories you brought up (postmodernism and postcolonialism) are at times tossed around in the academy a bit too quickly or without enough analytical grounding. But that isn't because what's *really* true is that we're not *actually* post-modern or whatever the case may be. Rather, the problems with using such terms in the way I so often hear them invoked in the academy involve the failure to take seriously the methodological demands of these approaches. That is, too many scholars seem to think that they are doing postmodern analysis if they simply talk about "identity" as such at all. The quick nods to social construction, as I mentioned above, give way to traditional and quite conservative discussions of identity as a thing social actors possess or access. They thus fail to press postmodern or postcolonial approaches to identity that present

"it" as contingent upon and manufactured by vested interests and identifications. So, I am not more or less compelled by "blackness" versus "post-blackness" as a term or signifier. The stakes in utilizing such terms are not to do with picking the right one — the stakes are to do with treating either as an experiential and evident end in itself.

To the meat of the volume more specifically — how did you and Professor Baker organize this collection of work? In this text, we encounter pieces that touch on themes such as blackness in aesthetics, time, technology, globalization, authorship, and institution. What can readers expect to encounter in these areas of the book? You note at the end of the Introduction that this is just a collaborative start to the conversation on post-blackness but not the end, and you then provide scintillating questions for further pondering and future discussion. In your estimation, where do you see the conversation heading? What sorts of theoretical and methodological turns do such future queries necessitate?

There are a lot of different ways we could have organized the volume thematically, of course. What finally became our organizational pattern was the result of our thinking through the various approaches and data sets presented by our contributors and incorporating some suggestions made by outside readers when the text was going through the peer-review process. However, the groupings identified in the Introduction are by no means hard and fast divisions within the essays, and they do not appear as sharp lines of demarcation in the structuring of the book. They appear only in the Introduction as a way to think about the myriad contexts for working through the trouble with post-blackness. Readers will, of course, organize the collection differently based on their own interests as they go through the book.

Where I hope the conversation is heading is in a more self-reflexive direction in which cultural critics take stock of the investments that guide their own approaches rather than simply using their own experiences or subject positions to launch uncritical analyses that ignore the assumptions that are necessary to offer these analyses in the first place. Such a direction would potentially look at, for one thing, the possibilities and limits of public intellectualism as the scholarly discourse on race becomes increasingly played out in cable news and online contexts. This impulse is what's at work, for example, in my asking at end of the Introduction how we might discuss blackness and identity without resorting to experiential authority and race phenomenologies.

Finally, given your work here, and in other publications, some of which are forthcoming (*Codes of Conduct: Code Switching and the Everyday Performance of Identity*, with Miller), what questions, topics, and themes are you currently at work on? How does (and has) your work at *Culture on the Edge* around identity/identification inform your current projects and thinking? What can the fields you work in and around expect as you continue to advance critical approaches to a variety of data sets — including but not limited to slave religion, literary studies, gender, diaspora, theory and method in the academic study of religion, and categories such as blackness/post-blackness/whiteness and so on?

My attempt to work through the implications of a focus on identification rather than identity is definitely evident in my current projects. I'm very happy to be doing the editorial work that you cite with Monica Miller in a volume on the topic of code-switching that looks through a theoretical lens at discourses of power, agency, and performance. She and I are keeping the collaborative work going, too, with some preliminary steps made toward a workshop on the politics of identity and authorship that we hope will materialize this Fall.

I am also writing a few essays specifically within the context of religious studies — one responding to the new *Norton Anthology of World Religions*, one that will become part of the *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*, and one discussing the state of "critical theory" in religious studies scholarship. In different ways, all of these pieces will be taking a look at scholars' proximity to their objects of study. I am also in the early stages of several book projects: my second single-author monograph, which will be a critical study of the category "slave religion" as employed by ethnohistorians and religionists; a co-authored book (with Craig Martin, St. Thomas Aquinas College) on the intersection of gender theory and religious studies (two scholarly ships passing too often, as far as I'm concerned); and a short co-authored book (with James A. Crank, U of Alabama) that will provide something of a suggestive primer on race and so-called "new modernisms." Working with scholars who specialize in race studies, religious studies, and literary studies helps me clarify my own terms of engagement with these interlocking points of analysis. My hope, too, is that doing so keeps front and center the work of methodological and theoretical specificity within interdisciplinary scholarship.

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Genius Denied and Reclaimed: A 40-Year Retrospect on Marshall G.S. Hodgson's The Venture of Islam

Bruce B. Lawrence

Marshall Hodgson was both a genius and a visionary. While he may have seemed to be just another university professor, at once restless, innovative, and genial, he was also an academic *Übermensch* with a global agenda. He wanted to change the world by changing the way we saw, understood, and engaged Islam within world history. Born in 1922, he was drafted but as a Quaker refused to fight in World War II. After serving five years in detention camp, he returned to school, graduating from the University of Chicago with a PhD in the early 1950s. He had been teaching from the notes that became *The Venture of Islam* for over a decade before his demise in 1968. Forty-six years after his death, and 40 years since the posthumous publication of his magnum opus, his legacy remains puzzling. Was he ahead of his time, or has he been overtaken by the Cold War and its aftermath, including the horror of 9/11, along with its own, persistent aftermath?

Hodgson was informed, above all, by a moral vision of world history. He thought that Islam mattered because it righted the intellectually wrong yet emotively triumphalist notions of Eurocentric domination in world history. Hodgson began by expanding the backdrop for Islam to include the emergence of all historically documented societies. He stressed the formative features of world civilization dating from 3 millennia before the Common Era. By 1500 BCE, there had emerged four core cultural areas: Mediterranean, Nile-to-Oxus, Indian, and Chinese. It was two rivers, the Nile to the south and Oxus to the north, which provided the map markers etching the core area of what became Islamicate civilization. There was no Middle East or Near East, since in each case these qualifiers presumed an absent center: middle to where? near from where? east of where? Instead, it was these two major waterways, the Nile and the Oxus, which framed major developments characterizing the earliest three phases of Islamicate civilization. They are best

viewed in alliterative or assonant pairs.

The first phase Hodgson called Formation and Orientation (500-634), which ends after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and his initial successor, Abu Bakr. The second is a phase of Conversion and Crystallization (634-870). Though Islamic rule comes to prevail, there are not yet Muslim majorities in all regions under Islamic rule. The third phase is Fragmentation and Florescence (970-1041), as Muslim polities splinter while Islam itself emerges as a major civilizational force for the first time.

What follows is no less important but not as easily summarized as those first centuries of Islamic expansion and rule. A fourth phase, Migration and Renewal (1041-1405), carries us through the early Mongol invasions and the aftermath of Tamerlane. It is followed by a fifth phase of Consolidation and Expansion (1405-1683); Hodgson ends this period with a glance at Indian Ocean Islam after reviewing the three land-based empires, Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal (or Indo-Timuri). Finally, there crystallizes the sixth phase of Reform, Dependency, and Recovery (1683-present); completed after Hodgson's death, it includes a postlude from WW II to the present,titled "Islam and Globalization: the Age of Mobility". [See "the Islamic World", an epitome by Hodgson's former student, Marilyn Waldman, along with Malika Zeghal, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online.]

Here *in nuce* is what Hodgson argued about the importance of seeing Islam over the timeframe of 1500 years but with an emplotment that was closer to 3000 years. The interaction of the known world is crucial. The Nile-to-Oxus, the future core of Islamdom, was the least cohesive and the most complicated of the four cultural core areas. Whereas each of the other regions developed a single language of high culture — Greek, Sanskrit, and Chinese, respectively — the Nile-to-Oxus region was a linguistic palimpsest of Irano-Semitic languages of several sorts: Aramaic, Syriac (eastern or Iranian Aramaic), and Middle Persian (the language of eastern Iran). The Nile-to-Oxus region, of course, became conjoined with the Arabian Peninsula through the expansion of early Muslim rule to neighboring regions, but the nature of the society, culture, and religion that evolved was bi-directional. Though the Arabs conquered, the people, the institutions, and the societies they conquered challenged and changed them. The crucial period is 800-200 BCE, known as the Axial Age because the world's first religions of salvation developed in each of the four core areas, and from these traditions — for example, Judaism, Mazdeism, Buddhism, and Confucianism — derived all later forms of high religion, including Christianity and Islam.

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To begin to understand Hodgson the man or to appreciate his legacy, one must begin where he began: with a moral vision that accommodates civilizational continuity and change. At the World Council of Middle East Studies Conference in 2014, one of Hodgson's most distinguished students, Huricihan Islamoglu, epitomized that vision with four essential points: All of us are in this together and there is a shared history more significant than the differences and conflicts that separate us; the individual matters in a pragmatic, economic context; all human action is historically contingent, subject to an ebb and flow that can only be understood retrospectively and with constant self-criticism; and finally, the individual counts not just as contingent subject but also as empowered agent of change.

Hodgson had precursors, including the 14th century polymath Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun had argued that history was about social organization and civilizational patterns, and that religion

mattered less for its heroes than for the patterns of social exchange they promoted. In a similar vein, Hodgson locates Islam not as an outsider but an insider to world history, with more than religion at stake. Islam was so broad, its influence so pervasive, it defies categorization as Muslim or Islamic, belonging only to Muslim actors and practices, creeds, rituals, or structures. Instead, for Hodgson, there is a vibrant, moving, resilient tradition that is best understood as Islamic*ate*. The *–ate* is much more than an added syllable: it is a stark challenge to rethink all that is meant by Muslim and Islam. It is the social and cultural palette that emerged from Islamic rule, encompassing and influencing non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Islamicate, with the *–ate* tacked on to the end, adds oddity and resonance to what becomes the heritage of Islam for world civilization.

Underlying this central argument is an even larger premise: there is only world civilization and Islam is a part of it, not apart from it. Islamicate tradition encompasses but also projects all the elements of Islamic thought that came from pre-Islamic resources — Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, by language; Magian, Jewish, and Christian by religion; Byzantine, Sassanian, Mongol by imperial domains. Islam — or, more accurately, Islamicate civilization — in turn, becomes part and parcel of the emergent West in developments that unfolded after 1800.

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The Hodgsonian project did not end with his death. It is ongoing. In 2014 Islam and Muslims are still struggling to be part of world history on a global plane. The so-called clash of civilizations debate, linked to both Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, as well as one of Huntington's former students, Frances Fukuyama, only highlights Euro-centrism and Western hegemony by other means, with old arguments recycled under new rubrics. Beyond the several critiques of civilizational theory one must locate an alternative path connecting pre-modern to modern history. To rethink the Afro-Asian ecumene (the known world before 1500 CE) as a cosmopolitan vision of polycentric nodes requires attention, above all, to metacities, and to networks that link disparate metropoles from Asia to America, from the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

Among all world historians of the 20th and now 21st century, only Hodgson has accented Islamicate civilization as itself the locus of modern history: without developments in Islamdom (the counterpart to Christendom in historical reckoning), the so-called rise of the West would never have happened. *The Venture of Islam* corrects the fallacy that the defining arc of global civilization is centered in the West, with not just the Muslim world but also the so-called Third World and the larger Afro-Asian ecumene deemed to be parochial, traditional, and underdeveloped

Hodgson uniquely and decisively underscored the pervasive notion of an inclusive, multi-centered world order where Islamicate norms and values informed what have now become cosmopolitan longings and belongings. Constitutions were not just Western inventions but also adaptable, critical instruments, helping to shape an Islamicate cosmopolitanism during the 20th and now 21st century. Legal pluralism predates the 18th century, and Hodgson demonstrated how a hemispheric world history, paying equal attention to all parts as interactive nodes in a single system, requires us to see the multiple ways that Persianate, Turkic, and Indic cultures and societies redefine constitutionally mandated citizenship in accordance with Islamicate norms and values.

I consider Hodgson's contribution of pivotal importance to the ambiguous yet productive category "Islamicate cosmopolitanism." This category involves citizenship, cultural identity, class/ gender

perspectives, and, of course, network theory, across time and space but always relating to cities. It involves not just Muslims but all those who are engaged by Muslim others, whether in a majority or minority Muslim polity. Despite the screeds of terrorism and Islamophobia, Islamicate pluralism has emerged, and deserves analysis, as the unexpected yet evident consequence of Hodgson's moral, cosmopolitan vision.

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I am an unabashed Hodgsonian, never having known him but having taught *The Venture of Islam* for over 35 years at several universities. Others have been charier of relating the Hodgsonian legacy to their own work. Consider the caveat of a sympathetic fellow academic, Anouar Majid. In his broad gauged manifesto, *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World* (2000), Majid, a Moroccan literary critic teaching in the USA, noted Hodgson's focus on language: "Islamicate refers not only to the religion of Islam but also 'to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.' Although this eminent scholar made a compelling argument for the need to coin new terminology to deal with the history of 'Islamdom,' older prejudices continue to determine the questions asked by, and consequently the outcomes of, scholarship on Islam."

But just *how* do "older prejudices continue to determine the questions asked by, and consequently the outcomes of, scholarship on Islam?" One has to assess the reception of Hodgson in both the UK and the USA. Some ignore him, others read him selectively, still others have tried to refute him. The British historian Frances Robinson engages with Hodgson's ideas but not his terminology or frame of argument. He gives full credit to Hodgson for the inspiration and the goad to produce his own *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (1982). A luxuriant coffee table text, with more maps than Hodgson and also abundant, evocative pictures, it is dedicated to just the modern period, since 1500. While Robinson's *Atlas* sketches the major themes of political, economic, and religious history that define Islam in relation to the West, Islam remains outside the West, the 'other' confronting yet also defining the West.

The American historian Ira Lapidus is similarly indebted to Hodgson. Not only does he reproduce maps from *The Venture of Islam* but he also echoes many of Hodgson's perspectives in his extensive work, *A History of Islamic Societies* (1988). Reducing the three-volume *Venture of Islam* (over 1600 pages) to one volume (a 'mere' 1002 pages) is itself an advantage, yet Lapidus goes further: he also telescopes the history of Islam into three phases: Islamic emergence, or the emergence of what he calls Islamic mass societies; the long period of diffusion, including the growth of the major empires; and, most recently, the period of European dominance, relative economic decline, and also post-colonial nationalisms. Lapidus is not so much Hodgson-lite as an alternative way of understanding contemporary Islam, mainly as an urban-oriented cultural phenomenon with broad, often unintended political and social consequences.

While both Robinson and Lapidus applaud without embracing Hodgson, some British scholars openly oppose Hodgson. Christopher Bayly of Cambridge, in his 2013 Humanitas lectures at Oxford now available as a podcast, critiqued Hodgson for his persistent Teutonic essentialism and his clandestine Third Worldism. Bayly argued that Hodgson tried to disguise his own marginal pursuits (he was a vegetarian as well as a pacifist) and to substitute Islam/Islamic world for Third World. Bayly alleged that Hodgson used Muslim persons and cases, along with Islam-specific arguments, in order to buttress his counter-capitalist, quasi-socialist appeal as a world historian.

Bayly's view has been challenged, even within British academia. Faisal Devji of Oxford was invited to give the rejoinder to Bayly. Devji applauded Hodgson's effort to insinuate Islam between Europe and India, forging a new model of hemispheric history. In particular, he called attention to Hodgson as a moralist on the margins. Since Hodgson wrote but one short monograph, *The Secret Order of Assassins* (1955), speculated Devji, was not that work in some sense the weathervane for the *The Venture of Islam*, itself a didactic project turned into a multi-volume book? While Devji overstates the Persianate themes in volume three, heavily edited after Hodgson's death, he still sees the big frame and the moral thrust of Hodgson's labor, a refreshing contrast to the narrow diatribes that mark Bayly's intervention.

What above all characterized Hodgson was openness about scholarly pre-commitments and the continuous, unending need to exercise self-criticism. To cite Huricihan Islamoglu once more, what distinguished Hodgson from his colleagues at the University of Chicago and elsewhere in American academia was his "unconstrained openness about himself, his ambivalences, and his strife. He was a man trying to discover or actualize himself as a man of Enlightenment (not *the* Enlightenment), a Westerner with all its contradictions. Not constrained by Quakerism or by narrowly defined leftism, he strove to re-cast himself as a universal man with a moral position. It is that quest that permeates Hodgson's life as also his work."

And now more than 40 years after Hodgson, we are witnessing an uptick in scholarly use of "Islamicate." Some recent publications have noted the robust resilience of Islamicate as a qualifier for pre-modern cultural/intellectual engagement across creedal, sectarian, or linguistic borders in Afro-Eurasia. From E.J. Brill in Leiden there is a new journal, *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* (since 2013), while another academic collective with inclusive links to all periods and perspectives of world history has launched a website, *Society for Contemporary Thought and the Islamicate World* (since 2010), with both a book review and debate forum.

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Hodgson's relevance to the 21st century can only be secured through the classroom, and it is over the value of his magnum opus as a teaching text that even the most rigorous and dedicated Islamic studies scholars remain divided. On the cusp of the new millennium Brannon Wheeler, another graduate of the University of Chicago, organized a conference to look at the process of what became the title for his edited book: *Teaching Islam* (2003). Asked to participate, I had to confess: "I am the first to admit that communicating Persianate and Islamicate nuances to undergraduates is a challenge. One can duck it, but at the risk of oversimplification and reversion to stereotypes. One can take it up, but only with judicious use of sources that have appeared since Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam*. One might best begin by assigning the *Encylopaedia Britannica (EB)* instead of the original text. It was an accomplished historian of premodern Afro-Asian Islam, Marilyn Waldman, who penned the *EB* entry, 'The Islamic World.' Waldman builds on the work of her own teacher, who was none other than Marshall Hodgson. Like the inventor of Islamicate and Persianate accents, Waldman tries to make sense of the actual stages of shift within Islamicate civilization. Her prose not only mirrors Hodgson's but also simplifies and streamlines some of his major theses." Over a decade later I still rely on Waldman. It was from her essay that I quoted at the beginning of this essay, and it is to her that belongs the credit for evoking the core themes, as also the salient neologisms, without reproducing all the arguments or ambiguities of the original three volumes published in 1974.

Waldman, like Hodgson, accounts for space, the known world at different moments in time. There

are real junctures, defined by multiple forces and also compelling individuals, as well as novel structures. The major areas coalesce as the Afro-Asian ecumene, or in a nod to the ascent of Europe, the Afro-Eurasian ecumene. For the emergence of Islam, there are two crucial forces: the Iranian and Hebrew languages. Hence one needs the term Irano-Semitic, as also later Perso-Arabic. In effect, one cannot think of either Judaism or Islam without Iran. It is another vector, at once competing with and complementing its neighbors. Seamlessly yet effectively, Waldman weaves this distinction along with others into the artful narrative of her *Encyclopaedia Britannica* epitome of *The Venture of Islam*. Alas, however, because Waldman's essay, with the Zeghal codicil, is available only through *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it has not received the attention it and Hodgson's vision merit.

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The briefest and most poignant estimate of Hodgson's legacy must be his impact on the general public. Since 9/11, but arguably since the 1979 Iranian revolution, we have endured the popular, media-stoked cry from the far right about the evil of Islam. While it has echoes in America, as in the recent flap about Bill Maher's critique of Islam, it is from Europe that we find the strongest fires fanning the notion that Muslims don't fit in, and don't belong in, Western societies.

It was early summer 2014. I had visited al-Jazeera's website for headline stories. One was entitled: "On anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe." The story's author, a British sociologist with no political or ethnic axe to grind, starkly noted: "Though immigrants in general are singled out as a social and economic threat to European societies and workers, it is Muslims in particular who have come to epitomize the 'bad other.' This has been achieved not only through the xenophobic propaganda of the far right. Actually, conservatives and even liberal and left-wing parties have contributed to the fanfare."

Muslims as "the bad other" — it was Hodgson's nightmare, but it has become daily fare in 21st century Euro-America. It does not matter whether Sara Harris, the author of the al-Jazeera essay, is right or wrong in her assessment. From the deep perspective of the Axial Age, Muslims, like Jews, as also Christians and every other human community, will be vindicated by what they have done, not vilified by what has been done to them. Still, in the short term the headlines make it very difficult to turn from immediate crises that fuel the popular media to calmer assessments — at once more productive and more predictive — of historical change. That is why Hodgson is both so necessary and so perilous as a catalyst for our 21st century engagement with Islam.

And so one must conclude that for the general public, we find a focus so obsessively honed on the perceived clash of civilizations and the ongoing war on terror that the subtleties of Hodgson are not just masked but also erased in shrill debates about Islamophobia/Islamophilia. Scholars are partly at fault for this flattening focus. Though unintentionally, Edward Said's *Orientalism* has impeded Hodgson's vision. Said's elegantly crafted 1978 manifesto reviewed and critiqued Orientalist scholars for their disguised political intent. He heaped scorn on Hodgson's dissertation director, Gustave von Grunebaum, an Austrian refugee of Nazi Germany, who taught at Chicago in the early 1950s before later moving to Los Angeles and founding the Near East Studies Center named after him at UCLA. Hodgson, however, is absent from the pages of *Orientalism*. He differed as much from von Grunebaum as he did from his Chicago colleagues. He was in a real sense a pre-Orientalist, post-Orientalist, but because he died before finishing his major book, the storm of protest, like the fawning praise, over *Orientalism* highlighted Said's approach rather than Hodgson's counter-approach. Even though he raised issues about scholarly pre-commitment long

before Said's book appeared on the cusp of the Iranian revolution, and self-doubt began to pervade American academia, Hodgson's contribution to a broader, more constructive view of Islam across time and space was occluded, first by the *Orientalism* debate in the 80s and 90s, and then by the war on terror from 2001 until now.

Generational change in tastes also cannot be ignored. To the extent that Hodgson's legacy has been reduced, it is not just because of his too capacious historical vision or his choice of tongue twisting key terms; it is also because the public at large can no longer see nuance within Islam, or Islam as nuanced within world history, to the degree that was possible for Hodgson back in the mid-60s. Yes, those were terrible times for America: the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the grinding poverty of many, and the turmoil of the Civil Rights movement. But there was room for a moral vision, one that Hodgson provided and one that still beckons.

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The Vibrant Religious Life of Silicon Valley, and Why It's Killing the Economy

Samuel Loncar

He even looks like a prophet.

Well, how a prophet might look like in the digital age. Jaron Lanier, technologist and computer scientist, cannot be mistaken for a small man in any sense. A polymath by conservative standards, he appears publicly in a large T-shirt and baggy pants. Dreadlocks older than the average adult in Silicon Valley complete a look that is appropriately idiosyncratic. He invented virtual reality (the idea and its first technological fruit); never finished college yet hung out with famous scientists at Caltech and MIT as a child; has numerous patents; and can be safely assumed to know more about math, science, and technology than anyone you know. He is also a philosopher (and a brilliant one at that), an accomplished musician known for his mastery of ancient and esoteric instruments from cultures few anthropologists have heard of, and a man of deep humanistic learning.

His prophetic role emerged with the publication of his first book, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, in which he defended a digital humanism against the anti-humanist credo at the heart of Silicon Valley. *Who Owns the Future?*, a sequel of sorts, develops an in-depth critique of the current economic and technological system of Web 2.0 and its cultural home, Silicon Valley. Beyond critique, he offers a new proposal for a future in which the middle class will thrive, and even exist, an alternative to the future he thinks our current system is creating: one in which inequality is not a temporary fluke, soon to even-out as goodies trickle down from the high towers of Wall Street and flow from the bounty of Silicon Valley, but rather a structural condition as likely to disappear as billionaires are to divest themselves of their wealth and become impoverished social justice workers, toiling alongside the lower classes whose ranks they helped swell. Yeah, not very likely.

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To understand Lanier's work and its significance, one has to grasp how different Silicon Valley is from the rest of the country. Most importantly, one needs to realize that Silicon Valley has a vibrant religious culture, a more-or-less orthodox theology, and plenty of rites and institutions to keep its priestly caste employed and relevant. Sound implausible, perhaps the wild imaginings of a writer hailing from a religious studies department? Then you probably haven't heard of The Singularity.

Few things embody the religion of Silicon Valley better than the idea of The Singularity. In 2045, according to futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil, the exponential increase in technological innovation will reach a point where humans transcend biology and merge with technology, becoming functionally immortal as spiritual machines, no longer dependent on our embodied condition. In short, technology will provide the answer to the fundamental human anxiety, mortality, and will lead us towards the most basic aspiration of traditional metaphysics and religion, union with divinity. When describing the Singularity University, co-founded by Kurzweil, and its ideas, Lanier says: "these are ideas with tremendous currency in Silicon Valley; these are guiding principles, not just amusements, for many of the most influential technologists … All thoughts about consciousness, souls, and the like are bound up equally in faith, which suggests something remarkable: What we are seeing is a new religion, expressed through an engineering culture." The title of David Silva's documentary on The Singularity sums up the religiosity at its core: "Turning into Gods." [See also Michael Burdett's *MRB* essay, "Atheism 3.0? Alain de Botton's School of Life and Transhumanism."]

The "religion of technology" is not itself new. The late historian David Noble, in his book by that title, traced its origins in a particular strain of Christianity which saw technology as means of reversing the effects of the Fall. What is new, and perhaps alarming, is that the most influential sector of the economy is awash in this sea of faith, and that its ethos in Silicon Valley is particularly unfriendly to human life as the middle classes know it. The general optimism about divinization in Silicon Valley motivates a widespread (though by no means universal) disregard for, and even hostility toward, material culture: you know, things like bodies (which Silva calls "skin bags") and jobs which involve them.

The very fact that Silicon Valley has incubated this new religious culture unbeknownst to most of the outside world suggests how insulated it is. On the one hand, five minutes spent listening to the CEO of Google or some other tech giant will show you how differently people in Silicon Valley think from the rest of the country — listen carefully and you realize most of them simply assume there will be massive unemployment in the coming decades — and how unselfconscious most are of their differences. On the other hand, listen to mainstream East Coast journalists and intellectuals, and you would think a kind of ho-hum secularism, completely uninterested in becoming gods, is still the uncontested norm among modern elites.

The truth is far more interesting. There exists a massive though rarely discussed division between the technological elites and the conventional elites in politics, journalism, and academia. The biggest division is that the former have a vibrant, motivating, visionary eschatology, which is a core part of the religion of Silicon Valley, whereas the latter have a vision of the future so boring, bland, and vague that it often boils down to more equality, more freedom, somehow, indefinitely. It's hard to argue with. It's also hard to care about or take risks for. Eschatology is not the same thing as a simple view of the future. It is a vision of the end times, of a radical, qualitative transformation of history that warrants a sense of historical ending and discontinuity. Every utopian politics culminates in an eschatological vision. Whatever we would be after The Singularity, it would be hard to call it human in the current sense. And without humans, what happens to history?

Silicon Valley's religion has a clear vision of the future — naturally there are always dissenters, like Lanier — motivated as much by faith as reason; it is a vision of increasing dematerialization, a concomitant emphasis on the technological alteration and eventual transcendence of our embodied condition, and the rise of a friction-less world in which autonomy and choice extend toward infinity (an Ayn Randian utopia). The reason this matters to everyone is that, whatever may be true about this vision, its current implementation makes one thing eminently plausible: absent major changes, one part of society sure to dematerialize is the middle-class. Why? Because the religion of Silicon Valley has an ethics, one which sounds good but works disastrously, on Lanier's analysis. It is the ethics of the open culture. Information should be free! Write a new program? Put it online for anyone to use and improve. Create new music? Forget sales! Share it with your friends. Make the world a better place. Money will take care of itself … until it doesn't.

Lanier confessed his own role in creating this culture and its norms of unrestricted and unremunerated information sharing in *You Are not a Gadget*, and he still stands by how ideal such a world would be and how much good it would contain. The problem, one he is now trying to solve in *Who Owns the Future?*, is that the ideal "ignored the nature of computation." Computers are not equal. "A top computer can bring limitless wealth and influence to that lucky computer's owner and the onset of insecurity, austerity, and unemployment for everyone else."

Real power today comes from information superiority, he says, and he calls the massive servers that have huge information advantages and computational superiority Siren Servers. A Siren Server amasses benefits to itself based on its superior information but does not internalize the risks of its own activities. Instead, it externalizes risk to the people it depends on, namely its "products," i.e., users of services like Google, who freely provide the information on which the Siren Server works its magic, and more broadly the citizens of our political system, who have to bail out companies for their own risky behavior, which they based on data from these Siren Servers.

Lanier makes his basic economic point by noting that, for our society to work, the distribution of goods has to follow a bell-curve and not a winner-take-all (or "long tail") distribution. The current information economy follows the winner-take-all distribution. This is obvious even to a casual observer who compares the valuations of major technology companies and the size of their work force with, say, traditional manufacturing corporations. Apple and Ford provide an archetypal contrast. Having recently reached 700 billion dollars, Apple is approaching the never-before achieved trillion dollar line in its market capitalization. It employs some 92 thousand people as of 2014. Ford, which has 187 thousand employees, has a market capitalization of 65 billion. The point here is not that Apple is bad; just the opposite. Lanier understands perfectly well that this trend is a good thing from the perspective of economics and innovation. It means technology is making the economy more efficient; thus a company like Apple can, with half the people, have a value more than tenfold that of a traditional manufacturing company. More value at less cost is good business.

The problem resides in how things are getting cheaper: technology replaces human labor, and does so at an accelerating rate. What happens to all the industries that rely on drivers when self-driving cars become mainstream? Or manufacturing when 3D printing becomes cost-effective? Will the music industry and its fate become a template for all middle-class jobs? Lanier thinks so. Unless we change way the web works, the middle-class, he fears, will be disrupted out of existence.

But Lanier is a prophet, not an enemy, of Silicon Valley. He loves technology and doesn't see a future in which its dominance wanes; our economy is, and will increasingly become, an information

economy. The challenge is how to have a middle class in an information-driven economy, and the answer Lanier offers is to reject the ethics of the open culture and start paying people for the value they produce: information, whether in Google-searches, Facebook posts, or translations that get mined by algorithms to create free translations that are nonetheless based on human work, work which is unacknowledged and made more penurious with every advance in translating software. This could be done, Lanier thinks, through a micro-payment system, which would automatically track any use of people's information and give them a micro-payment in return for that use. The argument seems intuitively plausible. Its details are less important, however, even on Lanier's view, than the general need to rethink the way we treat people's information. It is crucial that we stop creating an informal information economy, in which the value regular people create is left off the books, as it were, while then converted into profits by those behind the Siren Servers. The solution, whatever its details, demands that the value of people's information is economically acknowledged and remunerated. Lanier's book is serious and thoughtful, full of insights both technological and humanistic, but it is also optimistic in a way that underscores his open confession that he is part of the culture he critiques.

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The problem with the open-culture ethic — and the religion of Silicon Valley in general — is not just that it ignores the nature of computation. The problem is that it ignores the nature of humans. The fact that some people, like the young Lanier, genuinely believe free information, especially personal information, is a good thing does not change the fact that such an ideology is a major asset to multibillion-dollar corporations whose services rely on people volunteering their information, which is then packaged, analyzed, and sold. For this same reason, it's hard to see how the architecture of the Web would ever be changed in a way that makes it more expensive for the people profiting off of its current configuration. To be sure, Lanier argues compellingly that it is ultimately in the long-term interest of these very corporations, and not just their consumers/products, to reform the current system, as they rely on the very middle class that they are eroding. But the business world is not known for taking the long view of things. More worrisome still, the same short-term thinking that dominates business operates as vibrantly, and arguably more destructively, in politics.

Although Lanier's analysis primarily focuses on the economy, the actual solution (as with any large-scale problem) could only arise through people's rediscovery of themselves as citizens of a polity whose governance requires their thoughtful and sustained engagement. But we have outsourced governance to the often combined interests of global capitalism and the political elite — combined not only because their positions are often occupied by the same people, revolving door-style, as C. Wright Mills noted in *The Power Elite*, but also because the money of the former drives much of the policy of the latter. The virtues of these entities, however great, do not mitigate the fact that neither seem to have much interest in what we can call the supporting center: ecologically, the earth itself; politically, an educated, active citizenry; economically, a strong and growing middle class.

The religion of Silicon Valley is not a religion of the masses; it is a religion of the elites, which could never be democratized absent a complete revolution in our political and economic life (hardly a desirable option). If inequality is growing, why would anyone be naïve enough to think that the desired immortality, for example, would be available to everyone, equally? The ever-repeated claim that "Of course it will be available to everyone, because innovation drives the price down until it's available for mass consumption" is question-begging. The reason that happens is because there is a middle-class; what's at stake in the current dilemma is precisely the continued vitality of

the middle class and the indisputable fact of its current erosion.

Prophets tend to be welcomed everywhere save their home countries. One can be grateful for Lanier's prophetic role in Silicon Valley and his willingness to be a heretic, while observing that Lanier remains an insider, not an outcast. This is one of the great strengths of *Who Owns the Future?*. It is not a journalistic peek into Silicon Valley and the world it's creating, but an insider's and founder's take on a religion gone awry. Sober responses to the problem of the disappearing middle class will be aided by Lanier's work, but they must also realize clearly the nature of our situation: a new religion — not of the masses but of technological elites — is one of the driving forces in the economic and technological architecture of our world, and religion works not with mere reason (itself a fantasy, for reason always brings company), but with myth, stories about who we are and where we are going (to the stars, heaven, a utopian future). The only response to a bad myth is a better story, a truer myth. Do we have one?

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