Becoming Otherwise: Sovereign Authorship in a World of Multiplicity

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
Political Science

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May 1, 2018
Blacksburg, Virginia

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ABSTRACT (Academic)

This thesis explores the theory and practice of sovereignty. I begin with a conceptual analysis of sovereignty, examining its theological roots in contrast with its later influence in contestations over political authority. Theological debates surrounding God's sovereignty dealt not with the question of legitimacy, which would become important for political sovereignty, but instead with the limits of his ability. Read as an ontological capacity, sovereignty is coterminous with an existent's activity in the world. As lived, this capacity is regularly limited by the ways in which space is produced via its representations, its symbols, and its practices. All collective appropriations of space have a *nomos* that characterizes their practice. Foucault's account of "biopolitics" provides an account of how contemporary materiality is distributed, an account that can be supplemented by sociological typologies of how city space is typically produced. The collective biopolitical distribution of space expands the range of practices that representationally legibilize activity in the world, thereby expanding the conceptual limits of existents and what it means for them to act up to the borders of their capacity, i.e., to practice sovereignty. The desire for total authorial capacity expresses itself in relations of domination and subordination that never erase the fundamental precarity of subjects, even as these expressions seek to disguise it. I conclude with a close reading of narratives recounting the lives of residents in Chicago's Englewood, reading their activity as practices of sovereignty which manifest variously as they master and produce space.

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ABSTRACT (General Public)

Political philosophy has long been concerned with what makes political rule legitimate. Why should we be governed by others? In what ways should we be governed? Why is it that humankind is "everywhere in chains" despite being born free, as Rousseau asks? This thesis explores these questions through the concept of sovereignty. Political sovereignty expresses the idea of rule by the "highest" authority. This concept was initially rooted in a theological worldview that is no longer as dominant as it was in early modernity. Political philosophers from Hobbes to Kant turned instead to reason, which was supposed to determine who could rightfully rule. However, the question of what "rightfully" means in a political era where the state governs who is able to live a good life and who instead will live a life of poverty is increasingly tenuous. What allegiance do those who live in situations of dire need have to a distributional system that has only perpetuated their immiseration? John Locke argued that those who are oppressed have a right to "appeal to heaven," i.e., to the highest power: the true sovereign. In a world where God's sovereignty no longer undergirds political thought and practice as its final guarantor, the state as a form of rule seems to be groundless. Consequently, subjects regularly take matters into their own hands. This thesis explores how they enact their sovereignty in the world, using a *This American Life* podcast as an example through which to explore the theory and practice of sovereignty.

To *Gerald Howard Botdorf*

Who would have been "happier than two larks in the sky in Snyder County"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All being is a "being with," and all making is a "making with." It could not be otherwise, and the world would be a much drearier place if it were. Even Zarathustra requires his animals; in how much greater need are we mere laborers in the fields of knowledge? Easily, then, offering acknowledgment to those who have helped shape a project, from its protean depths to its highest heights, could easily slide into bibliography and biography, a chronicle of both slights and salubrities. I shall try to be slightly duller than that. There is, after all, a project to be read, lest the acknowledgments of support for it be in vain.

First, I am grateful for the inputs, insights, edits, investments, and tolerations of my committee members, who have helped to refine occasional perorations into the paragraphs and sentences actually required. Insights and assigned texts from the courses I have taken with each of them found their way into my thesis. Tim Luke assigned Foucault's *"Society Must Be Defended"* and De Landa's *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, accepted a book review on Bonnie Honig's *Public Things*, and suggested that I look at both Henri Lefebvre and Carl Schmitt in relation to sovereign spatiality. I believe I took more notes in his class than my other ten combined. Scott Nelson suggested I turn to the "global cities" literature, which helped to spark my interest in political space and its contemporary constitution. Further, letting me lecture on Kant's moral and political philosophy as his teaching assistant has deepened my appreciation for the Prussian, who is regularly no less brilliant than wrong. Mauro Caraccioli agreed to supervise an independent study on the late Foucault and middle Nietzsche, which helped to transform a sense that Nietzsche might be useful for me into a full-blown appreciation for the

breadth and depth of his *oeuvre*. Mauro has also suffered many an interruption for the most banal of inquiries, of which I am greatly appreciative.

Other professors affiliated with the Department of Political Science and the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought have taught seminars or engaged in conversations that have helped to broaden my political vision. In alphabetical order: Cara Daggett, François Debrix, Rebecca Hester, Besnik Pula, Andy Scerri, and Edward Weisband. This majority of this project has been authored while I have been in the employ of the Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience. My supervisors, Jim Bohland and Jenn Lawrence, my fellow graduate students, Emma Buchanan, Ben Coleman, Simone Franzi, Vanessa Guerra, Vera Smirnova, and Michael Vadman, and visiting speaker Jon Pugh, whom GFURR hosted for two weeks in the fall semester 2017, have proved engaging interlocutors on a variety of subjects relevant, irrelevant, tangential, and central to my thesis — and, most importantly, always interesting.

Fellow students in the political science department have put up with me beyond the basic obligations of human decency to do so. Some even made the decision to share a house with me, and have consequently tolerated heaping piles of books spread throughout common spaces more often than was probably stipulated in the lease. My deep appreciation to my housemates Hirbohd Hedayat, Aislinn McCann, and Ray Thomas and classmates Jay Burkette, Julia Eggleston, Mikey Erb, Evan Mosley, Laura McCarter, Patrick Salmons, Ev Schwartz, Cathy Kiess Sipantzi, Maddie Tepper, and Jack Viere.

Beyond Virginia Tech's boundaries, a series of thanks are in order. First, to my former formal and currently informal debate opponents Chris Chambers, David Moosmann, and Jacob Schriner-Briggs. I like to think I've won more arguments of late than I did when we faced in

moot court, but this may be wishful thinking. My thanks to my dear undergraduate friends Marcus Carano, Alex Downs, Matt Ehrenburg, Andrew Hamel, and Matthew Loberg, who have endured many an effort to indoctrinate them into the realm of uncertainty, contingency, and unknowability I try to inhabit. There are many essays (in both senses) yet to come.

Finally, Mark — who first introduced me to many of the texts and perspectives found herein — and Irene Weaver continue to be sources of support as I pursue graduate studies. The same is true for my extended relatives, but especially for my immediate family: my parents, Bill and Natalie, and my siblings, Andy, Julia, Kayla, and Nate. Last but not least, to my fiancée, Maddi O'Neill, who constantly challenges me to be a fiercer questioner of the settled and ostensibly certain than I otherwise might be.

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INTRODUCTION

In early April 2016, I was driving back from my first academic conference, the Midwest Political Science Association Conference in Chicago, where I had presented a poster on my recently completed senior thesis. I had made the trip with my then girlfriend, now fiancée, who suggested we pass time by listening to a podcast. While in Chicago, we had met a woman named Linda Lutton. Linda was part of a team that had recently won a Peabody Award for its reporting in a Chicago high school over the span of six months.[1] My fiancée suggested we listen to that *This American Life* episode, entitled "Harper High School." The reporting was broken into two hour-long and heartrending accounts of how violence can become socially normalized through the brute fact of repetition. The "few bad apples" argument routinely employed to defend those in power is as relevant here as it is anywhere else; a subset of students and other young adults can fundamentally disrupt community tranquility merely through the established possibility of their carrying out future violent actions.

For whatever reason, the question that kept recurring to me as I listened was one of "theory" rather than "policy" — though this divide is, of course, more than a little arbitrary. How, I wondered, can democracy be established in a milieu characterized by violence? While the focus of the podcast was on internecine conflicts, there was also of course the lingering question of the state and its repressive apparatuses. How could robust self-governance be possible for subjects squeezed between the violence of their neighbors and the violence of the state? This question, or something like it, had been on my mind intermittently since the previous semester, during which time I was enrolled in a course entitled "Peace Studies." Perhaps paradoxically, the

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[1] "Awards" (2013), *The Peabody Awards*, accessed online 31 March 2018, <http://www.peabodyawards.com/results/null/1/2013/2013/title/asc.>

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study of peace required examining spaces in which violence was the norm. My research for the course was on El Salvador, a nation with intense gang violence. I had in my research encountered stories of children who, wanting to visit their relatives just a few miles down the road, were killed for crossing into a rival gang's territory. These stories were not uncommon.

The class was centered on learning the "tools" that could promote peace and then proposing how those tools could be combined to bring about peace in a specific setting. Of the available "tools" we were taught, I suggested deploying "economic equity," assistance from NGOs and international governmental organizations, "peace education," general access to education, third-party settlement to mediate gang disputes, arms control, post-conflict peacebuilding/reconciliation, rule of law (i.e., mechanisms to prevent governmental corruption), democratization, and feminist perspectives — quite an odd definition of "tools." Points were deducted from my paper because I had failed to provide a step-by-step plan of action for implementing these tools. "If you gave this to an NGO today," said the professor when I spoke with him after receiving my paper back, "would they have a clear sense of how to proceed to bring about peace?" This struck me, and still strikes me, as something of a silly question — though since the project, and even the course, was itself based on a narrow set of premises, I should not have been surprised. We might as well have asked, "How shall we hasten the Lord's return?", since we were already functionally engaged in eschatology.

Perhaps it should not, though, have been an unexpected question. In the Western canon of political thought, the conditions of possibility for the establishment of political society all center on the ability to overcome inevitable human conflict. This is clearest in Hobbes, for whom the establishment of a sovereign is the solution to the pre-political "condition of Man," which is a

"condition of Warre of every one against every one."[2] In such a state, there can be no culture, industry, commerce, institutionalized knowledge, or society, and the "life of man, [is] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."[3] Locke, for whom the state of nature is "as far distant" from a state of war "as a state of peace, good will, mutual assistance and preservation, and a state of enmity, malice, violence and mutual destruction, are one from another,"[4] argues that the state of nature is nevertheless "full of fears and continual dangers [to men's] lives, liberties and estates," the preservation of which is the "great and *chief end* … of men's uniting into common-wealths."[5] Even Rousseau, whose "general will" seems to require an idyllic, communitarian milieu in which persons who are relatively peacefully arranged come together to decide how they want collectively to act, acknowledges that such a community could only ever come into existence if "men [living as individuals or families] have reached the point where obstacles that are harmful to their maintenance in the state of nature gain the upper hand."[6] Politics on these accounts requires the bracketing of certain forms of violence, even as each theorist sanctions a variety of other forms of violence as necessary to maintaining "peace."

Shortly after returning from Chicago, I was assigned Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos*, which is occupied with functionally similar questions. Rather than inquiring how violence can be replaced by tranquility, she investigates the ways that a specific kind of governmental rationality undermines the potential for robust democracy by "hollowing out"

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[2] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin, 1968 [1651]): 189 (I.xiv).
[3] Ibid., 186 (I.xiii).
[4] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1980 [1690]): 15 (III.19)
[5] Ibid., 66 (IX.123–124).
[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1987 [1762]): 23 (I.vi)

states and subjects.[7] In fact, this hollowing out eliminates the attachments that could convince

citizens to risk their bodies on behalf of the state, to engage in the exact practices of violence that

ostensibly forestall a relapse into a more general condition of violence.[8] Her book concludes with

a discussion of what she perceives to be the crucial relationship between "education"

(specifically in the liberal arts) and "self-government." By abandoning generalized higher

education as the foundation of democracy, neoliberalism undercuts the possibility for robust and

vigorous self-rule.[9] Brown, though, is not the only theorist who has recently been concerned with

such questions. Bonnie Honig spends the first chapter of her *Public Things* responding to

Brown's "subject-oriented" theory of democracy with an "object-oriented" account of

democracy, the latter of which suggests that the power of "things" to "call out" to some always-

fluctuating "us" may be able to "loosen the grip of Rousseau's paradox of politics," in which the

people are never quite as virtuous as they need to be in order to rule themselves. She clarifies

that this does not necessarily mean that the paradox can be resolved, only that we need not

"necessarily [be] defeated by it."[10]

Brown's and Honig's studies share broad similarities to the recent preoccupation with

fascism(s) and populism(s) that have come to the fore with the election of Donald Trump and the

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[7] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015): 18.

[8] Ibid., 218: "Citizenship in its thinnest mode is mere membership. Anything slightly more robust inevitably links with patriotism, love of *patria*, whether the object of attachment is city, country, team, firm or cosmos. Patriotism itself may be expressed in many ways, from radical criticism to slavish devotion, engaged activity to passive obedience. In all cases, however, its consummate sign is the willingness to risk life, which is why soldiers in battle remain its enduring icon and why Socrates rendered acceptance of his death sentence as ultimate proof of his loyalty to Athens and compared himself to a soldier when doing so. Today, as economic metrics have saturated the state and the national purpose, the neoliberal citizen need not stoically risk death on the battlefield, only bear up uncomplaining in the face of unemployment, underemployment, or employment unto death."

[9] Ibid., chapter six (175–200).

[10] Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair* (New York, Fordham UP, 2017): 28–29. The need to operate within the paradox of politics is also the emphasis of her earlier work *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009).

surge of various right-wing nationalist parties across Europe. In a market society that has largely disrupted, or at least remade, any perspective on the collective interests that might have provided the basis for collective contestation, instead crafting subjects according to the model of "human capital," self-rule can easily be relinquished for the false promise of economic security. At the root of academic concern with such trends is the belief that the form of self-rule we currently have is more democratic than forms toward which we may be moving. We are, perhaps, more sovereign at present than we might otherwise be.

What exactly, though, is the sovereignty we may be losing? There is the Schmittian definition of the sovereign as "he who decides on the exception,"[11] and there is of course the more recent analysis by Giorgio Agamben, drawing heavily from Schmitt, arguing that "the exception" and "the norm" have now merged into a "zone of indistinction" first manifested in the concentration camps and afterward proliferated as the *nomos* of modernity.[12] Both of these accounts, though, seem to privilege a prior logic of sovereignty in contradistinction to how it is practiced. There is a gap, it seems, between life as it is lived and grand theories of sovereignty. This gap is what interests me. What does "sovereignty" mean in the everyday? How do subjects perform sovereignty? By what tactical determinations do subjects navigate the everyday as sovereign agents? How are they constrained by the sovereign performances of other agents? What does it mean to perform sovereignty as an assembled subject? These are the questions this study examines in order better to understand the "logics of sovereignty" not as prior to but instead immanent to practice.

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[11] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 5.
[12] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998 [1995]).

My study proceeds in three parts. In the first chapter, I provide a conceptual account of sovereignty as an ontological potentiality, laying out a theory of sovereignty as authorial capacity immanent to all forms of life in accordance with the empty form of their general concept. This account of sovereignty draws from medieval theological debates regarding God's power, tracing how questions of legitimacy only became relevant in relation to the issue of who God's proper representative in the world was. After having addressed these and other questions at the level of theory, I turn to practice in order to grapple with the ways that sovereignty as an inalienable capacity is tempered in the real world by other forms of life similarly endowed. In the second chapter, I examine the link between sovereignty and biopolitics in direct opposition to Agamben's account of the link in his *Homo Sacer*. Whereas Agamben reads the figure of the sovereign as one who engages in biopolitics by declaring a state of exception, I argue instead for a more complex relationship between the oppositional entities of the sovereign and *homo sacer*. The juridical *homo sacer* functions as a political mythologeme that disguises the ways that each of us is always already simultaneously sovereign and *homo sacer*. In Baudrillardan terms, *homo sacer* is sovereignty's Disney, while the Sovereign is its Watergate.

Given this alternative account, it becomes more interesting to examine the ways that subjects whose lives have been structurally disallowed manage and navigate the lifeworlds they inhabit. This is the project I undertake in chapter three, in which I read the practices of everyday life engaged in by students in a poor neighborhood in Chicago as forms of sovereign agency. These subjects constitute the daily conditions of their own existence collectively and individually in ways that respond to a variety of obstacles. Politically ordained sovereigns are here not figures worthy of unmitigated loyalty. Indeed, recognized political agents are responsible for the

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structural disallowing of these lives. Questions of law and order, crime and transgression are at best secondary to understanding the logics of practice that underpin specific modes of being in the world.

Why sovereignty? Why at the level of existent subjects rather than the state, the city, or the polity? As I pose this question, Foucault flashes unbidden through my mind, proclaiming, "My role — and that is too emphatic a word — is to show people that they are much freer than they feel. … To change something in the minds of people — that's the role of an intellectual."[13] To explore the logic of sovereignty, to follow the twisting paths to its aporias, is occasionally to experience dysphoria wrought by an encounter with absurdity. For a moment, one feels oneself inhabiting the order of the hyperreal, the momentary alienation following the rupture of immanence, a moment beyond all norms, desires, emotions, and pathologies — a moment of bare existence.

I have experienced, from time to time, moments of "hyperreality." I woke once from a short respite convinced that only I existed, that only I had ever existed, and that the universe had been waiting for me to read *1984*, the reading that lulled me to sleep, to be confronted by this realization. It was, perhaps, an all-too-Humean moment. I sat and waited for my roommates to return so that through discourse with them I might be brought back within the confines of the world I still suspected existed. This has only happened once.

More often, I experience moments of rupture. A common word becomes foreign. A norm feels ill-suited for my skin. Motility seems a strange and abstract phenomenon.

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[13] Michel Foucault, quoted in Rux Martin, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (n.p.: UMass Press, 1988 [1982]): 10.

Perhaps these are, from the perspective of a certain science, moments that if generalized would be constitute pathological behavior. Perhaps, though, they are also the perspective from which we might be confronted with the inalienable fact of our heteronomic autonomy, a freedom we regularly permit to be constrained by symbolic logics but which occasionally can be clearly seen to be constrained by nothing other than the outer reaches of our mode of existence. They are brief encounters outside of simulation, though not representation.

If we are to explore in a clearheaded fashion what it means for subjects to be sovereign over themselves, we, too, will have to experience such alienation, albeit intentionally and intellectually rather than accidentally and abruptly. What, I ask in the pages that follow, does sovereignty look like from this perspective? And how does viewing sovereignty as nothing other than its own mythology, its own simulation, reveal to us a political space removed from the ways we categorize law and order, peace and violence, democracy and tyranny, authority and illegitimate rule?

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

Italo Calvino's short story "A Sign in Space" is a story about sovereignty. It opens on an intergalactic, atemporal being called Qfwfq, the variously manifesting protagonist of all the short stories collected in Calvino's *Cosmicomics*. What Qfwfq is doing is difficult to describe. It seems as if he — the pronoun that seems to make the most sense based on the tendencies of Qfwfq's hypostatizations — has been floating through space, though "floating" seems too passive, and it is not wholly clear in what sense "space" yet exists. Perhaps it is best to say that Qfwfq is simply Qfwfq, an undifferentiable subject with respect to which no predication is yet possible, or is only made possible insofar as the story is narrated from the perspective of the present, after the initial act of signification has occurred.

Signification is the focus of the narrative. "[O]nce, as I went past, I drew a sign at a point in space, just so I could find it again two hundred million years later, when we went by the next time around," Qfwfq opens the story.[1] What exactly is this sign? Qfwfq's inability quite to articulate or to find the initial sign in its originating purity consumes him as the narrative continues: "I conceived the idea of making a sign, that's true enough, or rather, I conceived the idea of considering a sign a something that I felt like making, so when, at that point in space and not in another, I made something, meaning to make a sign, it turned out that I really had made a sign, after all."[2]

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[1] Italo Calvino, "A Sign in Space," in *Cosmicomics*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, 1968 [1965]): 31.
[2] Ibid.

The difficulty of articulating exactly what Qfwfq is or what he is doing when the story opens lies in this moment. The moment that brings into being a "point in space" different from all others is the same moment that makes it logically possible to conceive of other "points" located in "space." This apparent act of creation *ex nihilo* folds spatial–temporal flux in on itself in a moment of manifestation that renders legibility a possibility. The archive is implied in the very act of enunciation in the sense that the legibility of an act called "enunciation" must be at least coterminous with its actualization, or with awareness of its actualization. Qfwfq's pursuit of his initial sign is lost forever as he brings into being the full possibility not merely of a single "sign" but of a whole system of signification implied by the original sign:

> In the universe now there was no longer a container and a thing contained, but only a general thickness of signs superimposed and coagulated, occupying the whole volume of space; it was constantly being dotted, minutely, a network of lines and scratches and reliefs and engravings; the universe was scrawled over on all sides, along all its dimensions. There was no longer any way to establish a point of reference: the Galaxy went on turning but I could no longer count the revolutions, any point could be the point of departure, any sign heaped up with the others could be mine, but discovering it would have served no purpose, because it was clear that, independent of signs, space didn't exist and perhaps had never existed.[3]

Calvino's periodizations are deceptive. They imply an evolutionary progression from the initial act of signification to the "now" in which there is only a "general thickness of signs." But creating a sign in space implies that every other conceivable point is "not sign," even as the space of the sign can no longer refrain from being "not sign." From the perspective of *langue*, this thickness is necessarily implied by every *parole*; from the perspective of strategy, this thickness is necessarily implied by every tactic; from the perspective of structure, this thickness is necessarily implied by every act. But the transfer from "not sign" to "sign" is not imaginable

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[3] Ibid., 39.

without the presumption of the possibility of such a thing as a sign. Qfwfq cannot account for how he has produced the sign or even what it is.

The signed space exists not as a positive fact but only as a "positivity" that fixes the initial possibility of signification and is thereby immediately coterminous with its own having been lost in the thickness of signs necessarily resulting from the very possibility of the negation "not sign," which is the constitutive opposite of the judgement "sign."[4] "[G]radually, living among signs had led us to see signs in countless things that, before, were there, marking nothing but their own presence; they had been transformed into the sign of themselves and had been added to the series of signs made on purpose by those who meant to make a sign."[5] Qfwfq opens us up to the possibility that, perhaps in a Parmenidean sense, everything has always already existed, only now obtaining legibility through its self-spatialized signification. Updated for the (post)modern ear: the regimentation of ontological flux by means of proto-disciplinization is identical with the initial conceptual determination that there is something other than nothing — that there is a "self" different from the "other" it inscribes within the plane of signifiable possibility. Explicating John Scotus Eriugena's writings on creation, Giorgio Agamben writes,

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[4] I draw the concept of "positivities" from Michel Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*: "To describe a group of statements not as the closed, plethoric totality of a meaning, but as an incomplete, fragmented figure; to describe a group of statements not with reference to the interiority of an intention, a thought, or a subject, but in accordance with the dispersion of an exteriority; to describe a group of statements, in order to rediscover not the moment or the trace of their origin, but the specific forms of an accumulation, is certainly not to uncover an interpretation, to discover a foundation, or to free constituent acts; nor is it to decide on a rationality, or to embrace a teleology. It is to establish what I am quite willing to call a *positivity*." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 2010 [1969]): 125.

"A Sign in Space" is technically an "origin" story, which may seem at first sight to disqualify it from Foucault's theory of positivities. But if anything, the narrative demonstrates the impossibility of providing any "true" origin story — the moment of origin is available only as an abstract possibility, not as a discernible event. This is why the shift from archaeology to genealogy is the movement to "histories of the present." The past can only be described within the limits set by the present "archive" of knowledge, by the current conditions of legibility that govern enunciation. "A Sign in Space" exemplifies the inability of reason to go beyond the limits of reason, which maps at each moment onto the impossibility of discourse exceeding the limits of discourse.

[5] Calvino, "A Sign in Space," 38.

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"Only in descending into this darkness [the "Nothing from which all things proceed"] did God create the world and, at the same time, himself."[6]

Why open an exploration of theories and practices of sovereignty with this narrative? In what sense is it, as I have claimed, a story of sovereignty? I have three justifications. First, Calvino, intentionally or not, demonstrates the implications of the genealogical method: the search for "pure" origins that might redeem the present is a fool's errand; every historical account is a "history of the present," genealogies having the benefit of being self-consciously so.[7] Second, the manifestation and disappearance that lies at the heart of the logics of simulation are here demonstrated to be a necessary result of all signification, not an event external to signification that through the proliferation of signs becomes internal to it. To the extent that sovereignty is necessarily always "simulated" yet necessarily depends on the lived practices of ideology that require symbolic identification for their efficacy, one must come to terms with the

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[6] Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999 [1993]): 252.

[7] The phrase "history of the present" comes from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975]): 30–31. Foucault writes, "I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present."

I used this term while drafting this chapter without first reminding myself where I had encountered it, thinking it had been in one of the various essays or interviews where Foucault explicated his genealogical method. Perhaps this is because the method of genealogy seems to me best described as a method that questions how that which is taken-for-granted in the present is the chance outcome of so many historical accidents. Yet it appears from the secondary literature that Foucault's only use of the phrase was in *Discipline and Punish*. See Michael S. Roth, "Foucault's 'History of the Present," *History and Theory*, Vol. 20.1 (Feb. 1981): 32–46; David Garland, "What Is a 'History of the Present'? On Foucault's Genealogies and Their Critical Preconditions," *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 16.4 (October 2014): 365–384; Phil Carney, "Foucault's Punitive Society: Visual Tactics of Marking as a History of the Present," *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 55.2 (March 2015): 231–247.

Roth offers a helpful and brief summary of the term: "Writing a history of the present means writing a history in the present; self-consciously writing in a field of power relations and political struggle. The genealogy of the present form of the prison is a criticism of this form because it undermines the claims of the ideology of the prison to being concerned with eternal problems, and because it uncovers the prison's links with practices it seemed to have left behind." Roth, "Foucault's 'History of the Present,'" 43.

logics of signification that lie at the heart of all symbolic orders.[8] Finally, sovereignty as *augēre*,

the Latin root of both "authority" and "authorship," is exactly the mode of sovereignty that is at

issue here because all political authority requires, as we will see, some element of creative

authorship.[9]

    This opening chapter undertakes the conceptual project of articulating an account of

"sovereignty" that will inform the two chapters that follow. It is an account of sovereignty as

situated rupture, as an ontically embedded ontological possibility that is wholly representational

and wholly lived. The chapter proceeds first by examining the theological roots of the concept of

sovereignty in order to explore a tradition of "sovereignty" as creative authorship. Whereas later

philosophies displace "God" into "reason," "the state," or "the king," thereby providing an

account of the subject that is not in fact sovereign but instead subject to a sovereign God-

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[8] Cynthia Weber has drawn on Jean Baudrillard to develop an account of sovereignty as simulated in both her book *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995) and, more recently, the article "The Trump Presidency, Episode 1: Simulating Sovereignty," *Theory & Event*, Vol. 20.1, Supplement (January 2017): 132–142. A logic of simulation was most clearly at play in the former analysis when "Models of truth … were manipulated or seduced in order to conceal both the truth's non-existence and the failure of representation. Investigating these invasions [of Grenada and Panama], I ask: if sovereign foundations could only be seduced but not produced in the discourses surrounding these invasions, what recognizable 'falsehoods' were circulated as proofs of the truth's existence?" *Simulating Sovereignty*, 38–39.

    It is insufficient, though, to halt at the identification of simulatory logics. Rather, we must ask in what way(s) these logics are lived, how they are practiced. Louis Althusser makes this point most clearly with his discussion of ideology as a series of material practices. Subjects perform themselves in accordance with the logics with which they identify. Thus, "caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects 'work,' they 'work by themselves' in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the 'bad subjects' who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. … *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection*." "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy, and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review, 2001 [1970]): 123.

    What Weber identifies as the essence of a simulated logic perhaps only in fact describes its outer edges, its effects becoming clear only as its grasp weakens. The absolute hold of simulatory logics is manifest in the lived practices of subjects who identify with a non-existent center, a center the projection of which is only possible on the basis of the simulatory regime within which such subjects are embedded. That subjects believe there to be a center does not in fact mean that there is such a center grounding the discourse.

[9] "Author," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed online 1 April 2018 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/author>; "Authority," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed online 1 April 2018 < https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authority>.

    For a closer account of the early meanings of the Latin root, see Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002 [1998]): 148–150.

equivalent, I instead will emphasize sovereignty as the capacity of existents to act and to be in the world. This requires investigating how the sovereign subject emerges from this prior tradition and how this tradition burdens it with certain limits. After this initial account of how the subject came to be seen as sovereign, I pose the question of what it means to count as a subject, suggesting that it might be more fruitful to speak of "existents" rather than "subjects" — or at least of "subjects" on the model of "existents." Finally, I advance an argument for what it means for an existent to be sovereign according to the mode of authorship and capability. While the ontological possibility of sovereignty is inalienable, the socially and historically embedded character of action (its ontic performativity) means that there are costs, consequences, and barriers to the actualization of this sovereign possibility. I conclude the chapter by gesturing at some of these ontic limits in preparation for the latter two chapters.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Etymologically, the term "sovereign" descends to us from the Latin *superanus*, meaning "highest ruler," which was transferred into the middle French as "soverain" and into Middle English as "soverein."[10] Morphologically, the term also bears a strong resemblance to the Latin *regnum*, meaning rule, from the term *rex*, for "king." The historical identification of sovereignty with kingship only strengthens this apparent bond, even as the lexical history makes apparent that there is no necessary relationship between being a king and being the highest ruler. While it preceded the emergence of the Latin terms, the observation of this duality between political power and authority is expressed biblically. Revelation records the following regarding the post-tribulation return of Jesus: "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should

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[10] "Reign," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed online 1 April 2018 < https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reign>; "Sovereign." *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed online 1 April 2018 < https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sovereign>.

strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KINGS OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."[11] This phrasing occurs once earlier in the book of Revelation, as well as in First Timothy, and it references the declaration in the Hebrew Bible that "the LORD your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords."[12] Jesus is not merely either Lord or King but both at once.

In a similar vein, the author of Hebrews writes, "For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: 'You *are* a priest forever / According to the order of Melchizedek.'"[13] Melchizedek makes only a brief appearance in Genesis when Abraham meets him after having rescued Lot, Abraham's nephew, from captivity: "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High."[14] We might also here recall the request of the people of Israel to be granted a king. In granting their request, God declares to the prophet Samuel, "Heed the voice

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[11] Rev. 19:15–16 New King James Version (NKJV). John MacArthur, an evangelical commentator, includes a note on the latter of these verses in reference to Revelation 17:14, a verse he then cross-references with Deuteronomy 10:17 (see below), 1 Timothy 6:15, and Psalm 136:3. The note on Revelation 17:14 on the phrase "Lord of lords and King of kings" reads, "A title for God … that emphasizes His sovereignty over all other rulers to whom He has delegated authority." John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Troutdale, OR: Word Publishing, 1997): 2017. MacArthur also cross-references Revelation 19:16 with Daniel 2:47, in which King Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians states, "Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

[12] Deut. 10:17 NKJV.

[13] Heb. 7:14–17, NKJV.

[14] Gen. 14:18 NKJV. MacArthur writes, "The lack of biographical and genealogical particulars for this ruler, whose name meant' righteous king' and who was a king-priest over ancient Jerusalem, allowed for later revelation to use him as a type of Christ. His superior status in Abram's day is witnessed 1) by the king of Sodom, the first to meet Abram returning in victory, deferring to Melchizedek before continuing with his request and 2) by Abram, without demur, both accepting a blessing from and also giving a tithe to this priest-king." *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 35 (internal references omitted).

of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."[15] The quoted passages are unambiguous in their implication; every earthly manifestation of authority is only a derivation of God's authority. Each earthly king, legitimate or illegitimate according to earthly standards, is nevertheless subordinate to the authority of God. Yet these subordinations do not preclude a functional division of labor. A priest differs from a king, even if God rules over both.

As the final grounds of both priestly and kingly authority, God's decisions are not themselves open to questions of whether they are legitimate. Power alone lies at the basis of his rule. This is clearest in the book of Job, in which God permits Satan to test Job's allegiance to God by afflicting Job with all manner of torment. Job's children and servants are killed, his cattle stolen and slaughtered, and his body wracked with boils. As Job sits mourning, decrying his own birth, his friends counsel him that he must have sinned against God. To this, Job strenuously objects, maintaining that he has done nothing to incur God's wrath. Finally, God himself responds to Job's complaints, proclaiming, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth? / Tell *Me*, if you have understanding. / Who determined its measurements? / … To what were its foundations fastened?"[16] The proclamations continue interminably. To Job's particular concerns are opposed the vast authority and creative capacity of God, whose ability to render the world as existing, to "cal[l] those things which do not exist as though they did,"[17] is the justification for his right to do whatever he would desire to do. It is no coincidence that both of

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[15] 1 Sam. 8:7.
[16] Job 38: 4–6 NKJV.
[17] Rom. 4:17 NKJV.

Hobbes's creatural inspirations, the Leviathan and the Behemoth, are listed in this passage from

Job among the signs of God's total power over the Earth and its creations.[18]

To the extent that "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are

secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development … but also

because of their systematic structure," it should not surprise us that Christian theology serves as

the ground, directly or indirectly, for the theories of sovereignty that became globally proliferate

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and are still of import today.[19] Yet it is nevertheless an

important history to recall in order to see to what extent the figure of the state is one among

many of "God's shadows."[20] In her account of the origins of the political concept of sovereignty,

Jean Bethke Elshtain pays special attention to the two forms of authority eventually to be echoed

on the frontispiece to Hobbes's *Leviathan*: the sword and the scepter. Jesus was to arrive at the

end of days with a "rod of iron" and a "sword going out of his mouth," but in the meantime, the

"two swords" of "*regnum* and *sacerdotium*, respectively, earthly and spiritual dominion," were

entrusted to earthly rulers.[21]

Based on the assertion by Jesus to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of

heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on

earth will be loosed in heaven,"[22] a series of debates were in play regarding what exactly those

keys represented and who was in possession of them. Elshtain recounts the view of Pope

Gelasius (d. 496) on the matter: "Pope Gelasius drew upon the history of Roman rule and law of

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[18] For "behemoth," see Job 40:15–24; for "Leviathan," see Job 41:1–34.

[19] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 36.

[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Song*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Book, 1974 [1882/1887]): 167 (III.108).

[21] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2008): 11.

[22] Math. 16:19 NKJV.

which the successors of Peter were the direct heir and on whom they modeled their episcopal

offices. He insisted that pope and emperor (or earthly ruler, by extension) enjoyed their own

spheres of *responsibility*, although the spiritual 'sword' of authority possessed a higher dignity

than could be claimed by imperial or royal power."[23] Fairly early in Western history, then, the

relevant political question becomes, "Who is God's representative on earth?" "Not being God

incarnate," Elshtain remarks, "no one else could emulate [God's ultimate kingship and lordship]

fully."[24]

But while this may have been the most important *political* question for a nascent

Christian hegemony, it was not the most important *theological* issue. Instead, a series of

interesting debates ensued regarding the limits, if any, to the authority of God. Was God to be

considered bound by the laws of nature that he himself had issued, or was it possible for him to

undo or interrupt these laws as he saw fit? To what extent is it necessary for God to intervene in

the world that he had created with an "exception" to the normal order of things?[25] The division is

between God's power as *potestas ordinata* and as *potestas absoluta*: the former bound by what

God has already ordained, the latter totally unbound.[26] Could God, for example, "raise up a

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[23] Elshtain, *Sovereignty*, 12. See also 257 n.43 regarding the length of Pope Gelasius's rule.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Schmitt makes this link evident when he writes, "The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology." *Political Theology*, 36. This element of Schmitt's thought is also central to Bonnie Honig's reading of him in relation to Jewish theologian Franz Rosenzweig: "I add to that [i.e., the possibility of a "secret conversation" between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin] the possibility of another such secret conversation, between Schmitt and Rosenzweig, in which neither side acknowledged the other and the stakes were also high. When we put Schmitt into dialogue with Rosenzweig on the topic of the miracle, we switch our gaze from sovereign to popular power or to sovereignty *as* implicated in and dependent upon popular power." *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009): 89.
[26] Elshtain, *Sovereignty*, 21.

virgin after she has fallen," or did the laws that he had previously set in motion constrain him, preventing him from acting as he would wish?[27]

This is fundamentally not a question of *right* in the sense that it does not consider as relevant the question of what God *ought* to do. Rather, it is a question of capability, what the logical limits in fact are to the sovereign authority of God. To inquire as to the rightness of God to act in the world would be to repeat the same transgression as Job. It would be as utterly inane. As Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans, "O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"[28] Yet Paul had also written to his readers that "every soul [should] be subject to the governing authorities."[29] It was consequently of the utmost importance that it be determined who exactly were God's rightful rulers on the Earth, such that it could be determined who wielded authority justly. Elshtain ably summarizes the transition: "Claims to earthly power or *potestas* as dominion, and *auctoritas*, or right authority, migrated over to politics from arguments about God's power and authority, in a word, God's sovereignty."[30]

The question of power consequently only becomes a question of rightful rule once it is presumed that the authority of God to create the world and to act within it is a power bequeathed by God to certain rulers, rulers who must be located on the basis of their right to rule, or what is contemporarily known as "legitimacy." The question of legitimacy is not fundamental to the

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[27] Ibid., quoting St. Jerome. For both forms of power, the word *potestas* corresponds in some accounts to *potential*, a term that will become important for my purposes. See ibid. at 38–39, as well as Agamben, "Bartleby," 254.

[28] Rom. 9:20–21.

[29] Rom. 13:1.

[30] Elshtain, *Sovereignty*, 30.

concept of sovereignty in the sense that it seems absurd to ask whether God is correct in doing

that which he is capable of doing. Legitimacy is only of theoretical or practical concern when it

is ambiguous whom God has appointed as ruler and over what they have been appointed. Once

the question of legitimacy became central to the question of political sovereignty, the issue of the

limits to the lawful exercise of that delegated authority also became relevant. Elshtain details

these debates extensively as well. The most important belief to come out of these debates, the

one with relevance for the later historical development of political thought, is that the answers to

such questions can be discovered through the deployment of reason. If God wants us to

understand who his rulers on earth are, then it stands to reason he must have given us the

capacity to make such a determination. Consequently, God remains the grounding principle for

political sovereignty throughout modernity, including sovereignty as articulated in the writings

of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, whose political theories are rooted in the belief that through

reason we can determine what is reasonable and that what is reasonable will accord with the will

of God. The gift of God to man was "reason" sufficient to determine what the laws of nature

were, to shed "light" on the workings of nature in order to determine who the proper ruler was or

should have been.[31]

SOVEREIGN SUBJECTS

If the roots of political sovereignty are to be found in theological accounts of the

sovereignty of God, how are we to understand the link between the sovereignty of God and the

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[31] William Connolly emphasizes the importance of the metaphor of reason as a "light" that could reveal how the world ought to be ordered, writing, "Hobbes, in transferring the light metaphor to reason and nature, infuses them with God's authority. God shines through the light of reason; and reason makes his commands visible to us." *Political Theory and Modernity* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988): 24. Rousseau likewise deploys this metaphor, which Marquis de Sade turns on its head. Ibid. at 44–45, 72–75.
  Elshtain traces the belief that God's will could be discerned through reason back to Augustine. *Sovereignty*, 2–4, 29–30.

sovereign subject that begins to emerge in modernity and forms the basis of the political theory

of Hobbes and Locke, as well as the establishment of the United States? The formation of

something like the modern perspective on the individual dates back at least to the beginning of

the Western canon. The origin of the subject, according to Nietzsche, lies in the formation of

debt–debtor relations that inaugurate the requirement for subjects to hold themselves to the

promises they have made.[32] Here, it is not wholly relevant whether Nietzsche's thesis about pain

and injury being the basis for memory is correct, only that the subject as a creature capable of

memory, obligation, and promising emerges at an early juncture. Even as the subject comes into

being, it cannot consider itself free. It is already either indebted or one to whom debts are owed

— it is always a subject of injury. This same paradigm is the basis for how the individual is

conceived in the Christian tradition. Elshtain tracks "the subject" as one who is subjected

throughout Augustine's debates with the Pelagians, the latter of whom believed it was possible

for humans willing on their own to choose that which is good.[33] If it were possible for humans to

choose the good independently of God allowing them to do so, then it would follow that God is

not totally sovereign. Because God is totally sovereign, argued Augustine, it follows that subjects

are only capable of willing insofar as they are permitted to will by God. Subjects are always

subject to God.

By the time we come to early modernity, the problem that the individual poses for

sovereignty is fundamentally different than the question of to what extent the individual can be

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[32] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1887]): 57–72 (II.1–9). For critical interpretations of Nietzsche on this matter, see Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012 [2011]), especially chapter two, "The Genealogy of Debt and the Debtor," and Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham UP, 2005), 10–11.

[33] Elshtain, *Sovereignty*, 164–165.

said to will on its own apart from God. Nor is it an issue of the subject-constituting debts that

obligate the subject. Rather, the individual has become a problem, perhaps *the* problem, for the

institution of political sovereignty. Subjects are always that which must yet be further subjected.

They are never "subject" enough. Hobbes's articulation of the difficulty is clearest. The problem

of the individual is the recognition that because the desire of men for power never ceases — "a

perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death" — there always

exists the possibility for political turmoil, even including its extreme form: war. [34] War for

Hobbes is not merely open conflict but any condition that tends toward it. As such, the

possibility that at any time, whether in society or out, the weakest individual is capable of killing

the strongest provides a persuasive justification for laying down the "right" that exists in nature

to "every thing; even to anothers body" in favor of entrusting to a single sovereign the right of

absolute authority over the populace.[35] Hobbes writes,

> So that it appeareth plainly, to my understanding, both from Reason and Scripture, that
> the Soveraign Power, whether placed in One Man, as in Monarchy, or in one Assembly
> of men, as in Popular, and Aristocraticall Common-wealths, is as great, as possibly men
> can be imagined to make it. And though of so unlimited a Power, men may fancy many
> evil consequences, yet the consequences of the want of it, which is perpetuall warre of
> every man against his neighbor, are much worse.[36]

Peace studies are Hobbesian. Hobbes wants perpetual peace, a condition that has not only ended

war but also eliminated all conditions that would tend to the outbreak of conflagrations.

But Hobbes's project is frustrated by the impossibility of total control, the impossible

project of exhausting human potentiality in a set of disciplinary mechanisms that could limit at

each moment the individual's ability to rebel against the sovereign's authority. Whereas God's

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[34] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin, 1968 [1651]): 161 (I.xi).
[35] Ibid., 190 (I.iv).
[36] Ibid., 260 (II.xx).

sovereignty is so awesome that it is unclear what space could be left for individual agency apart from God, Hobbes's sovereign *must be* so awesome precisely because of how variable and unpredictable the individual is. Explicating Hobbes, William Connolly pus it like this: "We come to society as diverse 'stones,' each of which must be sculpted to fit into the edifice under construction. … The law of nature obligates each to participate in that process by which he becomes an individual who fits into the mold of civil society. To become a Hobbesian individual one must give up much of one's individuality."[37] Any individual who will not conform themselves to the needs of the social order must consequently either be punished or persuaded to change their behavior. Hobbes's project is no less plagued by the "paradox of politics" than is Rousseau's. The Leviathan depends on an absolute and unwavering obedience that is ultimately guaranteed by nothing other than itself. Each of us is a constant potential disruption to the ordered regime that seeks to maintain peace in the form of order. Because the possibility of war can never be ruled out, perpetual peace can only be maintained through total control that views each citizen as a potential enemy. Here, peace and war overlap in a zone of indistinction.[38]

In light of this concern, Kant's attempts to identify the individual with the exercise of universal rationality is perhaps the most brilliant, and no less spectacular for its failure, attempt to satisfy how an individual capable of acting in whatever way it wants is instead necessarily

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[37] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, 31–32. Connolly, who has himself been attuned in various places to the "paradox of politics," refers to this element of Hobbes's thought as the "paradox of the self-interested individual," in that "in its very individuality it must be oriented closely to the attitudes of others and the prospects of the future; it must internalize a set of social norms while pretending only to think of itself in doing so; and it must appear to regulate its most individual impulses to regularize its external appearance." Ibid., 29.

[38] In *1984*, the "three slogans of the Party" are "War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength." In the Hobbesian commonwealth, the war the sovereign wages (or is willing to wage) against each subject constitutes peace, the enslavement of each to the will of the sovereign is freedom, and active ignorance permits one to obey the sovereign, thereby remaining "strong" and protected. Each slogan only makes sense if one presumes absolute devotion to the sovereign, in Orwell's case, Big Brother. George Orwell, *1984* (Signet Classics, New York: 1977 [1949]): 16.

bound to the categorical dictates of rationality.[39] His account is one of the sovereignty of *law* and *reason* without the need for a founding sovereign; the rational basis for the law's issuance lies in each individual. It is not merely that the subjects are here historically *potentially* equal (or, put differently, equal in potentiality), as in Hobbes, but that they are actually *philosophically equivalent* because an abstracted ego as the ideal of freedom lies behind the ability of the subject to choose its ends. The idea of morality requires the presumption of freely willing so that a "good will," the only thing that is "good in itself," can be distinguished from a "bad will." Whether an act of the will is good cannot be based on the actual outcomes of willing, which are open to the indeterminacy of history. Thus, whether a will is good is first based on its correspondence to a "categorical imperative," a maxim that can bind absolutely in every situation. On this model, whatever else they are, egoic subjects are agents capable of willing in accord with reason. Because "reason cannot contradict reason,"[40] the law that is universal cannot in any way infringe on its own possibility, whether in itself or another. It is as if each subject were an individual node in a web of reason, where the perfect correspondence of reason with reason links each node to the categorical imperative while separating each from every other. Thus we arrive at the classic formulation, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law," which later becomes the "idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law."[41]

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[39] See Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1981 [1785]).

[40] This is the way that my professor Garrett Thomson often explained Kant's categorical imperative in the course "Ethical Theory," which I took in the spring semester of 2014 at The College of Wooster. I find it a particularly illuminating phrasing for explaining the iterations of the categorical imperative that require each to will as if they lived in a "kingdom of ends" as well as to understand why we ought to treat others as if they were capable of willing universal laws. To inhibit a subject's ability to will in accordance with reason would effectively be to negate reason, and for Kant, it would be absurd to imagine reason mandating its own negation.

[41] Kant, *Grounding*, 30 [421], 38 [432].

For the Kantian moral position, morality presupposes freedom. The idea of freedom requires *choosing* how to act, not merely *responding* to an actual subject's desires. But to choose how to act, there must be a subject who chooses. This subject must be *theoretically* capable of embodying rationality in itself, i.e., of acting solely out of justifications that are absolutely free from all historical contingency, such as desires. To be "free" to choose amongst desires, and thus to be capable of freedom and morality, one must be theoretically able to complete an absolutely free action — or at least to determine what it would mean to complete such an action. The only actions that are absolutely free are those free from desire, argues Kant, and these must be rooted solely in reason. Reason as the tautological ground of reason issues the dictate, "Respect the logic of reason, which is absolute and noncontingent, in yourself and other people." Acting in a manner that could be willed to be a universal law is thus the possibility of all subjects *qua* reason, i.e., *qua* noncontingent, historically disembedded subjects. The foremost requirement of any positively willed action is consequently that its formal requirements be logically consistent. For example, "Tell the truth" is logically consistent given the conditions of truth-telling's possibility, whereas "Tell a lie" logically folds in on itself because the central precondition of lying is the possibility of truth, which consequently inhibits lying's ability to be universally willed. Kant's theory is a theory of positivities; all negations presuppose a negatable term and thus cannot be universally willed. We have reached the subject as a wholly positive term, self-sovereign insofar as it identifies with universal reason and the laws that issue from it.

With Kant, the notion of sovereignty as a capacity has merged fully with the identity of the subject. Sovereignty as the limits of God's capability has migrated through political and theological debates regarding who God's representative in the world is, to how we can know

from reason who God's representative is, to reason as a justification for becoming totally

subservient to a political sovereignty that effectively replaces God, to a theory of morality in

which reason as an end in itself is both the grounds and the outcome of absolute individual

obedience to reason. The final formulation of the categorical imperative is the idea of a

"kingdom of ends." Kant explains:

> By "kingdom" I understand a systematic union of different rational beings through
> common laws. Now laws determine ends as regards their universal validity; … Hereby
> arises a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws, i.e., a
> kingdom that may be called a kingdom of ends. … A rational being belongs to the
> kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates in it universal laws while also being
> himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as a sovereign, when as legislator he is
> himself subject to the will of no other.[42]

Kant links together the subject and the political order in such a way that the individual can only

be considered to be sovereign when it is simultaneously bound by reason. Only when reason and

the will correspond is the subject actually free. All else is illusion. Kant acknowledges

throughout his writings that just because individuals "ought" to comply with reason does not

mean that they will, but his account of the link between reason and freedom is so forceful that it

seems an almost inevitable outcome that subjects made aware of the idea of the categorical

imperative will comport with it.[43] The subject becomes identical with sovereignty through

reason, with reason as sovereign.

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[42] Ibid., 39–40 [433].

[43] Kant sees the "ego as constituted in itself" as a necessary presumption of thinking of ourselves as free; the abstract imagination of it is what grounds the possibility of willing freely. Yet if the only will capable of emanating from the ego in itself is of necessity a non-contingent law, i.e., a categorical imperative, then it would seem that the part of us that is the "ego in itself" is always already willing universally. On the other hand, if the ego in itself is simply a presupposition of willing abstracted from actual social–historical experience, then the categorical imperative must also be only the form of willing, the abstract and empty possibility of issuing dictates to oneself. But as a form with no possible content, even the maxim of potential universality seems too strong a command. Why, after all, should we concrete individuals issue only universal dictates to ourselves? Ibid., 53 [451].

WHAT IS A SUBJECT?

What exactly, though, is this strange figure of sovereignty? This "ego as constituted in itself"?[44] The Kantian method refrains from problematizing the world as it appears to us, instead seeking out the conditions that make possible the beliefs that we hold. Thus, neither the subject *nor* the "freedom" of the subject is something that we have or lack but is instead something that we must presume for morality — or, when it comes to the ego, for all experience — to be possible. The importance of this seemingly benign methodological observation must not be overlooked. Kant is not in the business of identifying *what* subjects exist. Rather, he instead seeks to identify the particular rational rules that are internal to a subject that has already been presumed to exist. The rational conditions of possibility for a subject set its boundaries, while the affective, libidinal, complicated, heterogeneous elements of any particular subject are ignored. Put differently, Kant excises "the human" from his account of the human subject.[45] But why should the "ego in itself" function as the basis for practical reason? Why should we who are subjects in the world of experience be constrained by the "world of intelligences," especially when we "have not the slightest acquaintance with such a world and can never attain such acquaintance by all the efforts of [our] natural faculty of reason"?[46] Why presume that there is such a thing as morality? Why presume that the subject is free? Or, why not offer theories of willing and "morality" that do not require absolute freedom? This is an important element of

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[44] Ibid.

[45] For an account of Lacan's criticisms of Kant and their implications for the sovereign subject, see J. Peter Burgess, "The *Real* at the Origin of Sovereignty," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 38.4 (May 2017): 653–668. A particularly poignant two lines are on page 664: "Indeed, Lacan points out that the *Critique*, in its essence, either represses or entirely brackets any and all bodily human experience, everything that could actually serve to satisfy and be reasonably grounded in law, in order to satisfy a practical or utilitarian claim to legality or compliance. To put it coarsely, the *Critique*, in Lacan's reading, says that human ethics is possible on the condition that one suppresses the human" (internal citations omitted).

[46] Kant, *Grounding*, 60–61 [462].

Nietzsche's project, theorizing the possibility of giving oneself contingent laws as part of an ongoing process of self-overcoming in which "I will" is only ever an after-the-fact fiction that describes the emergent outcome of the struggles of multiple drives.[47] Why not question the sense in which the subject is uniform?

Significant work has been done in this vein since Kant, much of it drawing directly or indirectly from Nietzsche.[48] The observations are fruitful: to the extent that anything exists, it necessarily exists as a composite entity; to desire is to be composed of multiple conflicting drives regarding a variety of ends; humans are made up of myriad bacteria and other entities that can shift the supposedly "rational" perspectives that humans have. The list goes on. Nevertheless, as rational creatures, we are aware that we are perpetually confronted by our own existence. In fact, awareness of such existence is perhaps the very basis of "rationality." At the most basic, this is all we know — the rest of our knowledge is itself a translation of that which comes from us, i.e., our mind's imposition of categories of legibility onto the external world. This may be the furthest

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[47] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966 [1886]): 25–26 (I.19).

[48] See variously, William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010); Elizabeth Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2000 [1972]); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "What is an Assemblage?" in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1986 [1975]); Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010); Timothy W. Luke, "Liberal Society and Cyborg Subjectivity: The Politics of Environments, Bodies, and Nature," *Alternatives*, Vol. 21.1 (Jan.–Mar. 1996): 1–30; Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2016); Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991 [1985]): 149-181; Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2015).

The approaches these texts take to the dispersed, assembled, cybernetic quality of the subject are varied. Tsing, De Landa, Deleuze and Guattari, and Connolly are interested in "assemblages," while Luke, Haraway, and Povinelli (more on her below) focus much more intently on the way(s) things are attached, the intersections and connections that bring them into being. Nevertheless, these authors are all trying to deal with the ways in which the subject is always already not what it is. The fundamental problem of the dialectic is here pitched to a new register that tries not to dissolve the dialectic but instead to work within its manifold crevices.

sense in which a subject of possible rationality can be said even to exist for humans. But what we can never know is whether other existents are likewise confronted *in some sense* with the "fact" of their own existence and, if they are, what the form of the awareness of such a confrontation is. If, as it has been argued, the mind is identical to the body under the attribute of thought, but the body itself (and the ideas that are simultaneously "it" under a different attribute) is not a uniform entity but a composite existence, then to what extent does something like a distributed "mind" hold for other existents?

This term "existent" and the relations it works to signify are important. It comes from Elizabeth Povinelli's work with Aboriginal Australians. An existent, "what might elsewhere be described as life, thing, organism, being,"[49] is like the concept of an "assemblage," yet it is also different in that the terms used for designating existents do "not refer to a thing but [are] an assertion about a set of obligated orientations without an enclosing skin."[50] While it is a judgment that something exists in the world, providing an account of an existent cannot be constrained within a certain set of material realities that are consequently always a member of that existent, no matter what. Existents do not neatly fit within the scientized subject–object dualism that regulates the Western imagination. In some ways, they are similar to the "multiple interacting force fields" that William Connolly points to as intersecting along a variety of temporal registers in a world of becoming, but even the idea of a "force field" implies a somewhat stable border, exactly the stable sort of border that Povinelli is seeking to disrupt.[51] The borders we perceive are concepts, projective judgments about the external world. They cannot fully capture the complex flows that multiply compose us, and conceiving of things in

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[49] Povinelli, *Geontologies*, 5.
[50] Ibid., 100.
[51] Connolly, *A World of Becoming*. See especially chapter one, "Complexity, Agency, Time" (17–42).

terms of their apparent borders is not a necessary way of viewing them. Their "borders" could be otherwise.

From these elucidations, though, it remains unclear what is to be gained by Povinelli's (and thus also my) use of "existent" as opposed to, perhaps, a more common term such as "assemblage." Povinelli makes two critiques of the latter concept that help to position both her lexical commitments and my somewhat different ones. First, she claims that an assemblage "doesn't exist in the world as it exists in the nominal, pronominal, and demonstrative dynamics of a human *logos*. To have *an* assemblage one has to somehow place an artificial skin — an epidermal like encasing — around what is *in fact* a multiplicity of actual and possible openings."[52] She consequently advocates for a degree of distance from the demonstratives we use to indicate happenings in the world: "thatish," "thereish," "usih," and "hereish" rather than their more specific alternatives. Her second concern has to do with the concepts of "duration" and "time" applied to existing things. In order to see something as existing through time, it must have a relatively stable form that can be said to endure from one moment to the next. Povinelli wants to trouble this distinction in order to question what the social belief in endurance presupposes. She states,

> But there is nothing less true about claiming we are also rocks and sediment before and even after we settled into this mode of existence than claiming that the fossil and the hand are in different geological tenses. After all, we can stretch human substance back into whatever stuff we stretch the fossil. We won't look like we do now. We won't be what we are now. We will be dispersed across many modes of existence, which are only potentially us, then. … In a circuitous way this way of thinking about the endurant takes us back to the paradoxical notion of an assemblage — because what is enduring is also constantly adjusting and finding its way within the changing biochemistry of recognition — to keep '*itish*' otherwise, to keep '*itish*' enduring.

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[52] Elizabeth Povinelli, Matthew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics, and the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture, & Society*, Vol. 34.2–3 (2017): 177.

The concern is that the notion of an assemblage as a relatively permanent, durable, enskinned set of relations that collectively constitute a sort of collective subject, not unlike Hobbes's portrayal of the state, presumes or projects a permanence that we cannot quite justify. Put differently, the *is* that a thing is always exceeds its "base" materiality through its integration into social relations that precede its very emergence.

Povinelli clarifies that the basis of her concern with how the concept is used is that the integration of assemblages into politics as they presently stand, a politics still rooted in the ability to recognize one's interlocutor as a political subject, "iterate[s] rather than disturb[s geontopower, the governance of the division between life and non-life,] in contemporary critical theories of subjectivity."[53] A politics of assemblages too easily becomes a question of how *we* might understand this assembled *other* as it comes into the purview of our political recognizability. How might the other become intelligible for us? From Povinelli's reading, this very well may be the wrong question. It may be the case that the non-human "other" is never intelligible to us, nor we to it. Perhaps the conditions of possible perception that sit in the background as we attempt to categorize the formal conditions of thought are exactly the conditions at the forefront of other existents' mode(s) of being. What is for us only a dim hum intensified by the cybernetic subjectivities of the present stage of capitalism — the "being with" of existence, the porosity of ourselves as pseudo borders, time's multiple layers — may be foregrounded for other forms of life. What counts as a necessary precondition of subjectivity? To what extent does positing requirements such as multiplicity, externality, and diachronicity foreclose possibilities of union, internalization, and synchronicity? Might there not be a (never-) yet-to-be-skinned form of life that participates primarily in what are for us secondary or tertiary

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[53] Ibid., 180.

elements of perception? Would it not remain unintelligible to us as we are constituted? Would

"we" not need to become (and then be) a different *we* than we are?

Even as Povinelli criticizes the attempt to project an intelligible *logos* onto forms of being

radically different than (and perhaps also incorporating) human subjects, might it not be the case

that the there is an internal *logos* for the forms of being that we understand and project as

existing in the world, yet this *logos* may remain wholly unintelligible to us? What do the plates

that together constitute the crust of the earth communicate to one another as they shift, stall, and

strain, here one sliding over, another sliding under: an "overcoming" and a "downgoing"?

Perhaps, not unlike J.R.R. Tolkien's Ents, the plates "do not say anything … unless it is worth

taking a long time to say, and to listen to," communicating on a register that is fundamentally

incomprehensible to the human *logos* even as we reduce the movements to the science of plate

tectonics.[54] A world in which there are not mechanistic laws but rather one in which "every

power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment" is simultaneously the constant

exhaustion, as we will see in Agamben's reading of Bartleby, of a potentiality to *do* or to *be*

otherwise.[55] While Agamben's conflation of the "to do" and the "to be" cannot hold at the level

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[54] J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings Part Two: The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982 [1954]), 80.

[55] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 30 (I.22). The context, which is illuminating, reads as follows: "'*Ni Dieu, ni maître*' [Neither God nor master] — that is what you, too, want; and therefore 'cheers for the law of nature!' — is it not so? But as said above, that is interpretation, not text; and somebody might come along who, with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation, could read out of the same 'nature,' and with regard to the same phenomena, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power — an interpreter who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all 'will to power' so vividly that almost every word, even the word 'tyranny' itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor — being too human — but he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment. Supposing that this also is only interpretation — and you will be eager enough to make this objection? — well, so much the better." Ibid., 30–31.

In a moment relevant to this conversation, Nietzsche also once observed the following: "We see all things through the human head and cannot cut this head off; and yet the question remains as to what part of the world would still be there if one had in fact cut it off. This is a purely scientific problem and not really a proper concern for

of a subject because a subject can never suspend itself in a state of potentiality between "being" and "not being," the "not being" of some subject as an existent may very well be the point of emergence for the "being" of another existent. The exhaustion of potentiality of *being* at every moment thereby opens up the possibility that an enskinned assemblage we had previously recognized may no longer be adequate for describing the relations that constituted that which had previously been understood as an assemblage. The "existent," because it is always in motion, perpetually presents the possibility of its own exhaustion and transformation into another mode of being radically different than that form in which it presently participates.[56] This way of

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human beings; …" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human (I): A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. Gary Handwerk (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995 [1878/1886]): 20 (I.9). I have concluded the quote with an ellipses to emphasize that the rest of the text comments on just such the irrelevance of such a concern. For exegetical purposes, it is important to note that this aside comes in the midst of a section entitled "Metaphysical world," in which Nietzsche permits the *possibility* of such a world's existence but argues that the desire for it is rooted in "passion, error, and self-deception" and that it derives from the "worst of all methods of knowledge, not the best of all." The comment regarding the head, then, can be seen as a sort of satire on the Kantian/Cartesian ego in its various manifestations. It would be fine, Nietzsche seems to be saying, to ponder what the human would be when lacking its head, but we would then be pondering an inhuman human, so what is the point?

At the same time, the question regarding the human without its head simultaneously emphasizes, if indirectly, how crucial *vision* is to the human perception of the world, as well as to philosophical accounts of how perception functions. Compare, for example, Nietzsche's critique in *Genealogy of Morals* of the "'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject'; … these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, though which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense." Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 119 (III.12). Imagining the human "without its head" might also thus be read as an argument against the representation of the "thing in itself" as a sort of pure image of real-world manifestations. To know only through the eyes is to lack a complete sense of the object of perception, not that a truly "complete" sense can ever be had.

Irrespective of which of these or any other readings Nietzsche hoped would be prominent regarding his brief dictum, pondering the human body absent its head helps to broaden perception of the ways that the rest of the body is at each moment interpreting the world. There's a strange, perhaps unfathomable, multiplicity in that our skin (or at least my skin) tells us about the world at the point of contact between the two, yet awareness of that interpretative contact (or interpretation *of* contact) is seemingly filtered through the head. The latter filtration is dimly there yet nonetheless present, most probably due to the brain's crucial role in perception. Having this sense of our own body's distributed form of perception, which does not submit itself subserviently to the "I," expands further possibilities for imagining the interspersed perceptibilities that might be present for any given existent(s).

[56] There is a correspondence here with the concepts of "constituted" as opposed to "constitutive" power. At every moment, existents re-constitute themselves (constitutive power), even if the form of being can be intelligibly said (from whose perspective?) to correspond to the mode of existence directly prior (constituted power). "Constituted power" is consequently always only its own mythology; it can only be said to exist representationally.

On a different note, one might be able to construct roughly the following typology: an existent is the proto-form of projective entities, which we call "subjects" in their uniformity, "assemblages" in their heterogeneity.

thinking about "existents" emphasizes the difficulty and arbitrariness of the conceptual enclosures that border the subjects of politics, that permit them to be said to exist rather than not to exist, and thereby permit them to be recognized. To judge that an existent exists is to attach oneself to a specific way of viewing the world and of being in the world: "[T]he endurant is not a thing that endures but the creativity of keeping in place something that is constantly changing. … Nothing can be kept in place but can only be attended to. That this takes a constant mutual orientation among things that cannot be things except within this mutual orientation and aren't because no one can know how far they stretched nor if they have leaked."[57]

What, though, does such a discussion have to do with sovereignty? It matters for thinking about sovereignty as a capacity that obtains not for a natural and stable subject but for a projected form of being that could be other than it presently is — that could be differently obligated and attached within a world of perpetual becoming. For Hobbes, as we have seen, the threat to stable political sovereignty was located in the *capability* of any human subject to act in a manner that tended in the direction of lapsing into a war of all against all, a capacity that Kant attempted to domesticate through universal reason. In some sense, the question asked by Hobbes is not so much "How can sovereignty be stabilized?" but instead "How can the inalienable sovereignty of each individual be managed so as to prevent it from becoming dangerously disruptive?" These questions of historically contingent political sovereignty drastically deviated from the questions that initially pertained to sovereignty as an attribute of God, namely: what are the internal logical limits to the capabilities of the conceptual entity theorized to be "God"? To discern such logical capacities and limits is not, *contra* Descartes, to demonstrate that a being

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Uniformity and heterogeneity are judgments, but that does not make them any less concrete, as we shall see in chapter two.

[57] Povinelli, Coleman, and Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli," 182.

such as "God" necessarily exists. It is, though, to pursue an answer to the question of what the limits of an entity deemed to be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent might be (e.g., is God bound by the laws of time and nature that have presumably proceeded from him?). We return, in some sense, to this earlier question. To inquire into the "sovereignty" of an existent is to ask what its projective, abstracted *a priori* limits are insofar as it is presumed to exist, even if this existence is fleeting rather than enduring. The form of God, no less than the form of existents, is necessarily coterminous at every point with such limits. To speak of sovereignty in this way is not to engage in a politics of inter-species recognition based on prior agents already fully formed. Instead, interrogating *in what sense* something is sovereign is to ask what the outermost limits of its capacities are — not the bounds it *should not* exceed but the capabilities it *cannot* exceed, and which in exceeding it may become exhausted, drifting apart so as to enter into a variety of new mutually tended-to existences.

CONCRETE FREEDOM AND THE POTENTIAL TO BE OTHERWISE

Addressing sovereignty from the perspective of capability on the model of God's creative power as possessed by fleeting subjects is to treat "sovereignty" as the possibility for radical authorship. We are here again in the signifying space of Qfwfq. Authorship is the form of sovereignty that Qfwfq undertakes, even as authority perpetually eludes him. He authors a sign *ex nihilo* where there was nothing before, and this initial determination renders legible all the signs that follow from it. Qfwfq, though, has no control on the style, form, or existence of the signs that follow from the initial sign that he creates and that consequently continuously alter the meaning, which is always necessarily relational, of the initial sign. Temporal motion transforms even the meaning of Qfwfq as a sign. Authorship is in his control only in some limited sense.

Authority in its finality always eludes him. His creation of and tireless search for the original

sign both presume the future and past static legibility of the signifying activity that he has

completed, but ongoing static legibility requires the total exhaustion of potential meanings in the

very act of original creation. Such legibility would require the absolute power of a sovereign God

who did not merely sign creation into being but still maintains it at every moment, which is as

good as having signed *all* of creation, past and future, into being simultaneously. Qfwfq's signs

are not immutable. Nevertheless, they constrain him in the present. The signs he attempts to

erase through obliteration reappear — indeed, the very obliteration itself may function as a sign.

The possibility of novel authorship in a world of multiple signs seems to require the possibility

of total rupture from what has come before, the possibility of acting in or interpreting the world

in ways not bound by the existing discursive regime.

Sergei Prozorov provides such an account of sovereignty as "transcendent immanence,"

drawing from the Schmittian account of the sovereign as "he who decides on the exception" in

relation to Foucault's writings on concrete freedom. Prozorov interprets Schmitt's observations

not as pertaining only to the legal determination of a specific figure capable of suspending the

"juridical order." Rather, they speak to the permanent possibility of transcendent rupture with

respect to any immanent scheme:

> There are no 'other places,' alternative to the diagram, that one could reach via
> transgression: transgression should thus be thought in our terms of a rupture of
> transcendence *within* immanence, which enhances the possibilities of 'metonymic' being
> beside one's diagrammatic identity without ever specifying them in positive terms. Thus,
> as we shall discuss in detail below, freedom consists in the *possibility of being otherwise*
> rather than in the *project of becoming someone else*.[58]

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[58] Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007): 42.

Such a perspective acknowledges that there can be no "final" determination regarding what the subject capable of effecting rupture is. No extant thing can ever wholly possess authority over another extant thing because the subordinated existent may also theoretically, if not actually, reject the ways in which it has been managed. This desire for "concrete freedom" takes the form of our "ecstatic refusal of all our attachments to the diagram, including the positive power that it grants us,"[59] which permits us to "affirm our sovereign subjectivity as the infinite potentiality for being that cannot be subsumed under any identity."[60] Such a rejection may be dangerous, it may entail certain costs, but it nevertheless remains a possibility insofar as some projected subject exists. The very possibility of freedom is found in maintaining in suspension the pure potentiality of the subject to be otherwise.

Sovereignty on Prozorov's account might be described as the potential for alter-authorship. It is entirely possible that Qfwfq's reading of the world, his account of what is and is not a sign, is radically different from those of his fellows who are also issuing signs. Likewise, existents of other orders, force fields of a different variety, very well may be undertaking acts of authorship that are never "properly" understood by Qfwfq — that what constitutes "proper" understanding is an open question. The initial signification, the seemingly innocuous *parole*, implies a unique *langue* by serving as the always shifting locus on the basis of which all future signs are made legible. But to begin from the acknowledgment of a different locus, to create (or perhaps to acknowledge) the existence of a sign in a different space (a marker that is only possible after the initial signing) is also to bring a different regime of interpretation and experience into being. This is part of what Foucault is getting at when he speaks of

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[59] Ibid., 145.
[60] Ibid., 151.

"heterotopias" (a theme that Prozorov touches upon), which are "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible."[61] What a space or sign is depends on how it a subject represents it to itself, which in turn depends on the total set of imaginable relations through which a subject sees the world. All these relations must be in play from the moment of the initial sign's manifestation. Otherwise, the sign is not even intelligible as a sign.

To be within the logics of manifestation is to be within the confines of simulation. Jean Baudrillard describes appearance (manifestation) and disappearance in relation to "seduction," in which "Things make events all by themselves, without any mediation, by a sort of instant commutation."[62] Even historically developed meanings that hide their social emergence have "appeared" and "disappeared" on the field of history. Genealogy as a method of analysis acknowledges that the "form" of an act may stay the same even as the meaning changes.[63] Simulation, on the other hand, holds that the very judgment of morphological homology depends on a whole series of presumptions that must be present at the moment of conceptual identification. The world of representative signification presents itself to us at each moment as enclosed, plain surfaces, sufficient unto themselves as containing what they are, when in fact the "what they are" depends on a presumption of "what they are not." This is why Watergate and Disneyland no less than the state of exception and *homo sacer* must be included in the order of signification as excluded, negated terms. Disneyland is "imaginary," Watergate is "scandal,"[64]

[61] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, Vol. 16.1 (Spring 1986 [1967]): 25.
[62] Jean Baudrillard, "Forget Baudrillard," interviewer Sylvere Lotringer, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987 [1984–1985]): 74–75.
[63] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 79–81 (II.13).
[64] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983 [1981/1977]): 24–31.

homo sacer is abandoned, and the state of exception is where "power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation."[65] None of these terms are legible outside the simulated order of representation that depends on them from the moment that the order itself comes into being. Law, Agamben observes, cannot operate without the presumption of anomie, just as language cannot function without the presumption of the "nonlinguistic."[66]

It is not these subordinate terms, though, that present the possibility of transcendent rupture within systems of purported immanence. Rather, it is the possibility of recognizing wholly other morphologies that were not legible within the confines of the prior system of representation, wholly new existences. This does not mean that such entities are outside of all systems of representation. Indeed, Baudrillard's pursuit of an "event" that is outside of history — that can "get out of the chain of cause and effect to fully appear"[67] and like "a being, or a word … imposes itself with a force which is no longer of the final or causal order"[68] — always already presumes a system of representation that regulates the inchoate illegibility of ontological flux. There can be no arepresentational or postrepresentational recognition of some conglomerations or accretions of matter energy as identifiably different from those that precede or surround them. The effect of the ruptural force of transcendence within immanence is thus "hyperreality" not as a rejection of all systems of representation but as their possible transcendence within their own terms, their absolute exhaustion in the form of the emergent order of simulation — the novel existent — that is to replace them. After space has wholly filled up with signs that are only

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[65] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998 [1995]): 171.

[66] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 [2003]): 59–60 (4.6)

[67] Baudrillard, "Forget Baudrillard," 88.

[68] Ibid., 85.

themselves, a sign of an order that is not itself is inscribed; perhaps this is the precise act that

Qfwfq undertook. For a moment, the moment of initial signification, we are in the order of the

hyperreal — the hyperreal as the exceptional limit of the real. This is the moment of the nuclear

implosion that ends the symbolic exchange that was to preclude mutually assured destruction, the

fake robbery that transcends reality into hyperreality only through perfectly obliterating the

distinction between truth and falsity, the map that becomes the territory.[69]

This account of hyperreality is thus something like the dialectical transcendence of the

Lacanian "Real," the "the undifferentiated, unarticulated field or reality beyond our reach and

simultaneously causing our desire"[70] that the subject inhabits prior to its movement through the

mirror stage.[71] Before this moment of identification, there is only the formless, shapeless,

colorless, odorless stage of infancy and natality, symbolically empty precisely because of the

proliferation of symbols. There is neither subject nor object because there is no sign. There is

neither Qfwfq nor space because Qfwfq has not acted to produce a sign in space. Through a

process of symbolic exchange that accompanies biological development (development as

construed by those already within the confines of the symbolic order), the proto-subject becomes

capable of acknowledging itself and the external world. The capacity for conceptual judgments is

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[69] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 58–75, 39, 1–2.
[70] Burgess, "The *Real* at the Origin of Sovereignty," 663.
[71] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1977 [1949]): 1–7.
    Adrian Johnston observes the following regarding the Real: "To be more precise, as that which is foreign to Imaginary-Symbolic reality — this reality is the realm containing conscious apprehension, communicable significance, and the like — the Real is intrinsically elusive, resisting by nature capture in the comprehensibly meaningful formulations of concatenations of Imaginary-Symbolic signs. It is, as Lacan stresses again and again, an 'impossibility' *vis-à-vis* reality." "Jacques Lacan," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/lacan/>.
    This account seem to correspond with Lacan's own observation that a "cut in the signifying chain alone verifies the structure of the subject as discontinuity in the real." "The Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1977 [1960]): 299.

now possible. The hyperreal cannot, then, merely be the destruction of all symbolic exchange because to be totally outside of symbolic exchange is to inhabit the Real, to be in a position from which it is not possible to judge that subjects or objects exist. The hyperreal is instead the breakdown of a symbolic order without the breakdown of its *a priori* conditions of possibility — space, time, multiplicity, etc. — which themselves are not grasped *prior* to experience but instead function as the *necessary suppositions* of actual experience in the world. Hyperreality thus merges the Real with the symbolic.

Sovereignty as authorship is first possible at this self-creation, the autopoiesis of the subject, which is the moment in which it is first possible to speak of a subject as a relatively self-contained composite existent capable of acting within the confines of its own logical possibility, the subject as an Ideal-I.[72] The Prozorov–Qfwfq image of sovereignty only remains possible insofar as a subject is capable of disrupting the symbolic order within which it has been constituted. For Prozorov, such disruption occurs in the form of "refusing what one is," withdrawing oneself from one's attachments in the world. These attachments limit potentiality and, consequently, freedom as potentiality.

Potentiality is an important concept for Prozorov's account of sovereignty. He relies heavily on the analysis of the term provided by Agamben, who reads Melville's character Bartleby the Scrivener as a figure of absolute potentiality. Bartleby is a scrivener, yet he refuses to write. In doing so, he undertakes an experiment "in which potentiality … frees itself of the principle of reason. Emancipating itself from Being and non-Being alike, potentiality thus creates its own ontology."[73] The principle of potentiality is, according to Agamben, suspended between

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[72] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 2.
[73] Agamben, "Bartleby," 259.

these poles. It is the capacity both to do (or to be) and not to do (or not to be), and it separates a subject's capacity to act from both the desire to act and the necessity to act. Agamben situates this experiment, the experiment of a scrivener who inhabits a zone between choosing to write and refusing to write (but also, Agamben alleges, between wanting to write and not wanting to write), in relation both to the ancient skeptics, who refused either to affirm or deny the truth of propositions, and to theological debates of the sort recounted above, in which the question of whether God had absolute authority or only authority in accordance with his own will was of utmost importance.

In situating the refusal of Bartleby in this way, though, Agamben commits a series of errors that perhaps result from his dependence on classical theological sources. Most importantly, to function as potential, potentiality cannot be dependent on the actual activity of a being in the world. Whether Bartleby writes or does not write in no way fails to exhaust in each moment his potentiality either to write or not to write. Agamben seems to acknowledge this by stating that Bartleby's potentiality "does not remain unactualized on account of a lack of will."[74] But if Bartleby's potentiality is exhausted at every moment as it passes into actuality, then it is unclear to what extent he actually inhabits a zone of indistinction between writing and not writing. Each moment that he rejects the prodding encouragements of the Man of the Law to write is a moment when despite his capacity to do so, he does not. The act of not writing is fundamentally distinct from the intellectual choice neither to affirm nor deny the value of writing. The skeptics are thus poor models for understanding Bartleby's (non-)act. Equally, the possibility of deciding not to be is, as a negation, necessarily only possible for existents that already are. In not deciding not to be, Bartleby affirmatively attaches himself to the world. He

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[74] Ibid., 255.

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affirms his being at every moment that he exhausts his potential not to be. He participates in relations of mutual care that characterize his mode of existence. The disruptive force of Bartleby's "I prefer not to" is that it is illegible within the parameters of the Man of the Law's understanding of the world, not that it is not a willful action.[75]

While Agamben's account of Bartleby as the model of potentiality, as well as Prozorov's partial reliance on it, leaves much to be desired, the idea of potentiality is nevertheless important for understanding sovereignty in terms of the ontologically inalienable capacity of an existent to act in the world. However, potentiality must be freed from its identification with specific material arrangements or decisions or schemes of interpretation. Rather, it must be located in the

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[75] Prozorov, for his part, instead opts for the figure of Michael K., a character in J.M. Coetzee's novel *The Life and Times of Michael K.*, as a model of sovereignty. Prozorov reads Michael K. in opposition to Bartleby, noting that "Michael K. serves as an epitome of the free subject insofar as he does not merely 'enter' a state of pure potentiality but actually *decides*, in a sovereign fashion, not to remain in the actual state of the camps, in which all potentiality is effaced." *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty*, 74. While Prozorov is generally laudatory of Agamben's account, he nevertheless does not believe that Bartleby serves as a sufficient model for thinking through the relationship between sovereignty and freedom. However, Prozorov's account likewise suffers precisely in his reasons for rejecting Bartleby: "Perhaps, the difference between Bartleby and Michael K. is the difference between the ontological condition of potentiality and the practices of freedom that strive to attain it: *the practice of freedom consists in deciding on a 'preference not to.'*" Ibid.

The ultimate deficiency in Prozorov's account is that sovereignty and freedom, which effectively amount to the same thing for him as for me, must always be negative, it always functions as a negation of what one is. Yet Bartleby is the negation *par excellence*. He does not so much die as wither away, his potentiality both to be or not to be finally exhausted as he slides into the ultimate negation of non-being. Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street," *Bartleby and Benito Cereno* (New York: Dover Publications, 1990 [1853]): 32–33. Or, if he is affirming, then it is an affirmation not to be. Joseph K., on the other hand, does not merely escape the camps in which he had been confined so that he might die alone in the wilderness. Instead, he lives in the mountains and grows pumpkins to consume. Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty*, 71. His potentiality to be or not to be is at every moment exhausted in a struggle for life and being, not in resignation to whatever happens to him as he prefers to do nothing himself. Prozorov acknowledges roughly as much, stating, "After all, the success of Michael K's flight is a happy hyperbole, and one is never entirely 'out of the camps,' never fully on the outside of the diagram. Although his passion of flight forms the ethos of concrete freedom, the actual practices of freedom are likely never to leave the camps all too far behind. What is exemplary is therefore Michael K.'s dwelling inside the diagrammatic space while resisting his own diagrammatisation, eluding his seizure by discourse and indifferently shrugging off the question of his identity." Ibid., 77.

What is the difference between choosing to live a life in the camps and choosing to live a life outside? Potentiality is either exhausted on behalf of life or on behalf of non-life. What, then, does it matter how one decides? Why can freedom not be an affirmation of what one is, even as one acknowledges one could be otherwise? Prozorov begins with the idea of "concrete freedom" but ends with something like a categorical imperative to reject, as best one can, all possible predications. The subject of concrete freedom — "bare life" as a redeemed and positive figure — is the ego in itself not as a supposition or projection but as an enacted mode of being in the world.

capacities inherent in something like, but also unlike, both the Ideal-I and the ego in itself. We might call it the pure form of the Ideal-I. The Ideal-I itself is insufficient as a model of potentiality because it is, *pace* Prozorov, already embedded in the representational schemes that make it intelligible as a subject's projection of itself. In Lacan's account of the mirror stage, there seems to be no distinction between the projection of the "I" and the social relations in which it is embedded and which ultimately render it intelligible. Understanding the capacities of the subject as part of that projected "I" would thus be to limit the range of imaginable capacities or potentialities within the confines of those social relations. The "I" projected as a scrivener always stands in relation to writing. The range of legitimate predications thus limits what is comprehensible as capacity.

Potentiality must instead be understood in terms of the material practices available to the pure form of the existent subject in question. The Kantian ego in itself is a useful model here, as it is nothing more than what one must "necessarily assume … beyond his own subject's constitution as composed of nothing but appearances."[76] Kant, as we have seen above, takes the extra and unnecessary step of attributing to this supposition of all experience moral force in the world of the senses. Nevertheless, the idea of an abstraction from all actual experiences in which an existent participates to the general form of that existent and its material capacities offers a better ground for theorizing potentiality than does a scrivener who actively affirms his slow destruction. This "existent in itself" still requires attention to the specific *material* identity of a socially legibilized form of being. Thus, as is the case for any Ideal-I, an "existent in itself" cannot be projectively understood without paying attention to its specific social relationships, yet it also provides a basis for theorizing alternative material–spatial arrangements available to

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[76] Kant, *Grounding*, 53 [451].

present existents, even as it cannot speak to how those new arrangements might be understood within a broader representation of space. The existent can author a new world yet maintain itself.

An account of sovereignty as a fundamental capacity both to act materially in the world and to inaugurate representational schemes that totally reconstitute space as a series of interlinked concrete abstractions,[77] even as new schemes remain dependent on basic subject–object distinctions that are the foundation of all experience, returns to a theological perspective that considered God's sovereign authority to be absolute and unbounded, limited only by the borders of his authorial capacities. In a world where God has been declared dead in the sense that no theological account universally grounds explanations for events in the world, there is nothing that of necessity logically constrains existents — however they might be constituted — from acting in accordance with the full range of their capabilities, understood as their potential both to act or not to act. This potentiality is ontological and inalienable, even for those living within the space deemed by the state to be under its control. Political sovereignty, with its concerns of legitimate authority and reasonable justifications for rule, is ultimately groundless.

ONTIC LIMITS TO ONTOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

The goal of this chapter has been to establish the concept of sovereignty as a possibility prior to examining the specific ways in which it is materially practiced in the world, the strategies through which subjects who are inalienably sovereign are nevertheless compelled, coerced, or convinced to act as if they were *necessarily* subordinated.[78] The sovereign capacities of any existent can, it seems, be divided broadly into three logical ideal types that in actuality interpenetrate, combine, and entangle. First is the possibility of altering an existent's

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[77] This is the language of Henri Lefebvre, from whom I draw substantially in the next chapter.
[78] This is not, as will become clear in the next chapter, to ignore the structural conditions of actual and ongoing subordinations.

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form of being or engaging in a composite relationship with other existents. This effectively amounts to creating the conditions for an alternative "existent-in-itself" that might serve as the basis for offering a concrete account of sovereign potentiality. Second is the ability to engage in alternative biospatial practices. Third is to participate in a novel interpretative regime the terms of which effectively reconstitute what certain biospatial practices mean. Clearly, each of these possibilities is related in some way to the other two. What an existent is depends simultaneously on how it is spatially arranged and how it is representationally understood, while what counts as a differently constituted existent is likewise dependent on either (or both) spatial arrangements and interpretations thereof.

To the first order belongs those dreams of science fiction that we might enter and experience the existences of animals, computers, or other forms of life from the perspective of the material host. Whether such an experience could be intelligibly maintained across existents is an open question. "How does the grass feel as it is cut?" falls under this sort of inquiry, as does the equally imponderable, "Can rocks die?"[79] The interconnected desiring machines of a Deleuzian world or the cybernetic sympoietic string figures of Donna Haraway do as well. "Man" is always an "animal with," whether with language, tools, rationality, or other distinguishing markers. As the tools change, so do the spatial assemblages, conceptual legibilities, and thus also the subject.

Second, biospatial transformations are, simply, movements: completely engaging in new spatial relations. To "change position" is no less than to alter one's relationship to all materiality,

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[79] The former of these questions was posed by François Debrix in a class discussion on Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour. "Materialities, Ecologies, and Post-Humanity," *ASPT 6104: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Methodology*, 16 November 2017.
　　The second question is also the title of the second chapter in Elizabeth Povinelli's *Geontologies* (30–56).

past and present. It is as if, from one's perspective, the whole universe has shifted, if only minutely. Perhaps one engages in novel relationships with non-human animals, in which the lion and lamb that lie together are led by a little child, the same child that has inserted its hand into the viper's den but not been bitten.[80] Third, the shift in interpretive regimes can be exemplified in the movement Foucault recounts from individuals being considered "sodomites" to being considered "homosexuals."[81] While certain elements of the relevant physical practices may not have changed, the ways that they were understood, and thus also the other practices in relation to which they were imagined and interpreted, did. We might also consider here the shift from being a citizen of heaven to being a citizen of an earthly political order, which Benedict Anderson has documented in terms of the transition from "religious time" to "empty homogeneous time." Insofar as time is only ever series of movements in relation to other spatial movements, i.e., time as the pure relationality of mobile space, the movement from "religious time" to "empty homogeneous time" is the necessary effect of moving from a world ruled (or imagined to be ruled) by a single Christian empire to a world of secular states.[82]

There are two themes running through these ideal types: the radical sovereign freedom of the existent to author itself and the interconnectivity that places limits on the activity of the presumed-to-exist existent or individual. Now that the formal ideal of absolute sovereignty has been articulated, the next step is to determine the extent to which its manifestation is impeded by the fundamental condition of multiplicity. To what extent is the theoretical radical freedom of an existent limited by other existents? Any answer clearly depends on providing an account of the

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[80] Is. 12:6–8 NKJV.

[81] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (*The Will to Knowledge*), trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Book, 1990 [1976]): 43.

[82] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]). See especially chapter two, "Cultural Roots" (9–36).

specific conditions of possibility of the existent in question and the degree to which the

conditions of its material reproduction are supported. A human stranded in a desert is radically

free to go any which way, but that will do little to stop it from dying of starvation or thirst in a

few short days, its body entering into alternative relations of mutual attentiveness with the desert

sands that softly caress it. When one speaks of the ontological possibility of self-authorship, it

exists as a pure form without content, and it can only be spoken of in such terms as "potential

alternative spatial arrangement" and "potential alternative interpretations of what one is."

       Prozorov segments freedom into two categories: ontological freedom and ontic

freedom.[83] So far I have been focusing on the ontological form of freedom as the possible

outside rupture of that which presently obtains, the inauguration of a new interpretive order that

follows from acts of sovereignty that bring new worlds into being. While rejecting elements of

his argument, I have in this focus on the ontological followed Prozorov. He gestures at the

difficulty ontic limits to ontological freedom might pose, but these appear in his text merely as

barriers to be overcome, not as constitutive elements of a subject and thus its mode of

sovereignty. Yet we know that sovereignty and freedom are always incomplete in the real world.

As we have seen in relation to Baudrillard, the actual identification of a form as existing is a

fundamentally historical project that can never be so fully outside of representation as to

inaugurate a new order *ex nihilo*, even as historical emergences disguise their historicity so as to

appear to arrive from nothing. The fully sovereign act is one that is capable through the total

novelty of its entrance of making all that is past seem as if it were empty and undivided. It is the

French Revolution resetting the calendar to Year One. It is the end of *Snowpiercer*, when all

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[83] Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty*, e.g. 149.

humans are dead except for two young children and the world is covered in snow.[84] That which follows from such moments is dependent on the world as it is, which of course follows from the world as it has been. But for the purposes of representation, the world might as well have appeared from nothing. After all, simulation is of the order of appearances and disappearances.

Sovereign action is always insufficient. To cause a new interpretive order to appear, as Qfwfq's single act did, always already tends to the elimination of the possibility of recapturing a pure sign at its origin. The set of relations that once obtained can never obtain again, even as new positivities made possible as spatial sites of "not-sign" become things for themselves, thereby allowing the logical possibility of "things in themselves" as regulative fictions and logical abstractions. As the apparent world disappears, so does the possibility of speaking of the "true world" that enables the world as it appeared.[85] There is only a "general thickness of signs." Action here is never fully complete. The possibility of undertaking "one final act" that would permit an individual not merely to die in honor but to be honored in perpetuity depends on the same actions being prized indefinitely, which we know is not the case.[86] Long after his initial signification, Qfwfq labors over a new sign until it is as close to perfect as he can make it. No sooner, though, has he crafted the sign than he regrets and rejects it as an antiquated relic of a different age. He destroys it as swiftly as possible, but he finds that blotting out signs is only temporary. The act of destroying signs is a positive act. Qfwfq claims the blottings out have

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[84] Directed by Joon-ho Bong, performers Chris Evans, Jamie Bell, and Tilda Swinton (Moho Film; Opus Pictures, 2013).

[85] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or, How One Philosophizes with a Hammer*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982 [1889]): 485 ("How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable").

[86] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003). See especially chapter three, "Tragic Recognition: Action and Identity in *Antigone*" (62–89).

faded away, revealing again the old signs, but it is an open question whether the negations fade

away or whether the positive act of destruction itself becomes a new sign.[87]

Dialogicality is consequently a fundamental problem for the project of sovereign

enclosure, that is, the ability to mark an end to an action of authorship that extends from the

moment it is undertaken indefinitely into the future. There is always the threat of the recurrence

of the outside that disrupts the way that the inside is understood or constituted. In purely

practical terms, this danger lies in the presence of multiplicity. The "problem of the individual"

present in Hobbes is really the "collective problem" of the individual to the extent that political

authority is not at risk when a single individual alone opts not to obey political leaders but

instead when many individuals together decide to revolt.[88] Because all, each, and any other

individual is representationally a potential threat to one's wellbeing, the State of Nature is a

seemingly very dangerous and risky place. This is the condition that Judith Butler refers to,

specifically in the context of humans, as "precarity," the fundamental ontological condition of all

existents that they will at some point cease to exist. Butler distinguishes this condition from

"precariousness," the variously distributed actual historical conditions that make it easier for

some to preserve their lives and more difficult for others to preserve theirs.[89]

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[87] Calvino, "A Sign in Space," 36–37.

[88] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 140–141 (I.viii): "[Y]et when many of them conspire together, the Rage of the whole multitude is visible enough. For what argument of Madnesse can there be greater, than to clamour, strike, and throw stones at our best friends? Yet this is somewhat lesse than such a multitude will do. For they will clamour, fight against, and destroy those, by whom all their lifetime before, they have been protected, and secured from injury. And if this be Madnesse in the multitude, it is the same in every particular man. For as in the middest of the sea, though a man perceive no sound of that part of the water next to him; yet he is well assured, that part contributes as much, to the Roaring of the Sea, as any other part, of the same quantity: so also, though wee perceive no great unquietnesse, in one, or two men; yet we may be well assured, that their singular Passions, are parts of the Seditious roaring of a troubled Nation."

[89] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2013): 20–21.

The effects of such distributed precariousness function to disguise the ontological precarity that obtains as a fundamental condition of existence. Even if no political system can be established in which the possibility that the weakest will kill the strongest can ever be fully excised, nevertheless, an endless series of barriers and interdictions makes it more difficulty in reality *and* provides the psychological security that it is in fact more difficult to act with deadly force against individuals who surround themselves with such safeguards. To borrow the language of Agamben, the political declaration of a specific *homo sacer* helps to disguise that each of us is always already *homo sacer* in potentiality. Sovereignty is ontologically conterminous with an indeterminate, unfinishable act of authorship that brings a new interpretive order into being. It is always a possibility that Brutus will stab Caesar, that a member of the Secret Service will turn on his or her charge. This is the premise of panoptic security; because each is potentially dangerous, all others must potentially serve as watchmen, which in turn creates a condition in which each is potentially always watched. Peace is War; Slavery is Freedom; Ignorance is Strength.[90]

But these interdictions nevertheless do in fact constrain, limit, and make difficult the ontic situations in which the ontological possibility of sovereign authorship might be realized. The following chapters in this thesis are aimed at correcting this deficiency in Prozorov's account by examining the specific ways in which the appearance of ontic sovereignty, which never in fact exists perfectly or totally, is maintained through historically specific regimes of distribution that do not merely make it more difficult for the weakest to kill the strongest but in fact alter who counts as "strongest" and "weakest" in the sense of "having the power to forestall death." Sovereign authorship as the possibility to be otherwise exists alongside ontological

[90] See footnote 38, page 23, above.

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precarity for all existents. Political sovereignty, the question of who *rightfully* or *lawfully*

expresses this ontological capability, thus works as a political fiction to discourage some to

exercise such potentiality because it might obstruct or limit the interests of others, especially

those in authority. In the next chapter, I examine the nexus between ontic regimes of distribution

that enable or discourage flourishing and the ways in which they enable or discourage

sovereignty as auto\sympoietic authorship. After this, I deal with firsthand accounts of subjects

navigating biopolitically disallowed spaces in order to think through the specific forms that

sovereign authorship and ontological precarity take in everyday life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIOPOLITICAL CONDITIONS OF SOVEREIGN PERFORMATIVITY

In the strict sense of the term, political sovereignty does not exist. If, as I have argued, sovereignty is the authorial potentiality of all existents, however those existents are constituted, then no political order can ever be completely consolidated. In fact, in a strict sense of the term, *no* form of sovereignty exists. The absolute authorship that is central to the concept of sovereignty is always partial and incomplete when introduced into politics, which are unavoidably rooted in multiplicity. Belief in sovereignty, though, has real-world effects. Belief is not merely a cognitive disposition one has in relation to certain propositions. Rather, belief is the inextricable core of practical reason. What we do in the world, how we understand what we do in the world — these are coterminous with our orientation to the world, to what we believe about it. Belief is thus of necessity a spatially performed practice, and spatial practices are rooted in beliefs. So when I say that sovereignty has "real-world effects," I mean that people live as if sovereignty existed; they live to make sovereignty exist, even as it constantly eludes them.

These practices are carried out in the material world, which is why they are of necessity "spatial" practices. The idea of a non-spatial practice or a non-material practice is simply unintelligible. All practices are spatial, even if some relations in space elude our present understanding. As the analysis of Calvino's short story in the last chapter indicated, though, there is not technically such a "thing" as space, no space in itself. Space begins at the moment that a sign has been made, the moment thought thinks itself, which makes it possible to see thought and non-thought as separate terms. "Absolute space" as the pure possibility of space is a regulative fiction abstracted from actual relations in space, a fiction that functions as the condition of

legibility for discerning the "actual relations" as relations. As Kant explains in his transcendental aesthetic, the idea of space is required to see objects as separate from subjects because "the very possibility of matter presupposes a formal intuition (space and time) as given."[1] The abstract possibility of space as the condition for discerning the external world must be presumed, even though this tells us nothing about actual relations in space. While Kant's "Newtonian" account of space has been criticized for stalling the development of more nuanced philosophies of space, his insights need not be neglected merely because of the effect they may have had in the history of thought.[2]

Whereas the previous chapter concerned itself with the formal possibility of ordered space analyzed through the language of sovereignty, this chapter directly confronts the relations that compose space. My argument is a direct rebuttal to Giorgio Agamben's "topological" spatiology, which is insufficiently attentive to the historical regimes of distribution that create spaces not of exceptionality but of normal (and normalized) indigence. By dematerializing biopolitics in the "logics of sovereignty," Agamben misses the ways that specific enactments of sovereignty are enabled by and justify biopolitical regimes of distribution. I instead return to Foucault's account of the biopolitical as a discrete historical–political *dispositif*, the operations of which are immediately material, even as they operate according to an imaginary of optimization. "Biopolitics" produces spatial relations that accord in an ever-moving relation to, and perhaps dialectical tension with, representations of space. As certain forms of life are made to live and

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[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Marcus Weigelt (New York: Penguin, 2007 [1781/1787]): 269 (A268; B325).

[2] E.g., David Harvey, "The Kantian Roots of Foucault's Dilemmas," *Space, Knowledge, and Power: Foucault and Geography*, eds. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007 [2006]): 41–47. Perhaps because of its brevity, Harvey's account here is not wholly clear regarding what Foucault's "dilemmas" were, nor how they emanate from Kant. The answer probably depends on "which" Kant and "which" Foucault one prefers to see.

others are "disallowed to the point of death," the range of imaginable practices open to fostered forms of life expands. Disallowed forms of life come to appear as "bare" even as they yet retain sovereignty — and as the range of potentially actionable practices may become increasingly narrowed. Representations of "bare life" and "sovereignty" in practice disguise the fundamentally *potentially* bare quality of all life: its ontological precarity.

I begin with a critique of Agamben's analysis of the relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics, showing how it is both internally incoherent and less useful than Foucault's original account of biopolitics. Next, I turn to Henri Lefebvre's tripartite model of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space in order to begin to grasp the variety of practices made possible through, and themselves making possible, biopolitical regimes of distribution. The production of space, Lefebvre helps us to see, is a never-ending activity. Individually and collectively, we are perpetually engaged in relations of spatial production and representation, which function together to bring new worlds into being. These practices must be undertaken at the level of the body, even as individual bodies alone cannot contain the effects of these practices. From Lefebvre I turn to Carl Schmitt, who argues that the production of space is a contested and not merely benign practice. To produce space is simultaneously to limit the ways that others can produce space. These contestations in space and over space are the sites of struggles out of which some are able to simulate their (ontic) self-sovereignty, while others are left in a situation of socially induced "precariousness." I explore recent sociological literature regarding the distribution of space in contemporary U.S. cities, paying special attention to citadelization and ghettoization as dialectically intertwined ongoing spatial practices that simultaneously function on the register of representation in evident and meaningful ways.

Finally, I argue these intentionally manufactured displays of precariousness and the concomitant reality of material abundance for some help to disguise the ontological precarity that characterizes all being. This relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics is fundamentally opposed to the version offered by Agamben because it privileges relations, practices, and representations over abstract logics.

AGAMBEN'S ACCOUNT OF SOVEREIGNTY AND BARE LIFE

Giorgio Agamben opens his *Homo Sacer* with the claim that Foucault never clearly explicated the "hidden point of intersection" between "techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures," which Agamben equates with the sovereign and biopolitical "models of power."[3] It is not entirely clear which of these techniques corresponds with which model of power as disciplinary power, which for Foucault is the mode of power concerned with individualization, goes unmentioned. Nevertheless, this allegation of lack permits Agamben to assert that the Foucauldian thesis "will then have to be corrected, or, at least completed."[4] Agamben's attempt at a correction comes through the distinction between *zoē* and *bios*. *Zoē* indicates life in general, whereas *bios* is the form of life made possible in community. *Zoē* is also the condition of possibility of *bios* insofar as communal life first requires that life exists at all, but according to Agamben, *zoē* is only (representationally) included within *bios* to the extent that it is excluded from it in the form of *homo sacer*, the figure who can be killed but cannot be sacrificed;[5] the "fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoē* and

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[3] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998 [1995]): 6.
[4] Ibid., 9.
[5] Ibid., 82.

bios."[6] The distinction between *zoē* and *bios* parallels exactly the relationship between voice and language. Just as the human being is the "living being who has language," it is the *zoē* that is also capable of *bios*.[7] The founding act of sovereignty, according to Agamben, is the exclusion of *zoē* from the *polis*, which is functionally equivalent to the creation of *zoē* within *bios* via the sovereign ban and internal exclusion of *homo sacer*.[8] Because sovereign power constitutes itself in relation to "bare life," he reasons, the politics of sovereignty has been biopolitical from the very beginning.

At times Agamben's account seems as if it is merely an analysis of the fundamental contradictions in the law's assertion of a durable and concrete relationship to life. In order for the law to be effective, it must presume itself to grasp in a real way the forms of life over which it ostensibly has control. It must "create the sphere of its own reference in real life and *make that reference regular*."[9] But since the law cannot be so precisely constructed in advance that it covers every conceivable exigency, there must remain within the law a way for the law to deal with the unexpected, or else the structure of the law falls immediately into disarray. The law must presume the state of exception. The state of exception is a state where the law is in force, yet every act (or at least every act enacted by the sovereign) maintains the force of law, meaning that *no act falls outside of the law*: "[T]he sovereign power is this very impossibility of distinguishing between outside and inside, [state of] nature and [state of] exception, *physis* and *nomos*."[10] Thus, when Agamben says that the "exception everywhere becomes the rule," he does

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[6] Ibid., 181.
[7] Ibid., 7–8.
[8] This is a creation of *zoē* in the sense that the ties of community are juridically withdrawn from *homo sacer*. To the extent that Agamben typically seems to equate the juridical with life, withdrawing the protections of the juridical is thus by definition what creates bare life.
[9] Ibid., 26.
[10] Ibid., 37.

not mean "exception" in the sense of a constant negation of the norm but instead as a "realm of

bare life" in which the distinctions on which law is founded become unintelligible.[11] The

sovereign can no longer act unlawfully. The camp thus comes to function as the "*nomos* of the

planet" precisely because by functioning as a space in which "power confronts nothing but pure

life, without any mediation," it represents in its everyday operations a site where no action can be

lawful precisely because no action can be unlawful.[12]

François Debrix reminds us that for Agamben the space of the camp is not merely

topographical, i.e., it is not merely a specific location that functions as an exemplar for the

furthest extent of biopolitical logics, but topological as well. It is the logical possibility that life

and law might in any space become indistinct. Debrix writes,

> What matters for Agamben (and what eventually may allow one to pose topographical
> questions such as those listed above) are the relations and redistributions of power and
> violence that the space of the camp both reflects and enables. The camp, for Agamben,
> occupies a place in biopolitical designs, in and for political power, because it operates as
> a topological matrix that potentially connects bodies in space to a range of operations of
> force, control, exception, or utility. This is what it means for Agamben to declare that the
> camp is an "absolute biopolitical space."[13]

The distinction here between "topology" and "topography" is a helpful one because it seems to

apply not only to the state of exception (and also nature) but likewise to the figure of *homo*

sacer. While the exclusive inclusion (i.e., the ban) of *homo sacer* from the political order is the

"originary" act of sovereignty, the figure of *homo sacer* plays a primarily illustrative role in the

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[11] Ibid., 9.

[12] Ibid., 176, 171.

[13] "Topologies of Vulnerability and the Proliferation of Camp Life," *Environmental and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 33.3 (June 2015): 447.

It remains from my perspective undecided whether Agamben recognizes that topological representations are the very source of the topographies of violence the topology of which Agamben seeks to diagnose. He seems unconcerned with identifying the regulative ideals or imaginaries that stand behind so much death and destruction when compared to his obsession with the topology that is to unveil the secret virtual ordering at the heart of the contemporary system.

course of the argument, demonstrating a topographical instance in which the capability of the sovereign to decide on the exception appears. Thus, the sovereign and *homo sacer* occupy the "two extreme limits" of the juridical order, each simultaneously inside and outside of it: "the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns."[14] Agamben's affixation of "virtually" to the power of the sovereign makes the concreteness of the condition of *homines sacri* all the more apparent. If the sovereign is recognizable because he potentially decides on the exception, *homo sacer* is recognizable because it is being actively treated in an exceptional manner. Sovereignty is thus the site of all potentiality (the potential to declare another *homo sacer*), while *homo sacer* is the site of all impotentiality (one has already been declared *homo sacer* in order to be *homo sacer*).

But the deployment of the term "virtual" also emphasizes that the symmetrical relationship between *homo sacer* and the sovereign is ostensibly ontologically stable. The sovereign is a specific figure (thus "he" rather than "it"), recognizable not because he actually declares the exception but because the sovereign cannot exist without the possibility of exceptionality, exceptionality in potentiality. Conversely, the concrete reality of *homo sacer* is that all are "sovereign" with respect to it because it being cast outside the law's protection means it can be killed at any time without ramification. *Homo sacer* is not merely the figure who can be killed but not sacrificed but, in more general terms, one "who can be deliberately killed *without* [the killer] *committing homicide*."[15]

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[14] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 84.
[15] Claudio Minca, "Giorgio Agamben and the New Biopolitical Nomos," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 88.4 (2006): 387.

In the Hobbesian state of nature, which Agamben argues is a state of exception, it "is not so much a war of all against all as, more precisely, a condition in which everyone is bare life and a *homo sacer* for everyone else."[16] This throws a wrench in Agamben's apparent denial of virtuality to *homo sacer*. If it is possible to imagine a condition in which each is concretely *homo sacer*, then that same condition is necessarily one in which all others are simultaneously concretely sovereign in relation to *homo sacer*. A topological or virtual relationship consequently obtains for both *homines sacri* and sovereigns in the sense that the concrete existence of each implies the concrete reality of the other, and thus the permanent and indistinct virtuality of each subject as both sovereign and *homo sacer*.[17] To be constituted as *homo sacer* is to be in the presence of an actively subordinating sovereign, even as the potential to be sovereign is only realized in the concrete creation of *homo sacer* or *homines sacri*. Sovereignty and *homo sacer* are thus not topologically stable positions but immanent judgments or interpretations of relations as they concretely obtain.

Rather than being left with a complex topology, we instead find a complex topography represented in a relatively simple topology.[18] Actual topographical "spaces of exception," the indistinction of life and law, occur at each juncture where sovereignty is constituted through not merely the *declaration* that another is *homo sacer* but instead the *concrete production* of another as *homo sacer*. No killing can be *de facto* murder because every killing constitutes a real space of

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[16] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 106.

[17] This is true to the extent that "virtually" means nothing other than "potentially concrete." Concrete manifestations thus reveal what was previously and remains presently a virtual possibility. A virtual possibility passes into a virtual impossibility only once that which could have been concrete may no longer possibly be concrete.

[18] It could be objected that my use of topological/topographical language is inappropriate when describing the sovereign–*homo sacer* relationship and can only be applied to spaces of exception. Any concrete relationship between these figures must take place materially, which thusly produces space, i.e., a topography. It is therefore justifiable to think of the abstract, ideal relationship as topological. Indeed, much of this chapter is devoted to emphasizing the spatial (and thus topological) quality of ideation.

exceptionality, and exceptionality authorizes every act as lawful. In what other sense could the

state of nature have contained real *homines sacri*? Sovereignty as "ban" is not yet possible. The

topological relationship between *homines sacri* and sovereigns cannot recognize murder, not

because killing *homo sacer* is less than murder and killing the sovereign is more than murder, as

Agamben claims, but because the category "murder" is law's *post facto* appellation onto a

material encounter that exceeds the law's ability to capture it factually. As such, when Agamben

emphasizes that Hobbes's solution to how the state of nature is transformed into a social order is

only possible by each laying down the right to enact the possibility for sovereignty that each

possesses in the state of nature, it is unclear what exactly this "laying down" could mean. It

makes no topological sense. Each is always both potentially *homo sacer* and sovereign in

relation to every other. For a topological relationship to obtain, it must correspond to possible

concrete realities as their abstract matrical form. In the case of laying down the possibility for

sovereignty, it would necessarily require the absolute impotentiality of non-sovereign subjects

(i.e., those who have laid down their right to sovereignty and become always and only bare life)

ever to constitute The Sovereign as *homo sacer* — through killing him, for example — and

themselves as sovereign in return. Hobbes, as we saw in the last chapter, is not unaware of this.

Establishing a political situation does not alter the fundamental topology that obtains whenever

there are multiple subjects: each is always already virtually sovereign and virtually *homo sacer*

in relation to all others. The weakest can always kill the strongest.[19]

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[19] Agamben's response, as I understand him, would likely be something along the lines of, "But killing the sovereign does not constitute him as *homo sacer*. It constitutes him as dead. *Homo sacer* is a form of life, one that is not *bios* because the law that creates social life does not hold for it. The Sovereign, on the other hand, is covered by the law, even when he has suspended its normal operation."

   What makes *homo sacer* a distinct form of life, though, is its proximity to a power that expresses itself ultimately in killing. It is not the *ban* alone that makes *homo sacer* but *homo sacer*'s perpetual proximity to death. Even without the law's protections, ethical forms of communal life are still possible. Indeed, they are what make the

Agamben's account of the "logics of sovereignty" tells us nothing more about politics or their structure than does that bleak Hobbesian assertion. If this is the case, perhaps it is because topo-logics, not unlike the purely conceptual account of sovereignty explored in the last chapter, only enable us to understand abstractions that are of necessity actually rooted in real-world practice. Every understanding of the world is, as we will see most clearly through Lefebvre, in some sense theoretical. But this does not imply that every theoretical account of collective life usefully illuminates the complexity in which we are perpetually embedded. Topological representations are inevitable, but they are a way of making topography understandable, not of discovering the previously hidden basis for all political life. As William Connolly puts it, "Biocultural life exceeds any textbook logic because of the nonlogical character of its materiality. It is more messy, layered, and complex than any logical analysis can capture. … [I]t corresponds entirely to no design, no simple causal pattern, no simple set of paradoxes."[20] Indeed, the relationship between the capacity for sovereignty and its actual manifestations is itself complex. It depends on "biopolitics" not merely as the bare life produced as the originary act of sovereignty, as a topological structure. Rather, this is a biopolitics that must be understood in its distinct topographies, in the material–spatial possibilities it engenders and prevents.

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law possible. *Homo sacer* only exists to the extent that it might be killed. This possibility, this virtuality, obtains for the Sovereign as for any other. We see this clearly in the transition from the state of nature into society because the figure that *becomes* sovereign had just (concretely) been *homo sacer* precisely because it existed in relation to other *homines sacri*/sovereigns as a figure that could be killed, though not necessarily killed without *recompense*. The Sovereign may still be killed, meaning that the shift from state of nature to the juridical order is purely topographical.

An alternative, far cruder way of putting this point is that Agamben's study ends by discovering the presumptions with which Foucault's account of biopolitics begins: with power immanent at every moment to its own exercise.

[20] William Connolly, "The Complexities of Sovereignty," *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*, eds. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2007): 31.

FOUCAULT'S BIOPOLITICS AND THEIR RELATION TO SOVEREIGN POWER

There is no incantatory power to the term "biopolitics," nothing redemptive in returning specifically to the Foucauldian *oeuvre*. The term seems to play a relatively minor role in the range of Foucault's writings, and it would perhaps not be too difficult to construct the narrative that follows without turning to Foucault. There are two reasons I do so. First, the idea of biopolitics means more than simply the concern of politics with life. Accounts such as Agamben's, however, tend to reduce biopolitics to a fully symbolic or logical relationship between some idea of life and some practice called politics. One aim of my return to biopolitics in the context of sovereignty is to correct this "correction" to Foucault's hypothesis. This was part of the purpose of the forgoing section. Beyond this somewhat reactive justification, the language of biopolitics helps to emphasize that politics, especially the politics of distribution, is unavoidably about making a series of decisions regarding who will live and who will die. What forms of life will be made to live? Which will be disallowed to the point of death? On this matter, Agamben is wholly correct. There may even be some tactical or polemical benefit to retaining the term *homo sacer*, though in a modified sense that keeps in mind the concrete and dispersed ways in which lives are fostered or neglected. While the matrix of the biopolitical is not (yet) a direct analysis of actual regimes of making live and letting die, it is closer to the ground than to the rarefied air of the purest topologies.

Consequently, some preliminary exegetical work is required. Utmost in importance is the question, "What does Foucault mean by 'biopower' and 'biopolitics?'" In his published works, the first use of these terms comes at the end of *History of Sexuality, Volume One: The Will to Knowledge*. The characterization Foucault offers, at which I have gestured multiple times

already, is that the "ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replace by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death."[21] This shift is definable only in its social, which is to say material, manifestations. Foucault is concerned to note that he is interested not in a "history of mentalities" but in "a 'history of bodies' and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested."[22] In this account, it is an "analytics of sexuality" that permits the whole series of technologies by which populations are increased, strengthened, and made capable of waging war on behalf of an idealized image of themselves. The objects to which this form of power — which "dovetail[s] into [disciplinary power], integrate[s] it, modif[ies] it to some extent, and above all, use[s] it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques," albeit it "at a different level, on a different scale, and … mak[ing] use of very different instruments"[23] — addresses itself to "the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on."[24] These are the objects that eventually make it possible for various techniques of government to conceive of humanity as a "species" and as a "population."

The final chapter of *The Will to Knowledge* overlaps significantly with the last lecture provided during Foucault's series of January to March of 1976. A wholly different path precedes the earlier analysis, though. Rather than preoccupying himself with the issues of sex and

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[21] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (*The Will to Knowledge*), trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Book, 1990 [1976]): 138.

    If one reads this chapter after spending too much time reading Agamben, it is difficult not to be struck by the first paragraph, in which Foucault basically anticipates in advance every argument Agamben will raise, from a discussion of the Roman roots of the "power over life and death," to an active acknowledgment that sovereignty as a form of power had of course been concerned with life and could even expose it to death, to delinking "the decision" (in this case, the decision to wage war) from this exposure. Ibid., 135, 137. Perhaps it was a tacit response to Schmitt, or at least the line of Schmittian thinking that Agamben eventually picks up.

[22] Ibid., 152.

[23] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003 [1997]): 242.

[24] Ibid., 243.

sexuality, he instead examines the route by which it became possible to think of society as a war, to believe that "peace itself is a coded war."[25] According to this image of society, certain elements of the social body pose a potential risk to its continued vitality, and thus precautions must be made against them. They must be managed, relegated to the pale, subjugated in manifold ways. Foucault is essentially tracing the emergence of non-biological accounts of race that permit the "biologizing state racisms" of Stalinism and Nazism to emerge. The link between this account and the narrative in *The Will to Knowledge* is that the techniques of managing sexuality are inextricably intertwined with the health of the population as a "race." The lesser racial elements could not be permitted to put at risk the population as a whole. The "whole politics of settlement, family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property … received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race."[26] What in *The Will to Knowledge* begins as a concern for the aristocratic body (symbolics of blood) is thereby shown to be a concern for the aristocratic body in distinction to the body of the undesirable elements of society, which only becomes more pronounced in the sexual sciences of the bourgeois.

What we see, then, is in fact a fundamentally different understanding of "biopolitics" in Foucault than in Agamben. For Foucault, biopolitics is a historically specific form of governmentality, a technology of power whose history he traces back to the emergence of "pastoral power" in Christian medieval society. Foucault might agree, then, with Agamben that there is something similar between the inclusive exclusion of *homo sacer* within the juridical order and later forms of power that discriminate between and amongst members of the political

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[25] Ibid., 51.
[26] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 149.

order. Yet to the extent that "sovereignty" is, for Foucault, the form of power that actively kills, the legally exclusionary activity that produces *homo sacer* cannot be an act of sovereignty, even if it proceeds from the figure who is legally determined to be sovereign. Put differently, in a biopolitical regime, the law is one of many active mechanisms by which social hierarchies are materially maintained. The relationship of the sovereign ban is a complex one, in which it is never quite possible to say whether the power of the sovereign is still in force or is wholly absent. Biopolitical power, on the other hand, is marked by its active maintenance of these divisions by forms of policing that run throughout the social. Each life is made to live *in its own way*, which in turn corresponds with a certain representation of the material–spatial politics at play for any given life. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that Foucault's lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics*, held from January to April 1978, ended up focusing entirely on neoliberalism and liberalism as a governing rationality that constantly poses the question of whether one is governing too much, of what the proper field of government is.[27]

What, though, is the point of undertaking this summary of Foucault's thought? What does it matter what Foucault "really meant"? To some extent, it matters not at all whether Foucault and Agamben are talking about the same material–spatial–historical phenomena when they discuss "biopolitics." At the same time, though, Foucault's account provides a better framework for understanding the relationship between sovereign potentiality as discussed in chapter one and its actual social expression — the relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics — than does Agamben's, even as Agamben understands himself to be developing precisely this element of

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[27] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008 [2004]):317–324.

This study is in some sense continued by Wendy Brown in *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015), though she does not use the language of biopolitics to do so.

Foucault's thought. Sovereignty as the ontologically inalienable freedom to act in accordance with the capacities of one's mode of being is limited on the ontic plane by technologies of power that distribute material and representational potentiality in ways that make some modes of being more conceivable than others and other modes less so. The question then becomes exactly how these representations and practices function together in order to enable the fullest range of ideational potentiality for subjects who are always already sovereign, who are always already (potentially) freer than they feel themselves to be. "Biopolitics" in this context thus refers to the production of spatial–material lifeworlds that allow different imaginaries of sovereign potential to be conceivable. To stay at the level of sovereignty's logics, as Agamben does in *Homo Sacer*, is to pretend that mere abstractions are sufficient for providing an account of the social world and its politics.[28] The concreteness of Foucault's arguments, especially in contradistinction to Agamben's, reminds us how much more complex and varied the world of experience is, which in turn highlights how necessary it is to focus on the materiality of politics, which takes the form of space's mastery, appropriation, and production.

THE EMBODIED PRODUCTION OF SPACE

In the opening chapter, I discussed at some length that sovereign action does not merely concern itself with material extension or with novel interpretation. Rather, both must be effected simultaneously. Material extension requires the possibility of the interpretation that movement has occurred, while, as Kant's discussion in the transcendental aesthetic shows, to think the external world is to think a world of extensions. One produces a sign in space by judging or

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[28] Agamben's concluding few pages in *Homo Sacer* do move away from an exclusive focus on the logics of sovereignty to consider how biopolitics play out historically. This far more interesting account is picked up and developed in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002 [1998]), which captures the biopolitical moment that seems to elude Agamben throughout *Homo Sacer*.

interpreting that one has acted to produce a sign in space, which requires an assertion regarding what counts as a sign. "[A]ll subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated," as Nietzsche puts it.[29] The relationship between materiality and interpretation pervades the totality of language as a representational system, which is language as far as it is *langue*. Calvino's Qfwfq observed that everything had become its own sign, but we might make this insight stronger by observing that everything only *is* itself if it is also the *sign* of itself. We need not presume that our representational system is exhaustive with respect to some sort of "world-in-itself," but everything that we are capable of acknowledging as existing must be capable of representing itself as itself to us.

This is the space of the Kantian phenomenal, the world of possible experience that is the only world with respect to which we can have knowledge, which, as Nietzsche repeatedly observed, makes the notion of the "in itself" superfluous. Work since Kant has made clear that systems of representation are not unchanging and absolute. Foucault, for example, develops the idea of the "historical a priori," concepts that can be held independently of the experience of the objects they subsume but the development of which are historically malleable and complex, not a formal condition of reason alone.[30] What a thing "is" for us depends on its relationship to

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[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1887]): 77 (II.12).

[30] "Moreover, this *a priori* does not elude historicity: it does not constitute, above events, and in an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure; it is defined as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect; and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them, and are transformed with them into certain decisive thresholds." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 2010 [1969]): 127.

Judith Butler develops this concept in the specific context of what forms of life count as capable of being grieved: "If recognition is an act or practice undertaken by at least two subjects, and which, as the Hegelian frame would suggest, constitutes a reciprocal action, then recognizability describes those general conditions on the basis of

everything that it is not, a relationship that is both conceptual and spatial, the latter because of

the former. It matters for action in the world what we understand our action to be, which is

rooted in conceptual–spatial interpretive schemes, schemes that are necessarily social. In

practice, the "fresh interpretation" that is the sign of sovereign agency is always limited and

incomplete because of the fundamentally dialogical quality of interaction. Interpretation depends

on mastery over a world of dead objects. For sovereign interpretation to be secure, it would need

to be both absolute and final. Yet nothing that enters the field of possible representation totally

exhausts the possibility for alternative interpretations. Sovereignty is thus always partial and

incomplete, even as its formal theoretical possibility haunts all failed attempts to establish it in

actuality.[31]

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which recognition can and does take place. It seems, then, that there are still two further terms to understand: *apprehension*, understood as a mode of knowing that is not yet recognition, or may remain irreducible to recognition; and *intelligibility*, understood as the general historical schema or schemas that establish domains of the knowable. This would constitute a dynamic field understood, at least initially, as an historical *a priori*. Not all acts of knowing are acts of recognition, although the inverse claim would not hold: a life has to be intelligible as a life, has to conform to certain conceptions of what life is, in order to become recognizable. So just as norms of recognizability prepare the way for recognition, so schemas of intelligibility condition and produce norms of recognizability." *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009): 6.

[31]See Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003), at 119–120: "On my reading, the crucial connection between the pursuit of recognition and social subordination lies in the fact that the pursuit of recognition involves a failure of acknowledgment of one of the basic circumstances of human action — the fact that action is always, ultimately, *interaction*, and that this interaction introduces an ineliminable contingency into life among others. This circumstance is, in a certain respect, a limitation on our agency, at least as long as agency is understood in terms of sovereignty [or in terms of its correspondence to the formal concept of sovereignty] — but it is also the enabling condition of agency and freedom themselves."

Timothy Luke also comments on the implications of dialogicality in the context of realist beliefs in the international system of states, as well as in a world in which states function as the basic model of international activity: "Writing is reading. Reading is writing. The unraveling of the state today, or the loosening of its jurisdiction(s), echoes the cacophony of new coding games made articulate by modernization's encirclement of nature and globalization of exchange since 1945. New social forces beyond the state, such as the market, science, the intelligentsia, technology, the mas consuming/producing public, medicine, or even global ecology, find alternative institutional agencies that allow them to write over/against/for and speak to/against/for the state. … New dictions are fabricating their own codes of power, spaces of operation, frames of time, and signs of authority in the many currents of the global flow." Timothy W. Luke, "Discourses of Disintegration, Texts of Transformation: Re-Reading Realism in the New World Order," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol 18.2 (Spring 1993): 254–255.

When I say that biopolitics functions as the condition of possibility for the simulation of sovereignty, what then is meant? In what sense am I using "sovereignty"? Biopolitical regimes of distribution are certainly not necessary for the theoretical capacity of an existent to be otherwise than it is. However, material conditions of existence function as the historically situated conditions of possibility for the interpretive regimes that permit some practices to be easily conceived while precluding others from being thought. Fundamental to this ideational regime is the imagined possibility to continue being in the world. Wendy Brown examines this element of sovereignty in her *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* as she interrogates the desire to inhabit enclosed spaces, from gated communities to nation-states. Such a desire, she asserts, is rooted in the fundamental insecurity of the subject that desires a sovereignty it always finds lacking and incomplete.[32] If who I interpret myself to be depends on the conceptual–spatial relationship of the always-in-motion subject "I" to the range of "not-Is" in which I am embedded, then to be enclosed by a range of protections and interdictions that ostensibly permit me to escape the travails of a fluctuating world permits the mythic obfuscation of the limits that obtain to my mode of being, i.e., ontological precarity.

Simultaneously, the subject that "I" am links in complex ways with the systems of support that enable me to be known to myself as a subject.[33] The form or mode of being with

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[32] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2010). See especially chapter four, "Desiring Walls" (107–133).

J. Peter Burgess addresses these themes in his article "The *Real* at the Origin of Sovereignty," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 38.4 (May 2017): 653–668. To the extent that the Lacanian Real confronts the symbolic order as a fundamental lack, it drives real-world projects on behalf of sovereignty, projects that seek to eliminate the unknowability and "impropriety" of action (Markell's term) in order to establish total control. The desire for sovereignty and the indeterminacy that flows from intersubjectivity are thus maintained in dialectic tension.

[33] "Atomic individuals with preferences for abstract utilities provided in the marketplace perhaps exist in theory, but one ought not to confuse theories with practices. An individual's preference for T-bone steak is much more than a transitive choice function opting for X over Y utile. This operation is an iteration in a food chain, and the food chain works by chaining individuals into a particular food machine, possessing the individualist with a strong

respect to which I am able to project potentiality is expanded dramatically as I am not merely

"being" but also "being with." Capital, for example, represents the symbolic possibility of

purchasing weapons to protect myself, purchasing plane tickets to leave a country if it becomes

unsafe, or a surplus I could use to sell my current home and purchase a house in a "safer

neighborhood." The outcome of the situated interpretation of my own mode of being and the

projected potentiality ostensibly found within that mode of being opens possibilities not

previously conceivable to the closed-off existent-in-itself considered in the first chapter —

though the pure form of the existent-in-itself reminds us that no veridical regime ever exhausts

the potential manifestations of any subject. However, none of the steps taken (or potentially

takeable) to secure the subject are finally sufficient to ensure that the subject will continue being

in the world, even as subjects are driven at least in part by that desire, which is implicit in all

other desires (for fame, for prestige, etc.). The subject of experience consequently inhabits a state

of constant tension, in which there is no necessary reason that it will continue to exist, even as it

takes steps to attempt to ensure that it will, steps that are in part delimited for it by the prior

social conditions — or, in the language of the rest of the chapter, the current *nomos* of spatial

mastery — that precede its individual manifestation *qua* subjectification.

The questions that are crucial to ask here in order to discern the specific social conditions

that limit the pure form of sovereignty's material expressions are consequently twofold: how is

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intransitive preference. Without the imbricate workings of beef science, feedlots, truck transport, meatpacking industry, refrigerated packaging, supermarket foods, home freezers, and backyard barbecues this food chain's chain feeding would not work. Practices reveal cyborg beings thriving in a border zone joining several machinic ecologies that reduce meat to a plastic-wrapped, Styrofoam-hulled, chemical-preserved slab of flesh, and it cannot eat on its food chain without the inputs and outputs of many machinic assemblies from the cattle feedlot to the dinner table. … Cyborgs eat cyborg food out of a cyborg food chain; absurd Lockean fables about autonomous individuals freely mixing their own labor with nature to appropriate their dinners without harm to others are little more than laughable illusions." Timothy W. Luke, "Liberal Society and Cyborg Subjectivity: The Politics of Environments, Bodies, and Nature," *Alternatives*, Vol. 21.1 (Jan.–Mar. 1996): 19–20.

"space" socially produced, and what is the specific social production of space that maps onto the

desire for security that attempts to actualize sovereign potentiality in the world of experience?

For the first of these questions, Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* is a most insightful

source. Lefebvre thinks about the production of space through the grid of "spatial practices,"

"representations of space," and "representational space," terms that correspond to a "concrete (as

distinct from the 'immediate')" triad describing space as it is perceived–conceived–lived.[34] The

first of these terms, spatial practices, is somewhat tautological insofar as all practices occur in

space and all spatial events must in some sense be practiced. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to

provide an account of how space is produced without first acknowledging action in space. This is

the site of the "mundane facts of the human condition, in particular the experiential unity of our

bodies." [35] Representations of space refer to the ways in which space is abstractly conceived.

This is "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers

… all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived."[36] Space

here is systematically abstracted as a uniform system imposed onto space as a grid of legibility.

Finally, representational space is "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and

symbols … but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers,

who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe."[37] While these elements of spatial

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[34] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991 [1974]): 40.

[35] Mauro J. Caraccioli, "Spatial Structures and the Phenomenology of Inter-National Identity," *International Political Sociology*, Vol. 5.1 (2011): 98. Caraccioli is concerned with the ways that international relations theories of space have ignored the body as a lived site and instead replaced it with formal abstractions that serve as the template for a resulting international order. Rather than seeing the fiction of the international system as a necessity, "The phenomenology of the body teaches us that the meaning of inter-national space is determined by who is writing its narratives, constituting global practices and identities through the embodied and local circumstances we all share." Ibid., 100.

[36] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38.

[37] Ibid., 39.

production are logically distinguishable, in practice, they cannot but interpenetrate one another. Space is simultaneously lived (spatial practice) and understood (representational space) in its immediate manifestation only in relation to the abstract and systematic topology (representations of space) within which it is embedded. Put a bit more obscurely, space is never empty but is instead constantly engaged in the practice of thinking itself.

This model is relevant to the project being undertaken here. In chapter one, I discussed effectively the same relations but did not deploy a Lefebvrian terminology because my goal was to emphasize the intertwined characteristics of the pure form of sovereign authorship, which simultaneously involves spatial practice and its representation to oneself even as this moment implies the abstract possibility of a fully referential system of signs. When it comes to the analysis of social space, though, Lefebvre's terms provide a significantly stronger footing as they permit us to distinguish analytically what are in actuality simultaneous and inextricable elements. I here draw from Lefebvre alongside Judith Butler and William Connolly, the latter two of whom provide us accounts of social being in the world as an intensely embodied encounter. Sovereignty as it manifests in the world of experience must take place at the level of the body. Correspondently, how the body is practiced in order to master social space is itself a manifestation of sovereignty. Accounts that are attuned to the body's centrality to social and political practice consequently better position us to examine how sovereignty is expressed in the mastery of space, and Connolly and Butler's accounts are some of the best.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler offers a reading of gender rooted in the Nietzschean belief that "'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed — the deed is everything."[38] That there is no doer behind the deed means that the logic of how space and identity are organized cannot be

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[38] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 45 (I.13).

found in a yet-to-be-discovered *arcanum* that could link together how we perform our bodies with who we consider ourselves to be.[39] In other words, practices by bodies determined to be "male" or "female" do not neatly correspond to the gender identity categories of "man" and "woman." In the contemporary age, this seems hardly a radical claim. Butler, however, goes a step further in arguing that the very division between "primary sex characteristics" is rooted in the performativity of gender. Because male bodies have been disciplined and trained to perform themselves in a masculine way, it reinforces the importance of primary sex characteristics as both a source of sexual pleasure and as a determining characteristic for how that body ought to be performed. The same is true of bodies we perceive to be sexed as female, a biological trait that only registers as important if there is some sort of performative division that can be erected to constitute these biological lines. The performativity of gender, itself a "stylized repetition of the body," thus creates the mythology of its own interiority as a secondary effect of its continued performance. The fiction of the essence of gender follows performances of gender. "Gender," Butler writes, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[40]

Butler's analysis thus intimately ties together the how the body is performed and the desires that it manifests. To prefer one series of pleasures over another depends to some significant extent on the narrative or symbolic regime within which they are made recognizable as pleasures, even as recognizability is inextricable from the bodily performances that are

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[39] In his search for the secret, hidden heart of sovereignty, Agamben's study in *Homo Sacer* opposes the apparent to the actual and participates in the dualist ontology Nietzsche deconstructs.

[40] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1990/1999]): 45.

undertaken. William Connolly picks up on this theme in the context of his work on the affective

dimensions of fascism. Connolly reads the materiality of the body in a variety of contexts,

including 14th- to 16th-century European table manners, professional dancing, the film *Fifty*

Shades of Gray, German military training, and his own Northern Michigan upbringing, which

included learning modes of bodily performance from hypermasculine figures such as football

players and male adults in his neighborhood.[41] Affect for Connolly is ever-present in these

accounts. It is necessarily material. What else could it be? "Our gaits, hormonal secretions,

rhythms of conduct, tacit rules of eye contact, facial habits of expression, skin dilation or

tightening, memory layered modes of perception, and relational presumptions convey such

disciplines into habitual modes of response," he writes.[42] When the body is practiced and

understood in certain ways, it potentially opens subjects up to abduction by fascist imaginaries.

When an ideal of masculinity requires constant willingness to prove one's toughness, when it

requires the stockpiling of weapons in order to protect one's family from all and any potential

adversaries, then a juridical–legal formation that prioritizes force and activity over negotiation

and contemplation appeals not merely to intellects but to bodies as practiced and representational

objects. It is little surprise that the bodies Connolly focuses on are those of the "armored male."

Gender, it seems, it one of the most crucial perceived–conceived–lived regimes available.

From Connolly and Butler, we can come to understand the importance of bodily practices

in the world as primary to all politics and all representations of space. Importantly, though, there

can be no "stylized repetition of the body" without a representational imaginary that links

together distinct, disparate acts under a common term. The same Nietzsche who observed that

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[41] William Connolly, *Aspirational Fascism: The Struggle for Multifaceted Democracy under Trumpism* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota UP, 2017): 44–58.
[42] Ibid., 47.

there is no doer behind the deed also made a case against the existence of "identical actions."

Because we are always-already in a world of becoming typified by ontological fluctuation, the

"I" that is at each moment confronted with its own existence is a wholly different bodily practice

than the "I" I perceive to have been only moments prior, and I am linked together as a subject

only by an interpretive and representational series of regulations that permits me to conceive of

myself as one and the same subject.[43] This is the difficulty that lay at the root of the classical

origin of the dialectic; we are always-already not what we are.[44] Even to ask the question of how

this distinction between "being" and "becoming" might be somewhat resolved, though, failed

(and still fails) to acknowledge that the roots of subjectivity must be found historically in the

development of the regulative fiction of the "I," a regulative fiction whose origin Nietzsche

locates in the violent mnemonics used to cultivate subjects capable of promising.[45] Thus, the

representation of ourselves to ourselves, the formation of an Ideal-I as this regulative fiction,

must precondition, embed, flow through, regulate, and discipline our spatial practices.

Lefebvre includes an illustration that helps to illuminate the centrality of bodily

performativity to the production of space, and thus to politics more generally. He provides us

with the picture of a house. It stands before us, seemingly stable, seemingly unmoving. A closer

look, though, shows that the existence of this house is not static, it does not stand unchanging

permanently within the confines of being. Rather, it is engaged in a networked series of relations

that constantly alter its "actual" spatial composition. It is "permeated from every direction by

streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity,

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[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1886]): 25–27 (I.19).
[44] Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders (vol. 1)*, trans. P. S. Falla (New York: Oxford UP, 1981 [1976]): 11–12.
[45] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 61 (II.3): "[P]ain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics."

telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on."[46] Perhaps yellowjackets or termites are burrowing into some of its wood. Perhaps a particularly heavy foot repeatedly ascending the stairs has weakened the boards. Wind and rain beat down upon it; electricity and people, gas and bugs flow in and out. We ought not to see the house as a static entity, writes Lefebvre, but instead as the intersection of a series of inflows and outflows that always threaten to disrupt the border of where the house ends and the external world begins: a series of flows in which we are intimately involved. It is an "active body," an "information-based machine with low energy requirements."[47] The being of the house is a sympoietic "being with" rather than an autoefficient "being-in-itself," even as the reified "representational space which its inhabitants have in their minds … for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice."[48] That these flows compose a house is consequently a matter of historically situated judgment, tempered in part by the fact that certain of these processes at present exceed our active, as opposed to reflective, perceptive capabilities. It is possible to imagine a cybernetic subjectivity that would overlay onto our perception of the house all of these biomaterial flows. Perhaps what would then constitute the space of a "room" or a "wall" would shift, dependent for its definition on the degree to which the flows in and out of it are relatively limited or (im)permeable. The point, though, is that the claim that the house is a house is not absolute but is rather a representational judgment of

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[46] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 93.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. Lefebvre argues that the representation that transforms these intersecting flows into a singular and unified object also tends to reify the social being of the humans who inhabit it. Thus, a "critique of space" is required to reveal the material relations in which humans as social beings are embedded.

Another fruitful take on the role that social life plays in constituting perception can be found in William Connolly's essay "The Vicissitudes of Experience," which reads "Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze into conversation with each other and with recent work in neuroscience." In *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011): 43. Connolly emphasizes that even perception is, for the most part, not an inbuilt feature of human experience but rather the effect of how we are socialized into perceiving. This chapter precedes his analysis of fascist bodily performativities by roughly six years but is clearly in a related space of analysis.

external space projected onto a networked set of spatial practices that have been composed otherwise in the past and may yet be composed otherwise in the future.

At each moment, then, we are engaged in spatial practices, but whether these practices rise to a level of social legibility for us depends on whether and to what extent they correspond to or potentially disrupt the collective representations of space in which we are embedded. The gesture of a finger may be unimportant when it is connected to a lifted hand spinning lazily through the air, attempting to conjure up the right words for a subject writing his thesis. The same fingeration may be of greater importance if the digitudal gesture "flips off" the president.[49] It is also here that we see the sense in which embodied subjects are subjectified before they are even individuals, as Althusser observes.[50] It becomes (for some) accidentally humorous when an infant raises its middle finger on its own precisely because the spatial practice accords to a specific symbolics of space in which the infant is embedded before it even becomes aware of its own subjectivity. The body is thus disciplined before it has even become confronted in any unified sort of way with its own existence. It is engaged in spatial practices that are already representational, even if the body engaged in the spatial practices in incapable of recognizing them. Further, it reproduces those representations through ongoing bodily practices: decorating a house, steeling oneself to fight, preparing food for dinner, working long and late hours, etc. These practices are, or have been in the past, representationally coded as either male or female acts that specific bodies repeat in stylized ways, even as some sort of representational schema is

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[49] Petula Dvorak, "The Woman Who Got Fired for Flipping off President Trump Just Sued Her Former Employer," *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2018, accessed online April 5, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-woman-who-got-fired-for-flipping-off-president-trump-just-sued-her-former-employer/2018/04/04/64c7376c-3840-11e8-acd5-35eac230e514_story.html?utm_term=.b5fa9245ed5c.>

[50] "[I]ndividuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. Hence individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects, which they always-already are." Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy, and other essays* (New York: Monthly Review, 2001 [1970]): 119.

first required to acknowledge the repetitions as repetitions. Only space as representationally presented is legible as something other than either nothing or too-much-something. For space to be legible, it is necessary that everything always be only the sign of itself.

<u>**PRACTICES OF SOVEREIGN SPACE**</u>

This passage through Lefebvre, Butler, and Connolly articulates the logics of spatial practice in a way that is attuned to the social, historical, and ideational forces that anchor a perspective on space as an ongoing process of embodied mastery rather than as no more than a philosophical abstraction acknowledging the possibility of material extension. Likewise, their arguments permit us to move from an account of sovereignty as nothing other than the pure potential of authorship in the world to an understanding of how such authorship is actually carried out, limited as it is by the world's multiplicity. Lefebvre's account of representational space intertwines with the Butlerian account of gender as a fictive uniformity to emphasize how social symbolics emerge out of spatial practice. Carl Schmitt provides us with yet another crucial element for thinking about space with his emphasis on the Greek term *nomos*. *Nomos*, according to Schmitt, derives from the Greek *nemein*, which means "to divde" and "to pasture." From this, Schmitt contends that "*nomos* is the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible — the initial measure and division of pasture-land, i.e., the land-appropriation as well as the concrete order contained in it and following from it."[51] No political order is thus possible without this original act of appropriating space; it forms the basis of the later processes of distribution and production.[52] More than mere mastery of space (spatial practices), *nomos* articulates the "spatially concrete unity" of "measure, order, and form," the

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[51] Carl Schmit, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2006): 69–70.
[52] Ibid., 327.

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"concrete order contained in [land-appropriation] and following from it."[53] As such, every *nomos* requires the initial appropriation of land, but "not every land-appropriation, not every alteration of borders … is a process that constitutes a new *nomos*."[54] While the appropriation of space has historically extended to the sea and to the sky, it is specifically the division of *land* that is foundational to the *nomos*. It is the case "[n]ot only logically, but also historically, [that] land-appropriation precedes the order that follows from it."[55] Whereas the sea cannot be partitioned through permanent spatial barriers, the land can, which means that the land can be internally and externally divided for the purposes of political communion. A variety of "fences, enclosures, boundaries, walls, houses, and other constructs" delimit the land that belongs to a particular people from both the peoples and lands that are not theirs.[56] Appropriating land is thus simultaneously a representational and a practical act. To say "this is mine" or "this is ours" presupposes a relationship to the "this" that cannot ultimately be reinforced through legal structures alone but which requires actual or implied practices of violence.

Those appropriations of space that do not seek to create a new *nomos* (constitutive power) are consequently engaged in the process of preserving it (constituted power). What we know from Lefebvre is that there is no moment that is not in some way related to the constituted or constitutive mode of power. Whether spatial practices are seen as such is thus a question of the representational space and spatial representation within which we are embedded. We can take Schmitt's account of the distinction between the possibility of a political order rooted in the sea and a political order based on the land as demonstration the importance of the representation of

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[53] Ibid., 70.
[54] Ibid., 82.
[55] Ibid., 48.
[56] Ibid., 42.

stability. According to Schmitt, the sea could not even *logically* serve as the basis for a *nomos* because it lacks the appropriating structures that maintain the divisions between a political order and what is not a political order. But the divisional structures that appear terrestrially are not in and of themselves the basis for a continued political *nomos*. The basis for this *nomos* is the representational (in both senses) role that the walls play with respect to the way that a people orders itself. The ostensibly obdurate material blockades that clearly divide inside from outside and prevent the outside from invading the inside must be perpetually maintained in order to be effective, and whether they are perpetually maintained depends upon the desire for their continued maintenance. When the Berlin Wall was brought down, it was felled by sledgehammers, hands, and heavy machinery. Were these tools unavailable prior to 1989? Certainly not. What shifted instead was, for numerous complex historical reasons, the will to continue practicing politics in a way that maintained the wall: shooting at any who came too close or tried to cross, staffing it with guards, repairing its erosions, etc.

A recent *This American Life* episode on walls makes the same point in the contemporary era through the tale of David, a Cameroonian man, who attempts to break into a Spanish city of Ceuta, located in Morocco.[57] If he arrives in the city, he might apply for asylum and travel to Europe. Surrounding the city is a fence towering twenty feet high and adorned with razor wire, complete with a two-meter trench in front of it and guards behind it. The fence that keeps "non-

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[57] Ira Glass, "641: The Walls," *This American Life*, Chicago Public Media, March 16, 2018. Accessed online April 5, 2018. < https://www.thisamericanlife.org/641/the-walls.> Contrary to how it may appear based on this discussion and the entirety of the final chapter, I am not an avid listener of *This American Life*. However, their show, as well as in-depth journalism more generally, is an excellent source for real-world experiences that inhabit the crucial political spaces with which political theory ought to concern itself. Political theory is itself "dead and undialectical," to borrow a Foucauldian phrasing, to the extent that it is not concerned with actual political struggle. This comment may seem out of place given the abstract character of the analysis that has preceded this point. But for all its abstractions, I am at least convinced that there are real political implications of diagnosing the relationship between the lived–conceived–perceived triad of space as well as the movement from appropriation to distribution to production. The third chapter will hopefully bring this point into relief if it is currently in doubt.

Europeans" outside of the "European" space could easily be cut by wire-cutters, but the reporters relay an unspoken agreement that those attempting to cross will not use such tools. Similarly, the Spanish guards on the other side use rubber (rather than real) bullets, so those attempting to enter refrain from using weapons in their quest. The city sits on the shore, and the fence ends when it reaches the water. Those trying to cross develop a whole series of tactics by which the guards might be distracted or overwhelmed, thereby allowing the refugees to reach the immigration center and potentially claim asylum. The whole enterprise is transformed into a giant game with real-world stakes immanent in the encounter, perhaps thereby demonstrating the "game-iness" that is always inherent to politics. David eventually defeats the wall and goes to live in Madrid, where, as of the story's broadcast, he still lives. He defeats the wall largely because the guards opt to take him to the immigration office after he has finally traversed the wall rather than to throw him back out on the other side. The wall is only effective as long as the guards are there, as long as a whole societal organization (we might say the *nomos* of Ceuta, and perhaps of Europe) is made possible by the rejection of the African/Middle Eastern/Asian outside.

Walls collapse or can be made to collapse. At sea, opposing vessels may either attack you or choose not to attack you. At no point is the "order" of the world ever permanent or fully stable. Rather, it is stable to the extent that a particular series of spatial practices can be judged to accord relatively durably with a specific image of space, an image that must be daily renewed through the ongoing practices of real-world subjects in its defense. When the tyrannical order at the end of *V for Vendetta* breaks down, it breaks down not because Parliament is destroyed. It breaks down because the men with guns who had previously been willing to shoot and kill insurrectionist citizens have become unwilling to do so. They have come to imagine themselves

and the general citizenry differently. The spatial imaginary in which they participated has altered in a way that makes their spatial practices incapable of being maintained. Conversely, when Ponchel, a French solider, is shot by Jonathan, an Irish solider, at the end of *Joyeux Noël*, a film set during World War I, Jonathan is only able to pull the trigger because his spatial–political imaginary has not been altered by the Christmas Eve mass in which soldiers from all sides have joined. (Ponchel is dressed as a German, and Jonathan believes him to be one.) While other soldiers have difficulty continuing to fight because they no longer imagine the figure in a trench across from them as an enemy, Jonathan, mourning, enraged, and embittered by the death of his brother, still practices himself under the auspices of an imaginary that constitutes all humans on the opposing side as enemy soldiers deserving of death. A specific place–history–identity nexus functions together to permit layers of symbolic meaning to be overlain on the bodies that populate the battlefield; a series of ideological practices intervene between man and man.[58]

Ultimately, the maintenance of a relationship between practices in space and any given spatial representation must be actively renewed at each moment by those committed to it. Spatial practices of sovereignty are a commitment to a specific ordering of the world, an ordering that is only possible because the practices that constitute it and the spatial imaginary that interprets those practices occur simultaneously and in an ongoing fashion. The *nomos* of a given social ordering does not flow necessarily from the initial appropriation. The initial appropriation is stretched, stressed, and remade in an ongoing process that (re)shapes the spatial–material being of the participants in a certain way of life. The order is daily reconstituted, as it were. Practices in

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[58] James McTeigue dir., *V for Vendetta*, performers Hugo Weaving, Natalie Portman, and Rupert Graves (Warner Bros; Virtual Studios, 2005).
   Christian Carion dir., *Joyeux Noël*, performers Diane Kruger, Benno Fürmann, Guillaume Canet (Nord-Ouest Productions; Senator Film Produktion, 2005).

space always participate in constitutive power because the potentiality of the world is at every

moment exhausted. Whether the *nomos* of a particular order can be said to have changed depends

entirely on whether the spatial representations that legibilize certain practices remain tenable,

which indeed does require the sort of decision-making that acknowledges an exception to what

has come before — though it is never the Sovereign who alone makes such a decision.

BIOPOLITICAL SOVEREIGNTIES

We are now prepared to address the set of relationships that obtain between practices of

political sovereignty and biopolitical regimes of distribution, examining them through the nexus

of uneven spatial accumulation in the contemporary U.S. city. I choose the contemporary U.S.

city as the site of empirical observation for a series of reasons. First, cities occupy an important

position in the contemporary imaginary of social scientists. From world cities to global cities to

resilient cities, understanding "the urban" grows in importance as the world moves toward ever-

increasing urbanization.[59] Second, in U.S. politics, cities occupy an important representational

space worthy of further interrogation. Conservatives, for example, point to them as a space of

extreme criminality that demonstrates the allegedly failed attempts of slightly more redistributive

economic policies. For the Democratic Party, cities are typically bastions of support, which only

increases the urban–rural tensions that have received much commentary since the 2016

presidential election. Most importantly for my purposes, though, they are a site in which life that

could reasonably be presented as "bare" or "disallowed" according to a biopolitical logic

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[59] Peter Rogers, *Resilience and the City: Change, (Dis)Order and Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2016 [2012]); Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Second Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2000); Saskia Sassen, "The Global City: Enabling Economic Intermediation and Bearing Its Costs," *City & Community*, Vol 15.2 (June 2016): 97-108; John Friedmann, "The World City Hypothesis," *Development and Change*, Vol. 17 (1986): 69–83.

nevertheless acts to produce its own space in a variety of important ways, ways that will be examined concretely in the third chapter, which this section more broadly grounds.

Cities, of course, do not exist in and of themselves. Spatially speaking, the sense in which they exist at all is a matter of representation. Cleveland is as distinct from a farm as it is from New York City, yet the heuristic of "city" links together Cleveland and New York while excluding the farm. Likewise, the existence of city spaces is only made possible through non-city spaces that help to sustain cities as dense population centers. I acknowledge these also important relations of space in order to bracket them. In this study, my focus will be on the distribution of space in the U.S. city.[60] Consequently, the next portion of this chapter briefly reviews some of the relevant sociological literature that broadly characterizes the specific patterns of spatial–material distribution occurring in the contemporary city. Abundance and poverty are generated as part of the same process. Drawing from Carl Schmitt, we might say that the broad typologies to be discussed are distributional regimes integral to the reproduction of the city *nomos*. The Lefebvrian observation that constituted power is also always constitutive power also helps to illuminate that distribution is necessarily founded on appropriation in the sense that every distributive moment is an appropriative moment (the mastery of space inherent to all spatial practices), even if not every appropriative moment is also distributive (though since "distribution" as a bequeathing from one to another effectively requires the recipient to appropriate the materialities being distributed, the relationship is perhaps not so clean in practice). After exploring this literature, I discuss the ways in which a specific spatial *nomos* of appropriation–distribution–production as enacted and legibilized by a lived–perceived–

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[60] Again, "city" is an incredibly broad concept encompassing a variety of spatial milieus. Thus, to speak of the "spatial distribution of U.S. cities" is to risk overgeneralization in potentially problematic ways. The concept of *nomos* is helpful in this regard, as we shall see.

conceived veridical regime enables subjects to simulate their own sovereignty through the

reification of space, as well as briefly discussing some of the affective drives that motivate this

series of undertakings. How do individuals take active and constant control over their space

through a variety of spatial practices? How are some potential forms of life promoted and others

disallowed? What are the limited and partial ways in which the ontologically ineliminable

potential for subjects\existents to author themselves and their lifeworlds is expressed in the

material world?

Peter Marcuse, sociologist and son of Herbert Marcuse, examines the forms of spatial

organization that have resulted in racially and financially segregated cities.[61] In a 1997 article, he

introduced a typology of various spatial formations that could then be found in the "post-Fordist"

city: the "outcast ghetto," the "classic ghetto," "enclaves, and "citadels." The concept of the

"citadel" comes from John Friedmann and Goetz Wolff, where it is a minor theme in a much

longer article. "[T]he world city may be divided," they write, "into the 'citadel and the 'ghetto.'

Its geography is typically one of inequality and class domination. The citadel serves the specific

needs of the transnational elites and their immediate retinues who rule the city's economic life,

the ghetto is adapted to the circumstances of the permanent underclass."[62] Other scholars have

described the relationship as dialectical; the citadel requires the ghetto in order to remain

comprehensibly exclusive, even as the ghetto results from resources being directed toward and

secured within citadel spaces.[63] Citadels are spaces where the wealthy can keep themselves away

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[61] Portions of this section were originally written as part of a final paper for Mauro J. Caraccioli's Spring 2017 course "Theories of Globalization." The initial argument and presentation have been supplemented, amended, and, in most places, significantly revised for inclusion here.

[62] John Friedmann and Goetz Wolff, "World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 6.3 (September 1982): 325

[63] Gregory Smithsimon, "Inside the Empire: Ethnography of a Global Citadel in New York," *Urban Studies*, Vol. 47.4 (April 2010): 702.

from contact with "poorer and lower status people." Indeed, their very design, whether in the form of a gated community or a guarded high rise, is to keep such people from intruding on the daily patterns of behavior in which the wealthy participate. Marcuse writes, "Outer doors controlled by closed-circuit television cameras, doormen who double as security personnel, controlled egress from elevators, and combination locks on entry to underground garage space serve to protect residents."[64] A specific series of spatial practices clearly reproduces the division between those who belong "inside" the citadel and those who should stay "outside." The practice is consequently only made possible through an imaginary of what counts as worthy of belonging to the citadel space.

Such an imaginary, though, depends on a clear conception of what does not belong within the site of agglomerated wealth, which is in turn enabled through the clear consignment of certain otherized bodies to spaces in which they can be understood to belong. Marcuse thus develops the importance in the United States context of the emergence of "a new ghetto that is different from the ghettos of the past and from the immigrant enclaves of the past and present."[65] These "new" ghettos, which were emerging in the immediately post-Fordist period Marcuse was

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At the very least, a third form of residency could be added to this list: immobile nomadism. In a series of interviews in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Daniel Kerr delved into the daily life patterns of "unhoused" persons in Cleveland, Ohio. Interview subjects described a sense of immobility that increasingly constrained them as the variety of cheap housing and well-paying short-term employment options disappeared. At the same time, the interview subjects often had to walk miles and miles each day to travel from a place to sleep to a place to work to a place to eat. Daniel R. Kerr, "'Almost Like I Am in Jail': Homelessness and the Sense of Immobility in Cleveland, Ohio," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 30.3 (2016): 401–420.

A migratory life masters space as much as any other series of spatial practices, but in the instances Kerr documents, this way of life clearly takes place *within* rather than *contesting* the dominant mode of land appropriation. It is certainly worlds, not to mention millennia, apart from the nomads described by James Scott, who would also move about to find food yet who, according to the available evidence, seemed to live lives of comparative abundance when contrasted with unhoused Clevelanders. James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2017). Even this ancient migratory spatial appropriation may have constituted something like a *nomos*.

[64] Peter Marcuse, "The Enclave, the Citadel, and the Ghetto: What Has Changed in the Post-Fordist U.S. City," *Urban Affairs Review* Vol. 33.2 (November 1997): 247.

[65] Ibid., 229.

then studying, resulted from the historically and culturally unique combination of "space and race" in U.S. cities, wherein the aftermath of slavery, Jim Crow, and redlining combined to segregate black Americans in ways that both corresponded with and reformulated a long legacy of exclusionary spatial practices.[66] Loïc Wacquant supplements Marcuse's analysis by constructing an ideal-type model from the "four constituent elements of the ghetto," namely, stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional parallelism. He contends that the ghetto "is a social-organizational device that employs space to reconcile two antinomic functions: (1) to maximize the material profits extracted out of a category deemed defiled and defiling, and (2) to minimize intimate contact with its members so as to avert the threat of symbolic corrosion and contagion they are believed to carry."[67] On Wacquant's account, then, the otherization of those who are eventually ghettoized both *precedes* their spatial cordoning off and is *intensified* through the processes of spatial segregation that are effected. Representational space and spatial practices are intertwined at every moment, and certain *specific* spatial practices (i.e., racialized representations enacted by single bodies) have effects that quite literally extend into space generally. This is self-evidently true for the emergence of the ghettoization of the black Americans who are the primary residents of the spaces Marcuse and Wacquant analyze; black bodies were stigmatized long before black subjects were spatially separated in cities from the "normal" white population. Of course, this initial stigmatization was itself only made possible

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[66] Marcuse, writing in the 1990s, was seeking to account for ghettos that were "new" as of the several decades prior, so in that sense, the spatial formation may indeed have been novel. Even if not, his typology is still broadly helpful for thinking through how space and material possibilities are distributed.

[67] Loïc Wacquant, "A Janus-Faced Institution of Ethnoracial Closure: A Sociological Specification of the Ghetto," *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and* Controversies, eds. Ray Hutchinson and Bruce D. Haynes (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2012): 7.

through specific material–spatial regimes: segregated schools, enslavement on plantations, the denial of political and civil liberties, and so forth.

More recently, Marcuse has moved away in some respects from his position in 1997, contending that the "hard ghetto" (ghettoization as the result of legal policy) has been replaced by a "weak ghetto," in which social forces such as "the operations of the private market in housing" (including both direct racism and income inequality) are what lead to the spatial conglomeration of marginalized groups.[68] Ghettoization, he contends, is now being "de-spatialized" in order to satisfy demands for urban space on the part of affluent city residents, i.e., due to gentrification.[69] Such processes may appear to eliminate some of the forms of spatial control that have typified the ghetto classically, but as Marcuse notes, de-spatialization of once-concentrated oppression does not indicate that the oppression itself has decreased. Rather, the problems may "have just been moved around, not solved."[70] Indeed, as a recent report in *The Atlantic* notes, in cities such as Chicago, "the number of wealthy census tracts has grown fourfold since 1970."[71] Chicago, Alana Semuel reports, has not seen wealth "cree[p] back into some poor neighborhoods" because many Chicago residents have classist and racist "mental maps" of the city, representations of space that identify certain places "they would never live, no matter how affordable the rents or good the amenities."[72] Semuel interviewed Harvard sociologist Robert J. Sampson, who attributed the difference between Chicago and other cities that have been engaged in gentrification to Chicago's racial segregation. "As middle-class

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[68] Peter Marcuse, "De-spatialization and Dilution of the Ghetto: Current Trends in the United States," in *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and* Controversies, eds. Ray Hutchinson and Bruce D. Haynes (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2012), 40. Marcuse's chapter in Hutchinson and Haynes' edited volume directly follow Wacquant's.
[69] Ibid., 54-57.
[70] Ibid., 60.
[71] Alana Semuel, "Chicago's Awful Divide," *The Atlantic* (March 28, 2018). Accessed online April 6, 2018. < https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2018/03/chicago-segregation-poverty/556649/.>
[72] Ibid.

residents stay out of such neighborhoods, so do the businesses that they would patronize,"

summarizes Semuel. "The decades-old legacies of segregation, far from being reversed, are

instead being reinforced."[73]

The citadel and the ghetto are consequently self-enforcing divisions of space. In

Schmitt's sense, we might be justified in asserting that these sociologists are attempting to

identify the specific *nomos* that holds for American urbanization. *Nomos* need not only apply

globally, even as Schmitt's concern is with the specific form of the global *nomos*. *Nomos*

indicates first and foremost the form of land appropriation that permits a specific regime of

distribution and production to follow from it. Wealthy Americans who reside in urban citadels

appropriate the space in a legible, ongoing manner, an appropriation that implies (and in fact

produces) ghetto spaces that are its opposite. It would be a mistake, though, to see ghettoized

spaces merely as the passive implication of a broader distributive and productive scheme that

follows directly from this initial appropriation. Impoverished spaces are appropriated as well,

albeit in ways that differ significantly from the mode of appropriation in the citadels.

Contemporary forms of ghettoization in the United States, which take the form of the

marketization of relationships initially grounded in direct racism, function to constitute a

population that can then be disallowed to the point of death. While some of the criteria for

segregation may have predated the actual practices of segregation, segregation simultaneously

functions to clarify or reconstitute the population of disallowable lives. Anathematized bodies

are those who live in the ghetto because the ghetto is the place for anathematized bodies. The

Euthyphronic divisions between a "carried thing" and a "thing that is carried" break down in the

dialectical manifestation — dialectical in that segregation follows from the divisions in space it

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[73] Ibid.

has already generated — of a presumably always already ontologically negatable form of life. The ghettoizable form of life is thus a form of life that belongs to the ghetto, which is the identification that constantly haunts black bodies as they move throughout the world. Elijah Anderson picks up on this theme, examining the ways that black bodies are read as alien in spaces that do not align with the dominant white imaginary:

> Although black people increasingly inhabit diverse positions in society, negative stereotypes persist and adapt to changing social situations. For instance, the ghetto stereotype follows middle-class black families into the suburbs. Some whites eye their new neighbors warily because they are not used to living near black people, perhaps thinking of them as "nice black people" who are exceptions to their race, or suspecting they have not arrived through legitimate means. Could they be drug kingpins? How else to explain a black man who drives a new Lexus and sends his children to private school?[74]

Though it was the original pathologization of blackness that justified its consignation to a separate location, the act of consignation continues to mark the body as "other" in ways that justify both its continual containment, conceptually and spatially, as well as the rescinding of all programs aimed at assisting the fostering of life in materially "other" spaces.

Consequently, when Wacquant writes that the "ghetto arises through the *double assignation of category to territory and territory to category*," he is indicating that the intellectual and/or material confinement of a specific race (which has been preliminarily "otherized" in ways that permit it to be disallowed to the point of death) within a specific place consequently underpins the spatially inegalitarian distribution of resources along lines that correspond to the presumed race of the subjects dwelling in specific locations.[75] Spatial segregation is one manifestation of inegalitarian distributions according to which black lives are

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[74] Elijah Anderson, "The Iconic Ghetto," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 642 (July 2012): 17.
[75] Wacquant, "A Janus-Faced Institution," 13.

"disallowed," and the living spaces open to black Americans play significant roles in determining their vocational, educational, and other life options. When Anderson details the many spaces in which black bodies are not welcome, it is because black bodies are identified with particular spaces (ghettos) that they are viewed as alien in alternate spaces (non-ghettos). There is a nexus between space and identity, between spatial practices (tacit or explicit arts of discrimination, including ways of looking and speaking), representational space (the identification of a black person as black, with all the attendant symbolic implications that result from such a judgment), and representations of space (an abstracted vision that projects where specific bodies belong on the basis of the characteristics they are determined to have). These elements are irreducibly different yet inextricable from each other. All forms of unequal treatment require otherization, and otherization is always expressed spatially.[76]

Elsewhere, Anderson has observed that those who live in the inner city are often employed in jobs for which those with lower levels of education are competing, jobs such as janitors, office cleaners, fast-food workers, office assistants. Of these, "[m]ost of the available jobs pay little and provide few if any benefits."[77] Further, such workers are "often the first causalities in an economic downturn."[78] As such, the increased precarity of labor in the United States as well as the "recent drastic reductions in welfare payments" cause many inner-city residents (in practice belonging to all races, though perhaps not representationally) to turn to

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[76] To clarify against one potential misreading of the preceding, the argument is not that all (or even most) impoverished residents of urban spaces are black, nor is it to argue that most black people are residents of impoverished urban spaces. Rather, the argument is that race has become symbolically identified with a particular space, and this symbolical identification continues to have concrete effects in how space is appropriated and distributed.

[77] Elijah Anderson, "Toward Knowing the Iconic Ghetto," in *The Ghetto: Contemporary Global Issues and Controversies*, eds. Ray Hutchinson and Bruce D. Haynes (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2012): 71. This article is listed as having been adapted from the previous one by Anderson, though there is little noticeable similarity between the two.

[78] Ibid.

"informal economies," which are accompanied by a host of social practices aimed at ensuring the integrity of agreements that cannot be supported through conventional legal channels and which may force residents to resort to violence, including killing, in order to make certain that future agreements are not similarly breached.[79] Whether or not the perpetrators of such acts are primarily black, the acts become representationally linked with the spaces in which black bodies are presumed naturally to reside. Consequently, because ghettoized blackness, which functions as the representationally dominant form of blackness in white spaces, becomes linked to with such forms of violence, the state-sponsored distributional practices that permit an influx of funds into such economies can be stayed. Residents of racially–economically segregated spaces do not comport with a vision of the optimization of the population as a whole, so they can be "disallowed to the point of death." Because "race" and "place" become coterminous, the distribution of resources away from specific populations, which is always carried out on a spatial register, can be effected.

To view a population as potentially disposable is both a feature of the actual material allocations made with respect to such a population as well as the representational construction of it. Life disallowed to the point of death is first marked as disposable in the very act of "disallowing" in the sense that the material abundance of society is oriented away from a specific people group. In the contemporary transnational character of the economy, these distributions are both the result of wealth polarization derived from the precarity of manufacturing labor in the United States and domestic policy decisions that actively remove support systems from beneath the feet of inner-city residents. The right-wing myth of a close nexus between "hard work" and affluence performs the same justificatory function. Those who are poor have "chosen" to be

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[79] Ibid., 70-72.

poor, whether directly through prodigality or indirectly through imprudent financial decisions. The spatial representation that abstractly envisions the outcomes of a market-oriented economy as the most just, beneficial result intersects with representational space (the space of perception) to code individually impoverished subjects as positioned in relation to that overall matrix, thereby justifying (if not mandating) a certain set of bodily practices in relation to them (perhaps glancing off to side as a homeless veteran asks for change or clutching one's bag tighter while walking past a group of young black males).

SOVEREIGN PERFORMATIVITIES AND ONTOLOGICAL PRECARITY

What is the relevance of this sociological analysis of the biopolitical distribution of material flourishing to an examination of the ways that sovereignty is performed and practiced in the world of experience? Sovereignty, as I have presented it here, is the capacity of an existent to act in accordance with the potentiality of its being, a potentiality that includes, in Agamben's terms, the ability to-do-or-not-to-do. Because of the inescapability of social multiplicity, this form of sovereignty can only ever function as an ideal, an ontological abstraction that must be presumptively possible in order for the idea of action in the world to be legible. This I have referred to as "sovereignty as authorship." However, sovereignty as authorship is, as we have seen, always incomplete because authoring is an intersubjective encounter. It depends on readers as much as writers.

Nevertheless, the desire for something like sovereignty still remains. The empty, tautological form of the desire for sovereignty in conditions of multiplicity is the desire to act as one desires to act within one's capacity for action. But how can such a desire be achievable? One must be able to imagine oneself as free, as bound only by the attachments one gives to

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oneself.[80] In a complex society, this includes safety from the vicissitudes of *fortuna*. The subject

working to achieve sovereignty is the subject of *The Prince*'s penultimate chapter, working to

channel the raging river of fate such that it might not overflow into the basement of the newest

McMansion. While this project may reflect a fundamentally individualistic desire, the politics of

it are not thereby necessarily individualistic. Indeed, spatial practices, which are necessarily

collective, produce the uneven spaces of accumulation typical of a capitalist economy, especially

a capitalist city. The wealthy assemble increasingly in "citadels," while the poor congregate in

their "ghettos." Biopolitical distributional regimes are the emergent outcomes of collective

spatial practices undertaken in accordance with representational experiences linked together by

the abstract representations of space that function as norms of recognizability for actual practices

in space.

If sovereignty is, abstractly, the capacity of an existent to act in accordance with its form

of being, then the ongoing appropriation of space in which all spatial practices engage are

manifestations of sovereign potentiality as limited by the fundamental condition of multiplicity

that characterizes being in the world. Space is never empty; it is always part of an existent.

Biopolitical regimes of distribution emerge from this appropriation of space and support its

continuation. Whether state distribution policy accords with a social democratic or broadly

Keynesian logic that, generally speaking, reflects the will of the working population or is

neoliberalized on behalf of the capitalist class, it is part of a tactics of space appropriation that

reflect the possibility of sovereignty as it appears in the world. Whereas for Agamben the link

between biopolitics and sovereignty is one of logics, the link here is one of practice. The ability

to appropriate space, which includes the space occupied by another's body, manifests

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[80] Because one is choosing specific attachments, this is clearly not a Kantian sense of self-legislation.

collectively in the distributional shifts that can be examined at a structural level in the historically specific regime of distribution that functions under the label of "biopolitics." Even as it has structurally distinguishable effects — which we might legitimately call its *nomos*,[81] not as an *arcanum* but as a distinguishable pattern or collection of patterns made legible through a specific representational regime — such appropriation has its existence only in practice. It begins in practice, at every moment is carried out in practice, and produces the world from which later practices must proceed. These practices are ontic manifestations of the ontological capacity for sovereignty.

"Citadel" is a well-chosen term in that it implies an attempt to protect oneself from that which is without. What is the "outside" against which the wealthy must erect barriers? It is the concretely representational space of the ghetto, which ever knocks at the door of the citadel. If uncareful, its residents might revolt and expropriate the citadel dwellers. Even worse, citadel dwellers might suddenly find themselves impecunious and on their way to a ghettoized space. The fear, in short, is that the citadel dweller might be declared by the market to be *homo sacer*, to be outside the economic–political order that permits social flourishing to occur and consequently to be permanently at risk of experiencing violence. Poverty and wealth, we have seen, must not merely be produced but maintained through the ongoing practices that master space in a specific way. The divide between rich and poor must be "policed" in the broadest sense of the term. In

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[81] Schmitt would perhaps take this to be a misuse of the term because it is focused on distribution, which is only made possible by appropriation. Further, as discussed above, Schmitt distinguishes that not every new appropriation inaugurates a new *nomos*. The implications of Schmitt's analysis of *nomos* and its derivation from *nemein* would seem to indicate that every spatial order, at whatever scale, has a *nomos*, a way of dividing the space in use, that can be discerned. So even as he states that "for us, *nomos* is a matter of the fundamental process of apportioning space that is essential to every historical epoch — a matter of the structure-determining convergence of order and orientation in the cohabitation of peoples on this now scientifically surveyed planet," the sense in which I use it here is closer to the "*nomos* by which a tribe, a retinue, or a people becomes settled, i.e., by which it becomes historically situated and turns a part of the earth's surface into the force-field of a particular order, becomes visible in the appropriation of land and in the founding of a city or a colony." Schmitt, *The* Nomos *of the Earth*, 78, 70.

ghettoized spaces, this often involves encountering "the police" as an institution authorized to use lethal force against enemies of the law, and to the extent that poverty is always an enemy of the law of the bourgeois, all those who are ghettoized or who representationally correspond to the ideal of what members of ghettoized spaces ought to look like are legitimate potential targets of institutionalized police.

None of these ontically concrete practices in constant pursuit of the ideal of sovereignty fundamentally alter either the potentiality of an existent to act in the world or the ontologically precarious quality of all existence, i.e., its finality. The pursuit of sovereignty is the desire for "power after power ceasing only in death" that Hobbes identifies, which derives not merely from the effect of natural "fancies" inherent to specific beings but from buying into the discursive regimes, simulations, and ideologies that constantly produce insecurity. Property rights, the police, systems of surveillance, moral–ethical doctrines, and so forth mediate and limit the capacity of beings to act in the world in the ways necessary to reproduce and transform their own existence, construing some as *homines sacri* while permitting others to appear to themselves as Sovereign.

In this context, Bartleby is an interesting figure beyond Agamben's somewhat narrow reading of him merely as a paragon of potentiality — rather than as a being that is at each moment actualized — because he is the "enemy of the law" *par excellence*. Bartleby's straightforward rejection of necessity as it is embodied in the commands and requests of his employer, the Man of the Law, cannot be contested within the very terms of necessity that he is rejecting. "Bartleby is employed, so he must work," speaks the ideology of contractual obligation. When he does not work, justifications that comport with the law of obligation must

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be found if he is to remain an employee. The Man of the Law is thus a "man of the law" insofar as he seeks at each moment the necessary obligation with which Bartleby is complying.[82] Given Bartleby's structurally subordinate position as an employee, there must be some sort of intelligible reason why he remains employed yet refuses to work.

But Bartleby is not bound by the logics of the Man of the Law, logics that would construe Bartleby as some sort of work-dependent *homo sacer*. Instead, Bartleby constitutes himself as sovereign by deciding on the exception. He operates according to a discursive logic totally unintelligible to the Man of the Law. Bartleby and the Man of the Law may share the same bio-material space, but it is in no way clear that the "things that represent only themselves" are identical for both of them. Bartleby the indolent, Bartleby the indigent, this Bartleby is sovereign, even as he appears from without to be bare life. The man of the law, who works that he may be secure in himself, presumes necessity where none exists. He must act as he does lest he be consigned to a worse fate. The Man of the Law would surrender mastery over his small domain were he to act as Bartleby does. Little does the Man of the Law know that Bartleby's form of mastery is freer than his own because Bartleby does not hide behind the veil of necessity. Bartleby belongs solely to himself: always vulnerable, ontologically precarious, at each moment the source of his own self-authorship in the world. But if Bartleby's life remains ontologically insecure even as Bartleby act for himself, then the pacifying figure of the declared *homo sacer* can no longer perform its palliative function. It has only ever served as a fiction.

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[82] Agamben makes essentially this same point by noting that the Man of the Law turns to books about the (un)freedom of the will in order to comprehend Bartleby's rejection of his simple orders. Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1999 [1993]): 254.

Instead of seeking out how and where life has, from the perspective of dominant ideological and discursive regimes, been made ontologically bare, we must instead come to terms with how life is lived, how subjects act according to the laws they give themselves, and how their capacities to act in accordance with their own modes of existence actively produce the world as they experience it. This is sovereignty from the perspective of Bartleby and his kin, who appear as unnecessary excesses within the logics of bourgeois, neoliberal, biopolitical ideologies. It is precisely this space that cannot be accounted for, or which can only be accounted for as a space of the disallowed, pathological, always-already bare, that grounds all possibility of reconstruing the *nomos* of the present regime, and it is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF BARE LIFE[1]

Ann Tsing's book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* is, as one could gather from the title, about mushrooms. It is also about much more. Mushrooms are something of a plot device that permits Tsing to explore the effects of globalized capitalism, the inner workings of international supply chains, the aftermath of environmental degradation, and the social relations that sustain and are sustained by processes that are simultaneously lively and destructive. What is it like, her book asks, to live in relation to mushrooms, to a specific type of mushroom called *matsutake*? The answers are complex. To begin to answer them, Tsing turns neither to the abstract analysis of processes of production nor to mycological science, though she demonstrates that she would have been capable of providing such accounts. Instead, she turns to stories. There is, she contends, an "unfortunate wall we have built between concepts and stories," a wall we will have to transgress because it constrains us within an intellectual space we must egress.[2]

This "must" is contingent. It cannot bind us categorically. It is a "must" that holds if we want to become mired in the complexity of human multiplicity. It is a "must" that ethically binds us to characters we will never meet engaging in practices that have long since passed. It is a "must" of politics as practical vision, as (re)orientation to the spaces that have becomes fetid

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[1] This chapter was initially drafted as a paper for Scott Nelson's Fall 2016 class "Contemporary Political Theory." After significant revisions, it was presented at the Spring 2017 ASPECT conference *Aesthetics, Politics, and Ethics in Fractured Times* from March 31–April 1, as well as at the Spring 2017 Midwest Political Science Association Conference from April 6–9. After receiving helpful comments at the ASPECT conference (though almost no comments at all at the MPSA), it was revised and submitted to ASPECT's journal *SPECTRA*. After undergoing review and a final series of revisions, it was published on September 8, 2017, as "Sovereignty in the City: The Tacticalization of 'Disallowed' Life, *SPECTRA*, Vol. 6.1 (September 2017): DOI: http://doi.org/10.21061/spectra.v6i1.402. While it was initially written with this thesis in mind, this chapter has been revised again to comport with the arguments as they have developed for the final project.

[2] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2015): 158–159.

through repetition. Our mummy concepts rise from their graves, benevolence in their hearts, calling us to be free through submission to Being, capitulating to the pure form of the world, its hypothetical imperatives an expunged impropriety. Political theory is a way of accounting for the world of experience. It offers us tools for contesting the paradigms that render our experiences through the myopia of the present. Stories carry concepts within them, even as concepts are unintelligible without the narratival emplotment that situates them in the space of representation (representations of space). Thus, stories are a form of theory, even as all theory is a mode of storying the world, linking together concepts by repetition, folding Euclidean space in on itself, multiplying surfaces of contact and sites of entanglement.

One story Tsing tells is especially relevant here. She travels to Open Ticket, Oregon, a "composite place" representing multiple real sites, where she spends time with matsutake producers. Pickers, buyers, and sellers of various ethnicities, backgrounds, and creeds gather together to appropriate space in ways that count to them as a form of freedom:

> Pickers, buyers, and field agents are engaged in dramatic enactments of freedom, as they separately understand it, and they exchange these, encouraging each other, along with their trophies: money and mushrooms. Sometimes, indeed, it seemed to me that the really important exchange was the freedom, with the mushroom-and-money trophies as extensions — proofs, as it were — of the performance.[3]

The mode of freedom Tsing recounts is emergent; it exists only in the practices in which the participants engage. What is freer about mushroom picking, exchanging, selling, and buying than any other mode of existence? Have the participants transcended space? Have they traded heteronomy for autonomy? Are they free from hunger or the law? Are they free to become the subjects they always already were? The answer, Tsing seems to suggest, lies in the possibility of participants to imagine themselves as free — not because one belongs to an imaginary space

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[3] Ibid., 75.

without any specific obligations, attachments, or desires but because the practice of spatial mastery and appropriation belongs to a representational ideal that one codes as "freeing." Japanese traders refer to the whole process as evidence of an "American psychology," which the traders are willing to tolerate "if [it] is what brings in the goods."[4] Freedom is a practice, a practice of expressing the capacity for sovereignty in a world of multiplicity and diversity, an expression that seeks to create opportunities for novel practices of ongoing spatial mastery.

Stories are theoretical, and theories are stories. Some stories are better than others. The best inject ambiguity back into the world, layering its simple surfaces with bumps and ridges, troubling analytical categories that used to seem straightforward. In February 2013, the National Public Radio show *This American Life* aired a two-part episode entitled "Harper High School" that examined life in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. "Harper High School" is full of stories, so it is also full of theories. These stories, like Tsing's, capture practices of sovereign freedom in a world of death and despair — new arts of living embedded in milieus of dying. Many of the vignettes deal with the violent conditions in Englewood, conditions whose effects secrete into the community, leaving no space untouched. The narratives chronicle the lives of teenagers and adults who make the world violent, teenagers and adults who suffer violence from the world, and teenagers and adults who try to limit the violence: one teenager accidentally shoots and kills his brother, several easily obtain guns despite Chicago's strict gun laws, and one struggles in the aftermath of the multiple murders he has witnessed throughout his young life. The world the members of the Englewood community inhabit is frequently tragic. Children die young, and even walking home from school becomes a coordinated performance designed to

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[4] Ibid., 83.

signal one's allegiances (or lack thereof) in order to remain safe. Yet in the face of dire social

and economic conditions, the Englewood residents find ways to cope. They survive.

In this chapter, I perform close readings of several of the narratives included in the *This American Life* podcast in order to explore sovereignty as it is lived and practiced in everyday life. Sovereignty as an abstract concept indicates the capacity of an existent to author itself in the world, which requires, more or less, space for an existent to think itself and thus to think everything else as well. In the world of experience, this capacity is limited in a variety of ways. It requires perceiving, conceiving, and living in space. Conceiving space is constrained by the condition of multiplicity. Forms of life appropriate, impinge on, master, and destroy each other in an endless appropriation, distribution, and production of space. Collectively, this produces identifiable patterns of spatial distribution, the *nomoi* that characterize a specific form of spatial appropriation, the initial founding of which is daily renewed through ongoing (re)appropration. Drawing on Bonnie Honig's account of sovereignty as embodied in the collective activity of a people, I use these narratives to assist in theorizing a politics that seeks futures that are more egalitarian. Such a politics is best conceived as a struggle against forms of violence enacted at specific sites rather than as rebellion against a unified form of domination. It is, of necessity, a form of spatial mastery, but while the will to life might be a will to destruction, it need not be a mastery rooted in *ressentiment*. It is instead a mastery that aims at multiplying the ways of life open to us by exploring the ways of life open to the stories' subjects. Despite being located in biopolitically disallowed spaces, how are their lives nevertheless sovereign rather than bare? How do they master themselves and their space?

To undertake this analysis, I begin by briefly outlining Honig's account of sovereignty, linking it to the accounts of spatial practice offered in the preceding chapter. After this, I turn to the specific narratives documented by *This American Life*, reading them not merely as chronicles of life in Englewood but as theoretically fecund exemplars of collective and individual sovereignty. Here we are in the realm of topography. Finally, I conclude by exploring what the reading of such narratives as instances of sovereignty can reveal for us regarding politics more generally. Understanding the characters in these narratives as sovereign actors seeking to master their own space rather than as either helpless sufferers (those who experience violence) or criminals (those who act violently) helps to illuminate the complex political dynamics that sustain poverty and produce violence in such spaces, which may help to expand our capacity to imagine how such spaces might be otherwise. Our imaginations expand in contact with storied encounters, encounters that might reveal "more life" where it had not been noticed before.

HONIGIAN SOVEREIGNTY

The narratives I examine all exhibit characteristics of what Bonnie Honig refers to as "mere life" and "more life," by which she signifies the "concept of survival that signals in its doubleness both the needs of life and the call to overlife."[5] That is, "mere life" refers to social conditions that are barely inhabitable, while "more life" is an overabundance of the material and social supports that make "life" livable. Mere and more life are not opposed but rather exist in "agonistic tension and mutual indebtedness."[6] Within the framework of mere and more life, projects of subsistence simultaneously implicate imaginative futures in which inegalitarian distributions of precarity and livability have been displaced by richer, more broadly fulfilling

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[5] Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009): 10.
[6] Ibid., 11.

alternatives; the "everyday" and the "extraordinary" imbricate and intertwine. In the stories presented by *This American Life*, gangs, those whose lives have been affected by violence, and organizations such as Harper High School that seek to curb violence are all engaged in practices of survival (mere life), some of which concurrently aim toward a future in which life is more livable (more life).

Mere and more life are central to Honig's theorization of sovereignty outside of the Schmittian tradition that locates the source of sovereignty in the ability of the sovereign to "decide on the exception" to the law, i.e., to suspend the legal order in cases of emergency.[7] Instead of conceptualizing sovereignty within a unified, hierarchical, decision-oriented, legal–juridical model, Honig reads decisionist elements in everyday, localized political movements and orientations, writing, "I focus here on the role of decision in democratic action and governance, and not in its exceptionality — as 'the decision' or 'decisionism' — but in its ordinariness, as discretion. Decision as discretion calls attention not to the suspension of the rule of law but to its daily operations."[8] For Honig, the law's suspension at the declaration of the sovereign is in no way self-evident. The quotidian rituals of democratic practice orient citizens to sets of rules and processes of rulemaking. Whether the law is suspended depends upon whether the members of the "people" affirm and accept its suspension, not merely on formal legal decisions of an all-powerful sovereign. Because "the law" does not exist independently from how legal dictates are carried out, the law's suspension is a material, not merely a declarative phenomenon, and it depends on whether individuals and groups alter their patterns of interaction, not on whether a single sovereign declares the law no longer to be in effect. Norm and exception are questions of

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[7] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 5.
[8] Honig, *Emergency Politics*, xvi-xvii.

practice, even as the representation that the law is no longer in effect may permit new spatial practices to be imaginable. These patterns of interaction must at a minimum be rooted in projects that sustain life, whether of a community or of an individual, but they can also be enacted in ways that expand the possibilities and opportunities of material abundance to either greater or fewer people.

It is in this latter sense that those affiliated with Harper High School engage in practices of sovereignty. Residents undertake strategies of survival (mere life) on behalf of more egalitarian and prosperous futures (more life), but these practices are poorly accounted for within legal–juridical accounts of sovereignty. While Honig's analysis is primarily focused on democratic possibilities *within* contemporary political structures and discourses, her arguments apply just as effectively to each and every site of action in concert, not merely to those spaces that are strictly considered to belong to the "government." This extends to agents and organizations that have in some sense been "left behind" by the official governmental agencies, as the narratives make clear the Englewood neighborhood has been. Harper High School lacks the permanent funding required to provide its students with the educational opportunities they need. Some of its students come to school hungry because there is no food at home. Violence or the threat of violence is the daily reality for many attendees. Those who wish to avoid it entirely are faced with an unappealing alternative: stay inside. In a state that operates according to a biopolitical, neoliberal logic — wherein minorities and the poor are not afforded the protections of the legal order, which instead shifts the resources needed to survive away from them — Englewood residents are excluded from the law's substantive protections. From the perspective

of the state, they exist as *homines sacri*, life that is in the process of being transformed into *homo sacer*, or life that ought to be transformed into *homo sacer*.[9]

By refusing to see the law either as a self-enacting set of propositions or as dependent on the will of a single sovereign, Honig provides the resources for thinking about sovereignty's exercise even amongst those populations that neoliberal logics "disallow to the point of death."[10] Every day, the administrators at Harper High School undertake a politics of discretion in the promotion of both mere and more life. They enact strategies of survival that aim to provide their students with more egalitarian futures, and these imaginative possibilities drive Harper's administrators to act. Simultaneously, students must make decisions about how they will act within the conditions of violence that surround them, either responding with external violence against others or internal "violence" against the self. Discretion — socially situated decision-making in the context of one's daily duties — is the basis of this democratic politics, not decisionism regarding the law's application.[11] The law, while not wholly irrelevant, does not have the exclusive claim to sovereignty that legal-juridical theorists want to credit to it.

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[9] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998). I find Agamben's term provocative, despite the flaws in his account that I detailed at length in chapter two. I use it here for its illustrative potential, though it should only be read as signifying life that is *being made bare* through ongoing spatial practices of biopolitical distribution, not life that has been constituted as bare through the sovereign ban or the declaration of sovereign exception.

[10] In Foucault's original account of biopolitics in *The Will to Knowledge*, he describes the displacement of the right of the sovereign to kill or let live with the governmental order's ability to "*foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" with respect to the population "taken as a whole." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction* [*The Will to Knowledge*], trans. by Robert Hurley, Vintage Books Edition (New York: Vintage, 1990 [1976]), 138-139.

[11] For the purposes of this chapter, in distinction to the relatively individualized account in the previous chapters, I do not want to over-emphasize individualistic discretion. Nevertheless, it is the case that all social life, and any democratic politics, will be formed out of individuals acting initially alone and only representationally in concert, which means that discretion, while it relies on acceptance and reception by others when externally oriented, also applies to a politics of the self. One of the narratives recounted deals with such a subject.

Moreover, it is important to note that in Honig's account of discretion, she is dealing explicitly with the administrative discretion afforded to those who are in administrative roles within the U.S. government's bureaucracy. Specifically, she focuses on Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis Freeland Post's actions during the First Red Scare of 1919. Post used the power of his office to refuse to deport several thousand immigrants who had been

In the remainder of this paper, I build on Honig's claim that "radical founding and everyday maintenance, the people and the multitude, the lawgiver and the charlatan, mere life and more life are undecidably implicated in each other in ways we ignore at our peril" by focusing briefly on four of the vignettes presented in the *This American Life* podcast, performing close readings of the narratives in order to rethink sovereignty as it is lived and practiced in everyday conditions of multiplicity, indeterminacy, and dialogicality.[12] The decisions made represent a mixture of orientations toward potential imagined futures, some of which tend toward "more life," others of which only strive for "mere life." The practices undertaken are complex and messy, as action in concert always is. They do not provide the surety of universality or rational deducibility, yet they exhibit democratic action's dangers and potentialities — neither of which is ever separable from the other — and take into serious consideration the intertwined material and imaginary elements of sovereignty's enactment, including the futures for which actors are striving and the steps they are taking to realize them.

HARPER HIGH SCHOOL

Our first story centers on a Chicago school system program that provided schools such as Harper, designated a "turnaround school," with millions of extra dollars in order to revamp the

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detained under the Sedition Act, in part by applying to each case standards of due process that were not legally required but to which he argued he was bound. Thus, "discretion" takes on a slightly different cast in this context as it deals with a public official's navigation of legal structures in the pursuit of more egalitarian (and arguably democratic) ends. Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 69–86.

However, the politics that Honig is describing does not need to be bound within state structures. Her newest work, *Public Things, Democracy in Disrepair* (New York: Fordham UP, 2017), argues for the role that public objects and practices play in forming democratic groupings of the sort discussed here, and many of her examples involve non-state actors (such as Native American peoples and the Occupy Wall Street movement). Read in conjunction with each other, Honig's works promote just the sort of rethinking of sovereignty discussed here.

[12] Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 11.

services that it offers to its students.[13] This funding ceases after a span of five years, and because

it is so substantial ($2 million for 2012 and $1.6 million for 2013 out of the school's $9 million

overall budget), the positions and services it funds at Harper will likely have to be cut when it is

rescinded.[14] The reporter for the segment, Ben Calhoun, relates an encounter between a staff

member, Marcel Smith, whose pay comes from the added funds, and a student who was asked to

leave class for taking a second cookie from among those his teacher offered to the class. The

teacher had told the student to take only one cookie or to explain why he deserved more, but the

student, who had not eaten the night before, was embarrassed to offer justification.

Consequently, he was banished from the classroom: caught within the ban of the teacher as

Sovereign. On an Agambenian reading, the student has been transformed in *homo sacer*, a figure

who may be punished by anyone due to his existence outside the space of the classroom. Smith

runs into the student while both are travelling the hallway, learns of his plight, and provides the

student with some cereal from his own office.

This action could be read merely as an act of charity in light of the needs of a particular

student, but at the same time, the structural underpinnings of the situation make it much more

than that. By ceasing, if only temporarily, to cast Harper as *homines sacri* — as members of a

population effectively ignored by the law — the City of Chicago has diminished the "differential

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[13] All of the details for the ensuing narratives, including quotes from conversations and otherwise uncited direct descriptions, are from Ira Glass, "488: Harper High School - Part Two," *This American Life*, Chicago Public Media, February 22, 2013. Accessed online December 12, 2016. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/488/harper-high-school-part-two.>

The first of these two podcasts on Harper is invaluable for providing context, though I do not draw specifically from any of its narratives here. Ira Glass, "487: Harper High School - Part One," *This American Life*, Chicago Public Media, February 15, 2013. Accessed online December 12, 2016. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/487/transcript.>

[14] Though these details have been played out in the years since the podcast's initial broadcast, I maintain, as is standard for engaging in "close readings" of texts, the literary present. Further, as an illustration of the themes in the preceding chapters, how the details have shifted is less important than how they appeared to actors at the time of the narratives. The question at hand is how to bring the theoretical insights from the previous chapters to our encounters with practical politics.

distribution of precarity"[15] amongst inner-city schools in Chicago; for a short time, Harper is on better financial footing, and its students benefit from the presence of an expanded staff. Chicago is treating the lives of students at Harper as worthy of increased support. But it is not enough that money has been infused into the school. The agents who work at Harper, such as Marcel Smith, must be attuned to the opportunities for forms of "decisionism" in the everyday. These are opportunities for exercising the authority granted to them in potentially novel ways on behalf of their students: "discretion." There is no generalizable norm or juridical code according to which Marcel Smith could have been required to provide a specific student with food so that the student could go about his day without being hungry, just as exiling the student from the space of the classroom did not automatically consign him to a bare existence. This is what Honig means when she writes, "Without interpretation, law is insensitive to particularity and nuance."[16] The application of broad, unfeeling legal dictates is always mediated by human beings who have to make determinations about how those principles apply. While not acting according to a specific dictate, Smith is operating within a type of discretion with respect to how the technical, contractual requirements of his vocation apply to the wide range of real-world phenomena he encounters.

The "decision" in which Smith is embroiled is incomprehensible according to the Schmittian account of the term. Smith's "decision" does not enact an "exception" that suspends the juridical order, but it is an "exception" that suspends the law of hunger. Providing extra food to the student temporarily suspends the conditions that hamper his ability to perform well in school. The rules of the school are not suspended; a staff member whose job it is to understand

[15] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, Paperback edition (New York: Verso, 2010), 25.
[16] Honig, *Emergency Politics*, 77.

when interventions are required to support Harper students has made an everyday, individualized, discretionary choice to provide material aid to a specific student. Scores of students pass Smith daily without requiring the mere necessity of sustenance, yet he must remain attuned to the needs of those students who do. This student, whose presence in the hallway during class Smith reads as abnormal, jars Smith into action. This encounter illuminates the doubleness of "survival" as both "mere life and more life."[17] Surviving entails simple existence, but it also implies "a dividend — that surprise extra, the gift that exceeds rightful expectations, the surplus that exceeds causality."[18] The cereal was a surprise surplus, enabled by a larger financial scheme that funded Smith's job, but it was also the bare minimum that the student needed to hope to be successful in school for the day.

But what about when the money runs out? What happens when Harper is once again returned to conditions of "mere life" because funding priorities have changed? How else is the distinction between, and mutual constitution of, mere life and more life in the paradigm of discretion exhibited at Harper High School? To begin to answer such questions, let us turn to two stories whose participants have radically opposed responses to the forms of violence with which they are confronted. First is the tale of a student, Thomas, who struggles against his desire to commit violence in response to the forms of violence that he has suffered, while the second is an account of a group of friends who formed a gang for self-protection, which, in the wake of their leader's death, expanded broadly throughout Chicago.

The reporter for the first of these segments, Alex Kotlowitz, sees Thomas often while visiting the school's social-work office. On one occasion, Alex strikes up a conversation with

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[17] Ibid., 11.
[18] Ibid., 10.

Thomas, attempting to understand why the latter is in the office so often. Thomas, we learn, has

been a witness to a number of shootings, at least two of them fatal. The first occurred when both

he and the murder victim were only ten years old. From the discussion, it becomes clear that

Thomas is struggling with grief at an existential level. He is fighting against allowing lingering

resentment from these incidents to become a part of the fabric of his identity. This is most

evident as Thomas engages in conversation with Anita Stewart, his social worker, who is asking

him which of the forms of violence he has experienced stand out most strongly:

> **Thomas:** Man, I got older. That stuff is old now.
> **Anita:** It's old? You remember what happened, right? … Does it really get old, Thomas?
> **Thomas:** It's done now.
> **Anita:** It's done. I know and I understand that it's done. But does it really get old, where
> you can say, "OK, this is over. I don't think about it anymore?"
> **Thomas:** But if I think about it, I'll do something.
> **Anita:** You'll do something like what?
> **Thomas:** Try to hurt somebody.

Thomas proffers roughly the same answer when Kotlowitz asks on a separate occasion where

Thomas sees himself in ten years. According to Kotlowitz, Thomas says, "Might be in jail,

because I think I'm going to hurt someone." Thomas then relays a story from shortly after a

fellow student and good friend of his had been murdered in his presence. Some days after the

murder, Thomas's cousin was pushed to the ground by an older boy, so Thomas punched the boy

hard enough that one of the boy's teeth became lodged in Thomas's hand. Whereas Thomas had

been unable to sleep since the murder, he was able to sleep after releasing his anger in an act of

retaliatory aggression.

Thomas's rage boils up within him, and it would take the hardest of hearts not to be

sympathetic to the depth of the anguish caused by the experience of significant loss at such a

young age. As opposed to seeing Thomas as (or demanding that he be) someone who resists his

proclivity to violence with "nonviolence" understood as passivity, we might instead understand Thomas's constant trips to Anita's office as what Judith Butler calls an "aggressive vigilance over aggression's tendency to emerge as violence."[19] Butler describes nonviolence as a struggle against the self, predicated on the "violence involved in the making and sustaining of the subject."[20] Yet Thomas's options are limited. The struggle for nonviolence, he indicates, cannot last forever. What will he do when he leaves high school, when Anita is no longer around? His easiest, though not for that reason necessarily best, option seems to be a turn to the external forms of violence against others that he has so far resisted. The techniques of sovereignty over himself that he is deploying are unstable at best; it is unclear how much longer they will remain effective. Again, there is a form of discretion here that does not correspond adequately with "the decision." This discretion is embodied in a set of practices situated within an already existing social framework (of which law is but one element), and it requires attunement to sites where survival, both as more and mere life, is threatened. For Thomas, the "mere life" of staying alive and refraining from violence against others despite the violence perpetually forced upon him grounds any further possibilities for imaginative self-mastery beyond the demands of the quotidian.

Thomas's response to violence is not the only one taken by boys his age. Ben Calhoun narrates the formation of a gang known as Terrance Green City (TGC), named for a popular student who was killed by a rival gang in July 2009. Terrance Green, TGC's namesake, and his friends had no interest in joining a gang. However, as they grew older — they became "hard legs" in the parlance of the neighborhood — members of another gang began to harass them on a

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[19] Butler, *Frames of War*, 170.
[20] Ibid.

regular basis. Terrance gathered his friends to found a new group called "Yung Lyfe," which stood for "young, unique, noble gentlemen living youthful and fulfilled every day." The idealism of the name, the "overlife" that it posited when confronted with the need to act in order to continue living, quickly faltered in light of the social reality with which its members were faced; it receded into "mere life." Yung Lyfe's members acquired guns, and the situation became violent the summer that Terrance died. One of his friends recounts, "I'm not going to lie. We were shooting pretty much every day. It was wolf season."[21] Terrance's death sparked a wave of violence that accounted for at least seven ensuing deaths and ten other shootings. One of those killed was a Harper student. Yung Lyfe transformed into TGC, which expanded throughout the Englewood neighborhood, even as it abandoned the promise to more life that its original name represented. From the perspective of mere and more life, the promise of creating the conditions for a fulfilled life accompanied the risk not only of individual *lives* but of future conditions of *livability* in the sense that the conditions of violence that have resulted from Terrance's death are essentially unlivable.

Even prior to their establishment of the gang, Yung Lyfe's members were marked according to two different material–spatial registers: age/physical maturity and geography. We see here the overlap of the traditional logics of political sovereignty, in which the jurisdictional reach of a sovereign is geographically delimited, and the logics of biopolitical governmentality, in which a specific population (males of a certain age in this case) is an object of regulation, sustentation, optimization, multiplication, and suppression. During TGC's formation, identity

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[21] Is it mere coincidence that causes Agamben to link *homo sacer* to the *wargus*, "the wolf-man … of ancient Germanic law" whose mythological function "in the collective unconscious as a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city — the werewolf — is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city"? Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 104–105.

emerged first, not territorial securitization, though the identity that was produced was constitutively related to the territorial practices of others. Because another group had marked Yung Lyfe's members as bodies that needed to be monitored, bodies foreign to the territory over which the former group was sovereign, Yung Lyfe's group identity emerged. Since Yung Lyfe has transformed into TGC, it has claimed territory of its own, and it would be reasonable to think that TGC's members might be engaging in some of the same practices that led to Yung Lyfe's original formation.

Calhoun also describes a "mythology" that has developed after Terrance's death, which includes several students who "use his last name, Green, in place of their own." Terrance, *homo sacer* from the perspective of the statist orders that permitted his perpetual harassment and bullying, pushing him to alternative channels of self-defense, has served a sacrificial and consecrating function for the students who knew him and who still affiliate with TGC. The spilling of his blood has ordained the emergence of a new political-theological order that rests upon a spatial imaginary perpetually secured and legitimated through violence. The bodies of TGC's members are performatively identical to Terrance's mythologized body; they are *homines sacri* in relation to the state, which would seek to eliminate the violent threat they ostensibly pose, yet sovereigns in relation to themselves and to those who respect and believe in the mythology of Terrance's legacy. Symbolic identification with his body legibilizes the practices that materialize in territorialization, wrapped up in the religious and mythical overtones on which traditional conceptions of sovereignty depend. TGC mobilizes practices of sovereignty that oppose and subvert legal orders by committing acts of violence that make life more dangerous for the residents of the neighborhoods where TGC operates. As *homines sacri*, TGC members

may be killed by the "sovereigns" of other gangs without penalty, except for the threat of retaliation, as well as by the governmental orders that seek to secure legal sovereignty at the state, municipal, and city levels.

In the opposition of these narratives — Thomas, who doubts his fragile self-sovereignty, and Terrance, whose desire for abundant life imbued his sacrificial body with mythological and sustaining power — it becomes clear that discretion alone is insufficient for the founding of livable orders. Discretion must be mobilized on behalf of "more life" instead of only "mere life." Political life is shown to be inherently risky; freedom of choice is not inevitably emancipatory. Subjects seeking life's surpluses may found orders that imperil the mere life of others on behalf of their own mere life (TGC), while subjects actively warring within themselves to maintain mere life may likewise fall into practices destructive of even that (Thomas). The final outcomes of these political struggles of self-organization cannot be ascertained in advance, and no final end beyond the struggle can ever be reached.

It is in the social context of such forms of violence that the fourth narrative, a decision by Harper High School to hold its Homecoming events despite a shooting occurring mere days before, is most noteworthy. In this final vignette, the school's staff puts in a fourteen-hour workday without extra pay simply to ensure that students can enjoy themselves. Narrator Ira Glass summarizes the workers' feelings as the event occurs: "For the staff, who have been here at this point for fourteen hours, the significance of this moment is not lost. It's regular life. They were able to give the kids regular high school for a night — a dance." The term "regular" takes on a different valence in the context of Harper, thereby exhibiting how tenuous its normal usage also is. Regular for whom? At the expense or thanks to the sacrifice of whom? What are the

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social conditions or relations that make normalcy difficult to achieve? The staff's determination to preserve a safe environment for students despite the risk of violence results from the simultaneous pursuit of "mere life" — it is simply a "regular" high school evening — and "more life" — it is an evening Harper's social conditions make all but impossible. These events could only be achieved through the Harper staff's commitments to abundance in the face of violence, commitments such as the staff members' individual determinations to work overlong hours in the face of the not insignificant risk that violence could occur at the event. Harper's staff members have embraced and enacted a specific imaginary of sovereignty. It is a sovereignty of survival, with all the complexity that the term entails, both in terms of mere subsistence and the surfeit of life brought about by enhancing the conditions of livability.

SITUATED RESISTANCE

These narratives help us to theorize the situated, contextual, all-too human character of democratic politics and real-world enactments of sovereignty. Numerous practices and representations of how to organize space proliferate, varying from territorially imagined gangs rooted in a mythology of violence and death to the socially embedded and fractured sovereignty of subjects who struggle against themselves in light of the extreme conditions of violence they have experienced. "The exception" has in some sense already been declared, not in an absolute sense that topographically enunciates a specific topo-logic but by collective practices of distribution that, in accordance with a biopolitical logic, deem the "inner cities" to be occupied by "disposable lives." When the "money runs out," it is the poorest urban residents who take the hit. They are vulnerable to all forms of state (non)intervention into their lives. In response, Harper High School's staff members work in pursuit of alternative futures they are trying to

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bring about on behalf of themselves and their students, enacting new worlds through countless decisions by innumerable agents at myriad junctures in a space where sovereignty as either law or its suspension is functionally irrelevant, if not altogether unintelligible.[22] Harper's staff enacts a politics of "more life" in conditions where "mere life" itself is regularly threatened, employing novel practices of sovereignty in order to do so.

These collective actions are historically and socially situated forms of resistance to localized regimes of violence; they are not part of an attempt to "overthrow" an overarching logic responsible for all forms of domination and repression. All forms of "structural" domination — racial, patriarchal, class-based, religious, etc. — are purely supervenient: they are only made possible through specific forms of violence deployed against specific subjects, even if, taken as a whole, these specific dominations constitute a legible pattern of discrimination that lends a different tenor to individual interactions. The situation of Englewood residents reflects the racialized character of poverty in the United States, but the actions of the administrators at Harper High School are not aimed at overthrowing a uniform mode of domination, even one that is racist or classist. Rather, a variety of subjects are enmeshed in a constant play of relations of force that act upon them — including along racial and class-based lines — and against which they act via a variety of practices aimed toward an imagined and contestable future order in

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[22] This is not to say that community members do not rely on agents of the state in specific circumstances, such as when someone is shot and must be taken to the hospital. In fact, the police figure prominently at various points in the story: as security at the homecoming dance, as investigators into Terrance's death, as enforcers of guns laws, and so forth. The point is that juridical thinking does not provide an adequate matrix for comprehending how life is actually practiced. It does not exhaust, or even come close to exhausting, the reasons out of which subjects act. In this sense, as well as in the sense that the existence of prohibitions against killing, fighting, or so forth do not eradicate the practices, the force of the law is effectively irrelevant. This is another sense in which anomie lies at the heart of the law, as Giorgio Agamben examines in *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005 [2003]). See especially chapter two, "Force-of-~~Law~~" (32–40).

which violence (or certain forms thereof) is diminished and an overfull abundance of the conditions that sustain life is realized.

Acknowledging the situatedness of both resistance *and* domination in the context of Harper High School helps to demonstrate that revolutionary projects do not involve ontologically disjunctive historical developments. In fact, such breaks are impossible. Ordering, crafting, mastering, and remaking the representational space of the self does not and cannot involve the absolute abandonment of past forms of thinking or ways of living (that is to say, "false consciousness") in favor of a *praxis* that could be "by its very nature — absolutely liberating."[23] Rather, the (re-)formation of both one's own identity and the social context one inhabits involves a series of slow changes and minute alterations, out of which emerge new social and identitarian formations that are differently situated, though not for that reason any less embedded in a broader social context. Radically disjunctive authorship exists only as abstract form; the production of space in everyday life is always a collective endeavor that consequently constrains individual action through its necessary collectivity. Subjects of space are not "freed." They are only altered. This by definition entails subjects' enmeshment in new relations of power, new relations of space, and new regimes of representation, all of which may merely permit subjects to survive or may bring about more egalitarian, abundant realities. The question is not how we can become free but rather what organizations of power we are willing to accept. What do we desire? And who is this "we" that asks such questions?

While there are strains of theory, such as those advanced by Honig, that emphasize the perpetually agonistic, contested nature of politics and political concepts, discourses of

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[23] Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," trans. Robert Hurley et al, *Power*: *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984 (Volume 3)*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000 [1982]): 354. Foucault rejects such an account of freedom, as the following paragraphs elaborate.

tacticalization have not yet displaced the vestiges of universal freedom that still inhabit some

theoretical grammars and concepts. Fully emancipatory projects are unachievable; tactical

negotiations of power are the rule. Freedom remains realizable only in practices that comport

with our individual and collective representations of autonomy. It is a "work carried out by

ourselves upon ourselves as free beings" that, while it places no hope in reaching a finalized

telos of being, does permit a perpetual work on the self that is both organized and directed.[24]

This is what Foucault meant when he wrote, "Liberty is a *practice*. So there may, in fact, always

be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even to

break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have

liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself."[25] In the spirit of Honig and

Harper High School's administrators, we must instead posit imagined futures for which it is

possible to strive. Simultaneously, we can recognize in the strategies of survival enacted by

homines sacri all across the globe — whether in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, gang-

controlled regions of Central America, or any other space where neoliberal, biopolitical regimes

have permitted the lives of some to flourish while constraining the imaginable futures of others

— the enactment of a politics of tactical sovereignty that employs "discretion" rather than

"decision" in order to negotiate the travails of the everyday. Such a language allows for a greater

proliferation of democratic imaginaries by relocating sovereignty within the quotidian mastery of

space rather than in the purely formal and legal features of politics.

　　This chapter is thus an argument in favor of situated political action that does not

acquiesce to the prevailing regimes of power but instead works at specific, concrete sites of

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[24] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," trans. Catherine Porter, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 47. Foucault's account is, of course, very Nietzschean.
[25] Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," 354.

domination and subjugation in the simultaneous pursuit of subsistence (mere life) and

imaginative futures that may be more abundant (more life). The aim has been to "show law in its

nonrelation to life and life in its nonrelation to law" in order to "open up a space between them

for human action, which once claimed for itself the name of 'politics.'"[26] This politics is not

emancipatory, nor is it philosophically justified or justifiable. It is instead expressed in the

practices of those who "take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in

maintaining [themselves] on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses.

Such a spirit would be a [sovereign subject] par excellence."[27] It is this form of political

imagination that the administrators at Harper High School exhibit and which those of us

committed to democratic orders must adopt broadly should we want to have any hope at

intervening practically into politics. Our politics are simultaneously aimed at survival and

"overlife," both of which terms are themselves historically and socially situated. Just as the

administrators at Harper High School sacrifice on behalf of the students who attend their

institutions, so must we who embrace democracy be prepared to sacrifice on behalf of more

egalitarian orders, resisting the specific modes of violence through which structural forms of

domination are generated and perpetuated. Only such a politics can be considered democratic.

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[26] Agamben, *State of Exception*, 88. Agamben seems to view this as a yet-unrealized space because the state of exception, as the secret *nomos* of modernity, yet links together life and law by eliminating the division between life and the (un)lawful. This argument results from Agamben's excessive focus on the juridical order, which does not so much link together life and law as it unsuccessfully seeks to capture life within its folds. The possibility of "rupturing" the law, of acting totally outside its logics, thus remains for every non-juridical representation of space, including those presented here.

[27] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974 [1882, 1887]): 290.

CONCLUSION

How can democracy be established in a milieu characterized by violence? This was the question that initiated this study on sovereignty. It appears now, though, to be wrongly formulated. Instead, the proper question is something like: What forms of violence permit the mastery of space to manifest a *nomos* out of which a more egalitarian distribution of potentiality might emerge? Subjects, existents, are always-already free within the limits of their conceptual existence. They are sovereign, as I explored in chapter one, in the original theological sense of the term, in which their capacity to act is logically constrained by nothing other than their capacity to act. This tautological formulation decenters questions that too often dominate conversations on sovereignty: Who rightly rules? What are the limits to such rule? Who counts as a legitimate or illegitimate ruler? Such questions are certainly important with respect to the political organization and persuasion. They are not, though, questions whose historical conditions of possibility can be delimited in advance according to an abstract model of political organization. "Right rule" is always an in-progress determination. There is never total "legitimacy" but only "ongoing processes of legitimation." This is because the pure form of sovereignty, the ability of an existent not only to act unhindered but also to author the world in the sense of imbuing it totally with meaning, is only ever partially realized in the world of experience.

Within the world of experience, then, the question is how the ability of existents to act in accordance with the fullest extent of their capacities for action is actually manifested. This led in chapter two to a more in-depth examination of the social production of space. The world is at all times composed of myriad existents partially expressing the ideal form of sovereignty through

their attempts to master the world around them. Mastery is a material phenomenon that occurs at every moment; space is perpetually mastered. Simultaneously, it is an ideal that drives how space is produced: the ideal of organizing one's material interactions in the manner most pleasing to oneself. Because all existence is sympoietic, the ways that practices of spatial mastery are carried out depends significantly on what counts as the subject of spatial mastery. What a subject is and what its attachments in the world are organize the ideational or projective space within which the subject operates, which involves both how the world is immediately perceived by the subject and also how immediate perceptions fit within an abstract schemata of how experience is organized. This collective production cannot be planned wholly in advance. Any attempt to do so would run into the fundamental difficulty of all political organization, namely, the sovereignty of individual subjects. Nevertheless, there is an identifiable pattern to how space is produced at all levels, from the body to the city to the globe. This identifiable pattern is its *nomos*, the organizing logics that characterize a certain regime of spatial mastery.

In societies that distribute resources in inegalitarian ways, which necessarily includes any and all market societies, the production of space will likewise be inegalitarian. Some will be granted resources, opportunities, highly desired living spaces, jobs, capital, and so on, while others will be relegated to the undesirable spaces and have limited resources, job options, and financial resources. The ongoing distribution of material potentiality in a way that permits some to flourish while inhibiting the same possibility for others is what Michel Foucault labeled "biopolitics." Some lives are fostered, while others are structurally disallowed. The relationship between ontic sovereignty as manifested in ongoing practices of spatial appropriation and biopolitical regimes of distribution as the legible outcome of such interactions is a fundamentally

different way of conceiving how sovereignty and biopolitics interact than is proposed by Giorgio Agamben, who has argued that sovereignty is in its very origins biopolitical because it transforms some lives into undesirable lives via their exclusion from the city's *bios*. Agamben's formulation, though, tells us little about the practices through which life is actually disallowed rather than merely declared to be undesirable, even as the declaration of undesirable life may be a tactical element in a regime of spatial production that actively treats some lives as unworthy of living.

In a capitalist economy, the processes of citadelization and ghettoization are dialectically related; as some grow wealthy, others necessarily become relatively poor. The spaces of the relatively poor are ghettos, whereas the wealthy fortress themselves in their citadel spaces. The specific history of the United States causes this tendency to manifest in a specifically racialized way, where black bodies become representationally linked with the practices of material disallowing that produce ghetto spaces. This in turn has ramifications for how such bodies are interpreted and interpellated while outside of distinctly ghetto spaces. It is here that Agamben's *homo sacer* plays a mythifying function. Treating the figure of *homo sacer* as if it is ontologically subordinate leaves no room for exploring the specific ways in which structurally disallowed lives, which always maintain their ineliminable ontological sovereignty, in fact maintain control over themselves in some sense and engage in practices of spatial mastery that are potentially disruptive to the dominant *nomos*.

There is a secret alliance of sorts between Agamben's account and those that view practices of spatial mastery in ghettoized spaces as purely disruptive or pathological issues to be investigated, clarified, and resolved through technocratic management or enhanced policing.

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Once *homo sacer* has been declared, can it be made whole again? Or is the Sovereign bound by its prior declaration? By treating the practices of spatial mastery that I explore in chapter three as the expression of an always-already present capacity for sovereignty, I am seeking to disrupt what risks becoming either (or both) a technocratic paternalism or a resigned fatalism. Resistant, alternative practices of spatial mastery are already occurring. What do they tell us? To what are such practices a response? How are they carried out? Where within them are sites of "more life," life that exceeds the dictates of the quotidian social and spatial reproduction of the norm and moves into an abundance presently reserved for the few? It is on the basis of our answers to such questions that projects that might loosen some of the many constraints imposed on us by ourselves and others can and should be launched. Such projects will never be "absolutely" freeing in the sense that they will never fully express in the world of experience the pure form of sovereignty. There is too much indeterminacy for that. But they may open up space to become otherwise than we, collectively and individually, are at present. They may permit the appropriation, production, and distribution of space to be organized according to a new, more egalitarian *nomos* that enables "more life" for more people.

This is the basis for all possible hope in politics, and on the subject of hope, Shakespeare put it best: "But shall I live in hope?" / "All men, I hope, live so."[1]

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[1] William Shakespeare, *King Richard the Third*, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Plays*, ed. Arthur Henry Bullen (New York: Fall River Press, 2012 [1593]): 102 (I.ii). Duke of Gloster to Lady Anne.

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