G.A. Powell
Northern Virginia Community College
grhetoric@gmail.com

A Rhetoric of Mythology: A Barthesian Analysis of Marx's Revolutionary Prophecy

The purpose of the paper is to re-examine Marx's prophecy, essentially a critique of the exploited class's relation to capital vis-à-vis the ruling class. The application of Roland Barthes's rhetorical forms (*The Privation of History*, and *The Statement of Fact*) is a post-structural approach, offering nuanced understanding of Marx's "failed" messianic prophecy in which the proletariat rises and subverts the ruling class vis-à-vis revolution–and why, still to this day, the modern-day proletariat remains enslaved–*mythologized*, willfully abetting in their own exploitation. Critical to our investigation, then, is our understanding of mythology and how it repurposes ideology–naturalizes, sedates, then seduces the everyday order of things. To this end, the mythology examined is The Young Girl (TYG)–an apparatus of control, by way of Barthes's rhetorical forms. For the purposes of this paper, a brief overview of (1) Marx's prophecy is offered, followed by an examination of (2) the architectonics of Barthes's mythology and its rhetorical forms that interpolate the laborer. I then (3) discuss the mythology of TYG and finally (4) apply the rhetorical forms to the proletariat, so that a more nuanced understanding of why Marx's prophecy failed and continues to remain at bay.

Keywords: mythology, The Young Girl, The Privation of History, The Statement of Fact

> A little "confessed" evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil.
> Roland Barthes (1972)

Marx's Prophecy

My intent here is to offer a pithy explanation of Marx's revolutionary prophecy, emphasizing his transition from Hegelian idealism to a revolution grounded in scientific laws of history.

The historical evolution of Marx's prophecy for the proletariat is discursive, seeded in the fields of economics, philosophy, religion, socio-biology, and history, but above else in the ideological and material conditions that envelop class consciousness. Marx noted, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle…" (Marx & Engels 2002, 219). Marx's collective work was dedicated to human liberation from capitalistic structures and institutions that alienate humankind, particularly the proletariat. Engels noted at Marx's funeral, "His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being…" (Lawrence 1975, 467-468). Key in Engels's eulogy is [Marx's] emphasis on discursive systems and the socio-political conditions obstructing the proletariat's freedom. It goes without saying that Marx was sensitive to the proletariat's Sisyphusian condition; however, when Marx speaks of freedom and revolution, he is speaking of a collective human emancipation–in terms of their nature, species essence, and species being. That is, the proletariat and bourgeois alike must participate in a deliberate societal transformation based on socio-economic and political realism. Marx tried to reconcile this conflict by revising Hegel's dialectic, which he viewed as a logical cul-de-sac (Thesis–Antithesis–Synthesis in which the exploited class revolts against the ruling class, thus becoming the new iteration of the ruling class). Thus, any historical transformation must begin with and be guided by a universal *Geist* buttressed by socio-economic conditions to create the desired social transformation. Influencing Marx's revision of Hegel is Ludwig Feurbach's eleventh thesis. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it" (Colletti 1975, 423). Here, we see a more thoughtful and mature Marx whose vision of revolution was pragmatic, rooted in the synergy of Hegel's *Geist*, but also transcends it to include Feuerbach's declaration, whereby economic and socio-political relations serve as a pathway forward for human liberation (Parekh 1982, 73). It was in

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bon where Marx underscored the precarious foundation of human freedom that contains the necessary conditions for revolution.

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. (McLellan 1977, 300)

What is clear about Marx's later thinking about revolution and human liberation is that it is less utopian and illusionary than the Hegelian Marx, which transitioned from the Hegelian *Geist*–a metaphysical freedom, to one that is grounded in historical and material realism. Significant here is that Marx's envisage revolution is a movement that is not just governed by ideals but by material conditions that impact the proletariat's everydayness. In other words, there is no compromise between material practices and social relations as they inform one another.

Since Marx's prophecy, there were several short-lived revolutions across Europe (Seed 2010, 39) and one successful insurrection in Germany that was short-lived, suppressed by Weimar Republic, leaving many critical of Marx skeptical and Marxist theorists (Antonio Gramsci, T.W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Hertza Herzog, Walter Benjamin, Louis Althusser, et al.) optimistic about the future efficacy of Marx's prophecy but bemused by capitalism's ideological grip on the exploited class. The 20th and 21st centuries were and are replete with short-lived revolutions (Occupy–US, Arab Spring–North Africa, Umbrella–Hong Kong, Yellow Vest–France, Maidan Revolution–Ukraine) that dissipated into thin air. Regardless, Marx was convinced, revolutionary movements wouldn't stop until there was emancipation for all. In the last issue of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx's final declaration, written in red ink, was "…always and everywhere will be: *the emancipation of the working class*" (Fernback 1973, 264).

Marx's spectra still looms indeterminate, yesterday as it does today, although his critics point to history's ledger as conclusive proof of Marxism's impotence, passing him over as literary fancy and passé; however, post-Marxists such as Derrida, Foucault, Laclau, Mouffe,

Debord, Zizek, and others see the prospect of revolution as pending–glacial and more ideologically comprehensive than what Marx had in mind (Derrida 1994). Marx was correct concerning the importance of material conditions as a necessary condition for transformation that goes without saying; however, although aware, he still underestimated and was negligent of the seductive, ideological impact of what of Barthes later coined as the semiosphere (cultural mythology, technology, work, entertainment, art media) *even* in its most rudimentary form that straightjackets individual agency. Since Marx's passing, autonomist, analytical, and feminist camps critical of classical Marxism have yet to find a pathway forward on questions of nationalism, identity, agency, and human relations, rendering Marxism an inconclusive failed project that requires no further investigation.

To no fault of Marx and his critics, neither could understand or foresee the rhetorical and perverse underbelly of ideology. Even Marx was confounded and flustered with his own prophecy (Marx & Engels 1956). Where there is room for further research and discovery resides in the complexity and perversity of ideology, a space that current Marxist scholarship tiptoe around. Poststructuralism offers an alternative interpretation, transitioning from traditional formulas of ideology and agency to what Roland Barthes coined as mythology, a semiological critique that deconstructs the ideological apparatuses of mass-produced culture taken as the established order of things but in fact which are engineered (Barthes 1972). Ideology in this regard goes beyond the discovery of discursive systems that emphasize false consciousness to the rhetorical forms that *interpolate*, *re-present*, and forge false consciousness.

Barthes's Mythology: Architectonics

By architectonic of myth, I am referring to the ideological structure of mythologies. Mythologies are a second order sign system consisting of signifiers, signified, and signs. The sign from the first order of sign system becomes the signifier in the second order of sign systems. Structurally, we can say a myth is a semiological chain containing the Signifier II (first order: signifier + signified = sign)–signified and the sign in which meaning shifts from denotative to connotative signified

is not fixed; rather, it is generative, *ad infinitum*, as meaning is a process of linguistic word play–dressed up and naturalized as truth. "What must always be remembered is that myth is a double system; there occurs in it a sort of ubiquity: its point of departure is constituted by the arrival of a meaning" (Barthes 1972, 123). The perversity that lies in that meaning stays the same by fundamentally changing. It is an arsenal of allusive fun-house mirrors, re-presenting "socio-political progress" that subdues consciousness, then naturalizes the eyes. If seeing is believing, an ideology's ubiquity is proof of its naturalness, no different than those taken-for-granted natural laws supporting our everydayness. Ideology is the cultural gray matter by which History–an unstable and uncontested signifier–materializes, re-invoking a Hegelian false equivalent (History and Progress). Understandably, History and Progress are taken synonymously, transubstantiated into Myth, dwelling in the divine semiosphere, where their "in-visibility" is both proof of their existence and non-existence. Consider, for example, the Easter Bunny, or any "cultural fiction." Parents know that the Tooth Fairy is fictitious but are complicit and perpetuate its existence for the kid's sake. Time passes, kids mature–recognizing the fabrication of the Tooth Fairy, becoming parents themselves. The irony is no one denounces the Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus, or the Easter Bunny altogether; they just exist without existing. Myth operates in the same way; it blends into the natural order of things. Although the Easter Bunny and Tooth Fairy are isolated cultural examples, the greater point articulated is that myth naturalizes social reality, from the mundane to the extraordinary and everything in-between. Nothing exists beyond myth.

Key in Barthes's discussion of mythology is that mythologies aren't semantically static; they always signify more than themselves. Second myths owe their legitimization to the metaphysics of language. It is impossible to perceive the world as is; 'what is' is always filtered and mediated through language games. As such, there is an ontological chasm between *the world as is* and *the world as perceived*. Ideology conceals those real conditions, revealing an imaginary relationship, made real to those enveloped by the myth. To this end, myths are historical, socially engineered, ideological signs that eventually take *form* and *become*, repeating the semantic cycle *ad infinitum*. The

meaning that constitutes one's everydayness is metaphorically best understood as the subtle transition from one color to the next on the visible spectrum. Zooming in, the eye is blind and finds it difficult to detect changes in wavelengths, so there is an element of sameness where perception is concerned. (This may extend to how ideology and meaning cooperate.) Zooming out, with little difficulty, the eye sees distinctions between the colors. However, if we zoom in *ad infinitum*, we don't perceive colors representative of spectrum, nor do we see pure light. Pure light is invisible. What one always perceives is the reflection of light, i.e., color spectrum, and its relationship to the object. Ideology works similarly. We only perceive the various *forms* of discourse. What is, *becomes* is in relation to the reflection of *forms* that naturalizes the person's everydayness. By *form* and *becomes*, Barthes has in mind the medium–how mythology, or truth for that matter, *are* mediated (radio, poster, print, television, film, celebrity, speech acts, art) and the rhetorical and tactics or discourse by which myth *becomes* or materializes–taking both a material and psychological presence in one's everydayness (Storey 1996).

For Barthes, if ideology effective it must address the ideological subjects' subjective position, their *raison d'être*–it must make use of the mediums that rapture the soul to create the ideological or mythical subject who is both altogether *religiously interpolated* both in (S) peech and (D)isposition = (H)abitus, reinforcing a corpus of hegemonic codes. *In Mythologies*, Barthes (1972, 36) explores psychoanalytical and religious signifiers (purification, evil, fire, foam, and spirituality) associated with the use of everyday cleaning agents, specifically soap powder. *Soap powder* signifies more than just a cleaning agent ridding dirt from garments. Soap powder cleanses and purifies and extricates dirt/evil from that which is naturally clean/good in its original state. Symbolically, we can say the individual laundering with soap powder is consubstantiated with the cleaning agents and is transformed by performing the ritual, whereby becoming the mythological subject. The same is true regarding The Holy Eucharist in which the body (wafer) and blood (wine) of Christ are reified through consummation. Mythologies aren't a matter of fanatical interpretation or the naïve; they stretch the spectrum of belief in which their illusion becomes more fundamental to

everyday ongoings of social life than the actual ongoings—no one goes untouched. In *The Essence of Christianity* Ludwig Feuerbach noted, "But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to things signified the copy to the original representation to reality" (Feuerbach 1989, xiii). To determine whether a myth is credulous is to entirely miss the point. Myths make natural and smoothly facilitate the passage of ideology to the lived everydayness.

Bringing closure to the architectonics of mythology, I have explained the ideological composition of mythology, with emphasis on the second order sign system and the generative relationship between the signifier and signified, in which truth is engineered as Truth. I have also discussed psychoanalytical and religious dimensions of myth. Allusive in their own right, the purpose of these dimensions is to fundamentally attune the ideological subject to particular versions of the world as re-presented. In the ensuing section, I will discuss how myth, rhetorically, transforms signification into form, thus interpolating the bourgeoise's everydayness.

Barthes's Mythology: Rhetorical Forms

My use of rhetorical forms certainly recognizes and is inclusive of Barthes discourse on ancient rhetoric but shifts more toward his application of rhetorical tropes to semiology in which the signifier and the signified are always in relation with, and to, the metaphysical "historicity" of the myth. Barthes (1972) outlined seven dialectical forms by which myth envelops the bourgeois: (1) inoculation, (2) the privation of history, (3) identification, (4) tautology, (5) neither/nor-ism, (6) the quantification of quality, and (7) the statement of fact. Common to each form is that they are generative tools that bespeak a mythological essence, interpolating the proletariat by which the consumer becomes mythologized. The privation of history and the statement of fact are rhetorical apparatuses that will be applied to our understanding of the proletariat's relations to capital, M-C-M. This point will be further discussed in the Mythology of The Young Girl (TYG). Seeded in the proletariat's relation to capital are unconscious motivations, feelings of unreality, a yearning for a fantasy, where reality is stripped from absolute meaning and is neologized, whereby a new order of meaning

and signification is represented. Rhetorically speaking, myths do not necessarily conceal by means of duplicitous tactics–they adjust the prescription by which the proletariat's eyes confirm what is prescribed as Truth; in other cases, they just blind them with "Truth," where seeing gives way to gazing. We can say, therefore, the proletariat's perpetual enslavement is no different from the magician who continuously amazes through misdirection of the motor senses, particularly eyesight. The proletariat says to himself–*de ja vu*…"I've seen this act a number of times and know how this plays out, but yet I still watch in awe." In this manner, ideology *appears* to be effective, precisely because the spectator is inside the act–a part of the act, wherein he must play the role and play it well. Continuing with the metaphor, ideology as dramatist, ideology doesn't exist outside itself, it is the entire production–lighting and stage crews, producers, audience, and so forth. Everyone knows their roles and plays them well.

In short, I have classified myth as a second order of signification and connotation in which a myth is produced. Myths can be understood as a body of practices, a grammar and rhetoric of being that reinforce the hegemony's order of things. To this end, I've identified seven rhetorical apparatuses that Barthes uses to expose mythology. Of the seven, two were selected (the privation of history and the statement of fact) due to their psychoanalytic efficacy in which reality and fantasy, for the proletariat, are no longer distinguishable.

Mythology of The Young Girl

The least concrete definition of TYG is that s/he is akin to what Foucault understands as bio-power–discursive apparatuses of social control that inform individual sovereignty (Foucault 2008). By extension, TYG is an apparatus and psycho-political weapon engineered by the hegemony to discreetly manage the consumers' socio-economic and political interests (Tiqqun 2012). On the contrary, the most concrete thing we can say about TYG is that "[S]he is simply the insubstantial concretion of all these abstractions that precede and follow her. In other words, she is a purely ideological creature of capital" (Tiqqun 2012, 17, 66). In either case, due to the nature of ideology, s/he is at best a symbolic re-presentation of power, a transient, transgressive

chain of socio-economic signs that exerts its black magic to maintain the established order of things. To say anything about this "witch" is to simultaneously speak her into and out of existence; she is both permanence and change, the whip and the loofah, dominated and the dominator, a metaphysical constellation of bipolar relations that facilitates diversion and desire, representing the newest iteration of capital. In one of TYG's recognizable forms, her nucleus contains three empirical socioeconomic relational elements: M-C-M; however, TYG represents one of many historical periods in the ideological evolution and *representation* of capital's visage. M-C-M is its core structural arrangement; however, capital's visage is no different than a chance pull at a slot machine lever, with each outcome revealing nouveau/exotic facial and disciplinary makeovers (e.g., education, finance, religion, family, housing, medicine) of capital that amount to the same foundational iteration of M-C-M. Bringing closure to our discussion concerning TYG, three statements of observation can be gleaned from our definition and Tiqqun's analysis of the TYG. These statements are purposeful in that they illustrate the symbolic means by which the proletariat is seduced by TYG and willfully capitulates to voluntary servitude.

(1) TYG is asexual and is also a synonym for capital (and is used interchangeably throughout this analysis). Her very essence is the tautological structure of all social relations because she is a social relation–spectacle–by which the proletariat identifies their everydayness. Each social relation is a rhetorical form contributing to the same *telos*–a moral discourse that naturalizes voluntary servitude.

(2) For TYG, rhetoric is a discourse of seduction, the *textual* teasing and playful arrangements of signifiers and signified(s) in order to myth-make, so it follows that by rhetoric we mean two things: TYG's use of media as well as the discourse within the text to seduce. By medium, I have in mind vectors that not only channel information to the receiver but produce and reproduce discourse through spectacles. And by discourse, I mean the spoken and written word or media used to influence behavior.

(3) TYG is asexual in the biological sense of things; however, media is critical to her ability to reproduce and circulate myth for

public consumption. Functioning as a filter between the bourgeois and the world as represented, media consolidates power, manufactures discourse, and governs the consumption of content through spectacles, which the proletariat consumes. Consumption is not an antagonistic experience, the force-feeding of information, dreams, and images into submission; it is "an active, creative and productive process, concerned with *pleasure* [emphasis added], identity and the production of meaning" (Storey 1996, 98). Its main purpose is to infantilize the consumer with narratives of appeasement, each narrative appearing aesthetically different but performing identical ideological functions. Media, by definition, takes on different forms and, in doing so, provides varying filtered experiences that unify, by which the individual not only comes into relation with myth but uniformly becomes the ideological subject of myth. Thus, the purpose of the media is to produce a uniform populace, transforming them into an ideological subject through mass-produced discourse that reinforces a particular myth in which their entire *being* is emptied and filled with the governing ideology.

In the following section, my attention turns toward the application of TYG and her use of rhetorical forms. Rhetorical forms are *types* of discourse and techniques that induce persuasion, whereby the proletariat voluntarily enlists his servitude. Therefore, the value of Barthes's rhetoric allows us to perform a post-structural autopsy of the Myth so that we may see the innerworkings of it, mytheme by mytheme. That is, we are mostly interested in the *liminal space* whereby mythemes become Myth. *Privation of History*, *Statement of Fact Linguistic*, and *Statement of Fact Material* occupy that liminal space by which the proletariat becomes interpolated–becoming a part of the Myth.

Application of Rhetorical Forms

TYG: Privation of History

Privation of history is the process by which history and Myth become consubstantiated, timeless, and take on a metaphysics of presence–it is a discourse that vacuums up all counter-discourse and debate. Barthes was clear when he stated, "Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History. In it, history evaporates" (2012, 151), and magically is replaced by pseudo histories that function as a timeless paradigm by

which all discourse is promoted as God-speak. Consider the following examples of Black Lives Matter (BLM), Anti-Fascist (ANTIFA), or any ethnic minority group or dissident movement voicing discontent about American Exceptionalism; the legitimacy of the "Other's" voice *instantly* falls on deaf ears and is viewed as radical, terrorist, and a perversion of American Exceptionalism, or the Myth in question. Why? Quite simply, Myth/History is already complete and divinely made perfect. Any attempt to deconstruct the natural order of things is framed as sacrilege, although the "Other's" voice, and their speech acts of revolt and protest are legitimate. As a consequence, the Other is *scapegoated* by the hegemony in such a way that confirms the Other's *antagonistic* relationship to the God-spoken Myth. It is precisely this timeless narrative saga of good versus evil that legitimizes Myth. Be it Marx's proletariat or any alternative voice that challenges Myth, Myth needs a protagonist/hero (hegemony) and an antagonist/villain (Other) for the narrative to retain its legitimacy (Propp 1968). As is the case with Myth, the protagonist remains the same; however, the antagonist varies. Similarly, TYG is the consummate thespian–like Myth, she is as old as she is young. This is not her first rodeo. "[She is] the eternal return of the same styles in fashion.… The Young Girl does not play with appearances. It is appearances that play with her" (Tiqqun 2012, 35). To say that TYG is timeless is an understatement. She is encountered in the Biblical account of The Fall, Hesiod's *Work and Days*, Etienne de La Boetie's *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, Karl Marx's *The German Ideology*, Juliet Schor's *The Overspent American*, Byung-Chul Han's *Psychology-politics*, and McKenzie Wark's *Capital is Dead*. Common to each discourse on capital, we find a "fall in line" mentality, and other various types of totalitarianism: Information regime and disciplinary regime, and those tactics that regulate behavior (Han 2022, 4). Perhaps few have captured the universal essence on the unvarnished truth about the laborer's relation with the TYG than Emile Zola and Karl Marx.

Emile Zola (1969) reminded us that work and existence are inextricably bound to one another. There is no other reason for existence but work; we all come into being only to do our share of work and disappear. While Zola emphasized the *telos* of work insofar that work's ultimate end is to preserve and ensure the ongoing survival

of the species, Marx underscores the socio-economic relationship of capital in three points: (1) The laborer's effort is monetized in the form of wages; (2) he does not own what is produced, so in order for the worker to survive, he too must use his wages to consume; and finally (3) his labor increasingly becomes *detached* from ordinary needs and becomes attached to conspicuous consumption (Eagleton 1997). Thus, alienation emerges–a byproduct of capitalism in which the laborer is external to his work. That is, he does not find himself in his work; rather, his identity and meaning is found in the things that he consumes. All the while lingering is the sad irony that the laborer works to work, as it is a means to an end–their biological–material survival depends on it. Marx was clear about species survival when he stated, "Life [and his dependency on those economic and structural relations] involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing, and many other things" (Marx & Engels 2001, 48). Capital, among many things, signifies a structural relation of domination, and exposes how voluntary servitude becomes the primary means of survival, to the extent that the laborer's use-value is leveraged against their exchange-value. This conflict is one way of ensuring that the *telos* of human nature remains an abstraction (Eagleton 1997, 18). Marx wrote:

> Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become species-being in his empirical life, his individual work, and his individual relationships, only when man has recognized and organized his *forces propres* as social forces so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of political force, only then will human emancipation be completed. (Holt 2009, 35)

Marx's emphasis on *species-being* speaks to a larger issue regarding human nature–consciousness and freedom, but specifically to the proletariat's crises of labor, social life, and identity, whereby specialized labor, coupled with the forces of production, divorce man from his everydayness. On species-being and freedom, Eagleton noted,

> We are free when, like artists, we produce, without the goad of physical necessity... My product is my existence for me. This for Marx is an ontological truth, which

> follows from the kind of creatures we are; but it is possible for certain forms of social life to drive a wedge between these two dimensions of the self [and this] is what the young Marx means by alienation. (Eagleton 1997, 27)

Species-being and freedom, disguised as TYG, is the metaphoric, aspirational carrot that presents as reachable but is always out of grasp. It is in the *pursuit* of emancipation and self-actualization that the laborer is re-trained, re-educated, and enslaved from the cradle to the grave, in which class consciousness assuages any feelings of exploitation. To this end, we can say the proletariat vis-à-vis privation of history perceives themselves and re-imagines their *being* in relation to the world vis-à-vis consumption–actual and imaginary. This psychoanalytical effect is called spectacle.

Spectacle

Our attention now seeks to identify the dragnet, or spectacle, produced by TYG by which the laborer is seduced, lured, and seeks meaning in concrete abstractions. Originally published in 1967 under the title of *La société du spectacle*, the manifesto is in many ways Guy Debord's ethnographic account of modernity since Marx. Where Marx was concerned with means of production, Debord shifts his observation to include the *modern conditions of production.* "The entire life of societies which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles" (Debord 1970, 3). By modern conditions, Debord, similar to Barthes's rhetorical forms, has in mind–*types* of discourses and techniques that induce complicity to Myth. Specifically, where the spectacle is concerned, I'm mostly observant of *techniques* (posters, leaflets, listicles, and so forth) used by the hegemony that simplify the laborer's everydayness to a chain of invisible signifiers and signifieds–"-isms," "-ologies," and binaries, reinforcing a particular way of *being* and *doing* in the world. Said in another way, unbeknownst to the proletariat, the hegemony uses the spectacle to stealthily uncloak his agency, and in its place, he is given and proudly sports various designer *marionette threads* by which he anonymously and seamlessly switches from one scene, costume, and character role to the next. If the spectacle is the piecemeal parts and

total of all social relations, then the proletariat is the sum of what constitutes dramaturgy. (Labor/leisure, laborer/consumer, need/desire, knowledge/information, satiation/gluttony, and history/myth are no longer distinguishable in the spectacle.) Even the laborer's role–more specifically, his material being–melds into a consumer/indentured servant whose eyes are transfixed on *panem et circenses*. "The [laborer] is both production and a factor of production; that is, she is the consumer, the producer, the consumer of producers, and the producer of consumers" (Tiqqun 2012, 65). Every aspect central to the laborer's relations to work is "made over" and glamorized by the spectacle in which he identifies himself in his objects of passion, an endless pilgrimage that promises a spiritual purification. Seen through the lens of the spectacle, there is an ontological distance from the spectacle and what it promises. We must remember that desire as is TYG is aspirational, never realized. It is the ever swaying carrot–just out of reach–that controls the proletariat. Tiqqun said it best, "Between the Young-Girl and the world there is a window. Nothing touches The Young-Girl, The Young-Girl touches nothing" (2012, 53). Desire is what fuels the proletariat's incessant lust for spectacle. Similarly, TYG's mere existence, her evolution, is contingent on transference of the parasitic relationship between desire and spectacle and her ability to re-present herself to the laborer in the marketplace of consumption, in which she is only desired but never actually consumed. Creating a Sebaldian vertigo, the laborer's being is consubstantiated with the spectacle and crystalized in a permanent historical aesthetic. For the proletariat, History, the record of time, and those events that constitute human affairs evaporate in the same way that ideology becomes white noise; similarly, spectacles leave no evidence, no trace of origin. It simply is there without being there. Void of Historical record or fact, the spectacle empties out the laborer's facticity, and in its place pours-in imaginary narratives that emancipate him from his given History; in his eyes, he is not bound to Historical materialism, class struggle, alienation, and so forth. Barthes noted,

> Myth presents itself in an ambiguous way: it is at the same time meaning and form, full on one side, and empty on the other.… [W]hen it becomes form, the meaning

> leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates [and replenishes itself]. (1972, 117)

Myth symbolically purifies, redeems, baptizing away the proletariat's history whereby he is given a new History. Constant disciplinary tactics such as authority, whips, chains, and co-presence are replaced with interconnections, loofahs and sponges, autonomy and superpositions, which are just as invasive (Han 2022, 4). Ironically, the more he *feels* and *thinks* of himself as free, the tighter his shackles become and the louder his chains rattle. The proletariat is seduced by the Spectacle's tautological nature; everything that he sees references his ideological essence (e.g., digital montages, NFTs, pop-ups, idioms, neologisms, bumper stickers, double speak). Rhetorically speaking, tautologies are linguistic/symbolic cul-de-sacs, environments that reinforce Myth. Guy Debord noted,

> The basic tautological character of the spectacle flows from the simple fact that its means are at the same time its goal. It is the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory. (1967, 13)

To bring closure to our discussion on the Privation of History, I have made several points that clarify the laborer's voluntarily servitude. The Spectacle is constituted through Myth's material and ideological relations to the proletariat by which he is interpolated. Simultaneously, the laborer assumes the role of both the exploiter and exploited; but even more substantial, where myth is concerned, as the mythologist, he becomes trapped in his own mythology, where both entry and exit points are and form tautological cul-de-sacs, i.e. Statement of Facts (SoF)

(1). Myth in relation to History is divinely complete and can't be altered. Each dramatic episode presents a predictable scenario in which the villain/Other (antagonist) attempts to usurp the hero/hegemony (protagonist). It is precisely the recycled failed attempts at revolution that legitimize history as History. Thus, we see privation of history as the narrative structure (act, setting, plots, climax, spectacle, and so forth), by which all Mythologies are dramatized.

(2). Within the mythological structure, the proletariat doesn't realize they are part of the Mythology, more specifically the spectacle, so they perceive themselves as autonomous beings striving for freedom, not realizing that any progress vis-à-vis counter-discourse, dissent, or revolution has already been factored by the hegemony.

(3). The hegemony weaponizes the spectacle to purify and baptize away the proletariat's given history in order to remold him in his own interest.

Statements of Fact Linguistic

SoF for Barth are those declaratives statements that are tautological in nature; however, where they differ from tautologies, is that SoF are based on common sense, removing the burden of proof or responsibility from the proletariat to apply critical reason. SoF are always made to seem obvious since they are simplistic, easy to consume, and encourage participation and civic engagement. Consider, for example, the *Paris Match* (1955) image of the Negro boy saluting the French flag, Barthes observed:

> …French imperialism condemns the saluting Negro to be nothing more than an instrumental signifier, the Negro suddenly hails me in the name of French imperialism; but at the same moment the Negro's salute thickens, becomes verified, freezes into an eternal reference meant to establish French imperialism. (Barthes 1972, 116)

There are any number of possible readings by which the image may be interpreted–from the mythologist who designs the mythology to the passerby, who's likely to see the image as the commonwealth's demonstration of French patriotism, which is naïve and to be ignorant of History's ledger. We must remember that SoF work by omission and provide just enough recognizable cultural clues to disrupt alternative readings to keep the proletariat in perpetual obedience that may usurp the master narrative.

SoF is a type of *linguistic* and *material* poaching that shares a common ground with privation of history. It straight-jackets language–the reversion of connotation to denotation, whereby meaning becomes

structurally bound through reflexive speech. We can say SoF is the exercise of myth through an absolute vocabulary. SoF purifies [h]istory, makes it natural, ordains it, and gives it an essence just by its aura, reinforcing a body of essential truths that we organize our lives around. It is the linguistic shift from semiology to ideology. "Myths tend towards proverbs. Bourgeois ideology invests in this figure interests, which are bound to its very essence universalism, the refusal of any explanation, and unalterable universalism" (Barthes 1972, 3, 154). SoF linguistically may take on the suffixes -ology, -ness, -ism, and -ity. These codes transform an idiosyncratic statement to one that is simplistic. SoF's, no different than other rhetorical forms mentioned, does not conceal ideology nor does not hide it. SoF's become statements of facts because the proletariat learns to live with them; it–they become his language, his attitude, his nature, essentially his *being-in-the world*. In other words, he is de-natured from his natural state, and in his new state he is Mythologized /Naturalized. By Naturalization, I draw upon one's naivete to any number of complex bio-chemical and electrical laws responsible for a simple act or gesture (e.g., yawn, scratching of the head, blinking of the eye). SoF function in a similar way. Things happen because that's just the way they happened and have always happened. Second, they are so commonsensical that they are taken to be true, and to apply reason leads one to all types of logical fallacies, and still, those fallacious facts are taken to be true.

Statements of Fact Material

SoF rarely exist in isolation; they are buried in images, mainly advertisement. For the mythologist, this is critical for several reasons. First, it helps one identify the parameters of the myth; second, within its parameters, the laborer–consumer of the myth–can re-imagine and invest their factical self within the myth's narrative structure. Referencing the proletariat's relationship to ideology, Parekh noted "...the proletariat always aspires towards the truth, and even in its 'false' consciousness and in its substantive errors" (1982, 167). Considering both Barthes's description and operationalization of SoF and Parekh's psychoanalysis of its impact on the proletariat, we find the proletariat consubstantiated with myth but always at a *palpable*

distance. It is this strategic distancing in which the proletariat's demand for illusion and actualization are intermittently satisfied, so even in bad faith, he is still obedient. Dmitry Stakhievich Orlov's, Marxist poster "Have you signed up as a volunteer?" is an excellent example of *palpable distance* in terms of its physical positioning to the passerby and its ideological mandate. Front and centered on the poster is an intense soldier with daggered eyes, pointing his finger at eye level to the passerby. Printed on the poster is an interrogative "Have you signed up as a volunteer?" Both the image and slogan are coercive, as the image casts shadow and shame on those who are not willing to fight for their homeland. *Palpable distance* both literally and metaphysically transubstantiates the poster's materiality/ rhetorical form and hegemonic codes (Russian motherland, as there is no higher duty than to fight and die for one's homeland) into messianic form by which myth interpolates the proletariat's soul inducing a call to service (see Figure 1). Lead curator Katya Rogatchevskaia's collection, *Russian Revolution: Hope, Tragedy, Myths*, is a series of posters reflecting the Bolsheviks' (laborers) messianic drive to reach a mythical future (Brandon-Salmon 2017).

Palpable distance creates mythic space. Due to the laborer's fictional relation to the myth, his identity is part of an imaginative arrangement of signifiers that communicate an essential truth; even if it's in bad faith, the proletariat throws himself into the infinite in hopes of seeking and identifying an essential truth that satisfies our *raison d'être.* Marx contextualized truth within an *idealistic* framework of human existence. Because of the proletariat's ability to not only satisfy needs (i.e., intellectual, material, social) but transcend them, he exercises an imaginary freedom–free from those conditions that seek to subjugate him. Requiring more than his given history can offer, the proletariat conjures in his mind a new History, one that satiates his total capacity for living. This is but one example of SoF's power and the ability to use the materiality of the image as a network of signs and symbols working in concert with the second order of meaning to reinforce an irrational mythology. Wislawa Szymborska's poem "Utopia" aptly describes the image's hypnotic prowess:

> Island where all becomes clear. Solid ground beneath your feet…. The Tree of Understanding, dazzlingly straight and simple sprouts by the spring called Now I Get It…. On the right a cave where Meaning lies. On the left the Lake of Deep Conviction. Truth breaks from the bottom and bobs to the surface.… Its peak offers an excellent view of the Essence of Things… (1995, 127)

Szymborska's poem speaks to the SoF as a "counter-explanation" or a "decorous tautology," a second order of semiology in which ideological properties of language and images, together, function as a veneer or cover-up that diverts and alienates the laborer from his everydayness, inducing cooperation consistent with the dominant ethos. (As an aside, can we blame the proletariat's blind allegiance to servitude? Why rebel against a system in which all material and emotional needs are satisfied?) Maurice Merleau-Ponty aptly identified the process of mythical enslavement as a phenomenological progression, whereby the senses are in total obedience to the imagination. "An integral part of seeing something is that we can only grasp by touching it with our gaze. The gaze shrouds the visible things, it touches them and mixes itself in with them" (1994, 175). The gaze is directed by SoF that bring into focus the ideological essence and metaphysical value of the object in question. Consubstantiated, SoF and objects mythologize–enacting not only as a modality of *being-in-the-world* but as a way of *doing-in-the-world*. Where the laborer is concerned, he is bated with a variety of mythic forms. Signifiers such as popular songs, storytelling, proverbs, fables, and cinema all mediate and signify a reality, where discourse crystalizes and takes on imaginary properties that construct his everydayness. We must remember that the proletariat dwells in the semiosphere of Myth by which his total being is anonymized.

Bringing closure to our discussion on SoF and their relationship to Myth, I have highlighted the following points:

(1.) SoF exist in two forms: linguistic and material. By linguistic, I have in mind those self-evident rhetorical directives that are commonsensical, absolving the passerby the responsibility of the use of critical reasoning. Here, SoF are not necessarily logical verifications of what is; no, SoF reflect the proletariat's relationship between the imagined and the real world, by which a final vocabulary is established–it is the final shift from semiology to ideology.

(2). SoF material is the physical form/manifestation of their linguistic counterpart, existing in various rhetorical forms by which the text is laden with value and moral directives. Dmitry Stakhievich Orlov's Marxist poster "Have you signed up as a volunteer?", for example, makes use of palpable distance as a strategic means of interpolation. Spatially, the poster is positioned in such a way that the passerby gaze is fixed to the heavens, signifying the proletariat is in communion with and seeking direction from the absolute divine. The verbiage, *"Have you signed up as a volunteer?"* is not so much an interrogative as it's an imperative. No different than an adult admonishing a child, pulling him by the ear.

Conclusion

Begetting Marx's prophecy is above all a timeless truism that can't be overstated. To receive liberation, man must be able to live to "make history" (Marx 1993, 48). Before everything else, "life involves eating and drinking, habitation, clothing, and many other things." Perhaps Jamison was more clairvoyant than Marx when he stated, "It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism" (1994, xxii).

Perhaps the delay in prophecy had little to do with Marx's self-delusion and has more to do with the glacial pace of revolution. Marx was correct concerning the need for social change, and the reasons are well documented, so the verdict is not conclusive whether a paradigmatic revolutionary shift will come. What this paper conveys is that a further autopsy is needed to understand the socio-political complexities of Marx's project, and there is still much to learn beyond the traditional explanations that mire heuristic understanding and praxis. Barthes's semiology is heuristic and resuscitates the conversation by placing emphasis on the didactical relationship between psychoanalysis and mythology. Several points were gleaned from this approach:

1. Barthes semiology and rhetorical forms as generative tools, which bespeaks a mythological essence. Mythology then seduces the proletariat, emphasizing the psychoanalytical process by which he becomes interpolated and shackled as an indentured servant of capital.

2. Capital, M-C-M, is not enough to induce servitude; it must have an aura–TYG is the ever-shifting, ideological re-presentation of capital and apparatus of control that reinforces the laborer's unyielding allegiance.
3. Privation of history and Statements of Fact (physical and metaphysical) are rhetorical forms–the mythological discourse by which the TYG consubstantiates their being with history.
4. Ideology may exist in a variety of rhetorical forms or not–the spectacle is a seductive apparatus of control (TYG) constructed by the hegemony to induce complicity and community among the proletariat.
5. SoF primarily exist in two forms–linguistic and material–but mainly work in concert to achieve a final vocabulary and epistemology by which history is de-natured, and in their stead is a new History that reinforces a body of essential Truths that the proletariat organizes their lives around. It is the linguistic shift from semiology to ideology.

Figure 1: Red Army recruitment poster. Public domain
https://www.bl.uk/russian-revolution/articles/propaganda-in-the-russian-revolution

Work Cited

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

Brandon-Salmon, Altair. "A Mythical Future': Katya Rogatchevskaia on the Russian Revolution",2017.https://cherwell.org/2017/11/14/a-mythical-future-katya-rogatchevskaia-on-the-russian-revolution/ (accessed October 21, 2022).

Colletti, Lucio. "Introduction." In *Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Early Writings*. Penguin, 1975.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Milwaukee, WI: Pattern Books, 1967 and 1970.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

Eagleton, Terry. *The Great Philosophers: Marx.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Fernbach, D. *Revolutions of 1848, Political Writings*. Vol.1, ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1989.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979 (Lectures at the College de France*). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Infocracy: Digitization and the Crisis of Democracy.* New York: Verso, 2022.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and the New Technologies of Power.* New York: Verso, 2017.

Holt, Justin. *Karl Marx's Philosophy of Nature, Action and Society: A New Analysis.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Lawrence, Wishart (ed.). *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, 50 Vols. London, 1975-2000.

Marx, Karl. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.* Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1859], 1993. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. "The Communist Manifesto." In *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Collected Works*, 477-519. Vol. 6. London, England: Lawrence Wishart, [1848], 2010.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology*, *Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three*, together with Marx's *"Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy."* New York: International Publishers, 2001.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Holy Family, Or Critique of Critical Critique.* Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956.

McLellan, David. *Marx: Selected Writings. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Das Sichtbare und das Unsichtbare.* München: Fink, 1994.

Orlov, Stakhievich. "Have you signed up as a volunteer?" 1920. Poster.

Parekh, Bhikhu. *Marx's Theory of Ideology.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.

Seed, John. *Marx: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

Storey, John. *Cultural Studies & the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods.* Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.

Szymborska, Wislawa. *A View with a Grain of Sand.* New York: Harcourt, 1995.

Tiqqun. *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl. Semiotext(e).* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012.

Zola, Emile. "Discours au Banquet de l'Association générale des étudiants, 18 mai 1893." In Œuvres *Complètes, Tome XII*, edited by Henri Mitterand, 677-83. Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1969.