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The Dialectics of Borders, Empires and Limens

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ABSTRACT

Borders are central to empires. Empires make borders, ignore, enforce and transgress them. None of this is new. What is new is a new kind of empire, an empire of globalization, to use the current euphemism. More honestly descriptive, capital comprises the empire of the early twenty-first century. Metaphorically, its borders form a Great Wall of Capital as Mike Davis (2005) dubbed it. The great wall of capital transcribes the globe in a vaguely north-south orientation. The commodities cross the threshold of the factory to enter a marketplace, where buyers and sellers exchange them so that the commodities cross another threshold, that between buyers and sellers. At this point the capitalist realizes his profit and puts it into a bank (another threshold), ready for reinvestment, another threshold that starts the process anew. In the empire of capital every threshold, or limen, is a border to be crossed, and most importantly, every limen or border in the global empire of capital is fundamentally formed by the capitalist process of production.

Keywords: Tourism. Capitalism. Mobility. Passports. Liminality.

RESUMO

A Dialética das Fronteiras, Impérios e Liminaridade. As fronteiras são fundamentais aos impérios. Impérios demarcam fronteiras para fazê-las cumprir, mas tambám para as ignorar e as transgredir. Nada disto é novo. Novo é o tipo de império, o império da globalização, para usar o eufemismo corrente. Mais precisamente, o capital é o império desse início de século XXI. Metaforicamente, suas fronteiras formam a Grande Muralha da Capital, como Mike Davis (2005) as apelidou. A grande muralha do capital divide o globo, vagamente, no sentido norte-sul. As *commodities* cruzam o limiar da fábrica para entrar em um mercado onde as trocas entre compradores e vendedores de deem, mas as mercadorias cruzam outro limite. Neste ponto, o capitalista recebe seu lucro e o coloca em um banco (outro limiar), pronto para reinvestimento, que reinicia o processo.

Palavras-chave: Turismo. Capitalismo. Mobilidade. Passaportes. Liminaridade.

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No império do capital cada limiar, ou limen, é uma fronteira a ser atravessada e, mais importante, cada limen ou fronteira no império global do capital é fundamentalmente formado pelo processo de produção capitalista.

INTRODUCTION

The empire has several centers; among them are Wall Street in New York City, Washington DC, the City of London, Tokyo, and maybe a few others. Capital's borders are ever shifting as the needs of capital are dynamic. This bordering wall permits empirical observation only on the local level, because its expanse requires abstraction for comprehension. Therefore to write of the borders of the empire of capital and its liminality means continually shifting between the concrete, empirically accessible micro-level to its abstract, global, macro-level - somewhat vertiginous, but necessary nonetheless. Victor W. Turner started what became a small industry in liminality when he recouped and elaborated Arnold Van Gennep's (1960) concept developed as part of the latter's study of rites of passage. Turner noted that during rites of passage, "the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1969, p.94).

The same applies to travelers who cross the borders of empire. Limens and borders both separate and tie together disparate sectors of society. This dialectical function of borders and limens applies to structural social positions and to classes. In fact it makes the positions relational. They function in this way to create a "human bond, without which there could be *no* society. Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed" (p.97). Those on the threshold can observe the function from a perspective unavailable to those on either side. Turner argued that because of its dialectical function, liminality was anti-structural and a manifestation of *communitas* — a sense of togetherness and equality in the human condition.

Turner's association of liminality with communitas and anti-structure, however, grasps only one part of the dialectic. Turner's limen is the aspect of liminality that ties together. He neglects its separating function.

> Take, for instance, the borders in Palestine. This is Derek Gregory's characterization of them in and around the occupied territories, and arguably all of Palestine is an occupied territory. The occupied territories have been turned into twilight zones, caught in a frenzied cartography of mobile frontiers rather than fixed boundaries. These enforce a violent fragmentation and recombination of time and space, which is nothing less than a concerted attempt to disturb and derange the normal rhythms of everyday Palestinian life (Gregory 2004, pp.131-2).

Gregory then continues by comparing these limens that crisscross Palestine to Giorgio Agamben's (1995) philosophical essay, grounded in the Nazi concentration camps and their containment of *Homo sacer*— bare life. "As the splinters of Palestine form the shattered space of the exception, punctuated by the power-topologies of a colonial necropolitics, it seems clear that 'third spaces' and paradoxical spaces are not necessarily sites of emancipation (SOJA 1996)" (Gregory 2004, p.134).

Travelers, tourists and others, enter liminal space-time upon crossing borders. In some cases, the borders are subtle, with little or no physical presence to act as guides and reminders of the liminal state. In other times and places—the Wall in Palestine, the Berlin Wall and Checkpoint

Charlie, the killing zone between the fences in Nazi concentration camps, and the anti-immigration wall between Mexico and the United States (Nevis 2002)—the limen operates as a sieve, a semi-permeable membrane that allows free passage for some but not others. The borders that are less visible still appear clear to socially perceptive travelers when they traverse neighborhood boundaries in cities such as Chicago. In these latter, subtler border crossings, there are no physical walls, armed border guards, or other paraphernalia of what Gregory aptly called *necropolitics*. Such neighborhood boundaries remain no less real. Moreover, they replicate at a micro level the same globalized politics as those of a grimmer visage.

Tourists are the privileged border crossers. Their privilege arises from their position in the world capitalist system (Wallerstein, 2004), the empire of capital. They move at will, regulated, but still able to cross borders so long as they have two commodities — passports from appropriate authorities and money. Those two commodities make tourists the ritual passengers, as Turner put it. They participate in the rituals of passport control and customs when the cross national boundaries. Mouth the appropriate perfunctories about their visit being for pleasure. Nevertheless, their roles in the drama are not under their control. They are controlled by the things, the objects, the commodities that they carry, but do not possess. They carry but do not possess them, because it is more accurate to say that the tourists are possessed by them. Their role depends on them. Their identities depend on them. This relationship between carriers and possessor is made possible, indeed required by the empire of capital. Capital sorts out humanity according to its own needs. That is how the empire of capital works.

TOURING IN THE CITY AND AROUND THE WORLD

Shortly before this writing I was a tourist in the Humboldt Park neighborhood of Chicago. Visiting a friend, we walked around the neighborhood and walked to the neighborhood adjacent to the east — Wicker Park. Humboldt Park is reputed as the largest concentration of people from Puerto Rico in the United States outside of New York City. Always a low income, working class neighborhood, it is now also the home of a major street gang, the Maniac Latin Disciples, second in size only to the Latin Kings in the Chicago Area. In 2011 the Chicago Police Department declared war on the gang (Main, 2011). The outcome of the war remains in doubt. The neighborhood also boasts several Puerto Rican cultural centers. My friend, who lived there but is not Puerto Rican, complained mildly that parking cars on the streets invited broken windows and other petty vandalism, but otherwise the gang activity had little adverse affect on her. Perhaps in support of that assessment, some of the touring we carried out on foot occurred between one and three o'clock in the morning of a weekend. We encountered no threats or even possible threats.

The next morning, we walked through the neighborhood to the Wicker Park neighborhood, just to the east. Unlike the gang-beset working class Humboldt Park neighborhood, Wicker Park is known as one of the trendiest neighborhoods in the city. To quote from the *Chicago Tribune*, it is a "quasi-chaotic atmosphere of traffic and crowded sidewalks gives the Chicago neighborhood its palpable buzz. The newest immigrants to Wicker Park are diverse by occupation, mixed by levels of education and ethnicity, single or married, but almost always young" (Chicago Tribune 2012). We crossed the border between the two neighborhoods; I as a

tourist in both and my friend as a tourist in one and inhabitant of the other. We sensed the border crossing despite little difference in the appearance of the built environment.

Twenty some years ago in Milwaukee, a city 90 miles (145 kilometers) to the north, I and my partner strolled through a neighborhood we inhabited, called Riverwest. She carried a camera, often a sign of the tourist. We noticed some graffiti on the sidewalk. A young man approached us, asking if we were interested in it. We said we were, and he explained the meanings of the signs, which aggrandized one of the local gangs in that neighborhood. My partner took photographs of the graffiti. At the time, several gangs vied for supremacy. Like Humboldt Park in Chicago, this neighborhood presented no threats to us. Nonetheless, gang presence coupled mainly with a few exploitive and/or negligent landlords prompted city planners to write off the southern half of the neighborhood as not worthy of rehabilitation. That the city's plan failed was due mainly to the neighborhood's inhabitants resisting, organizing, and lobbying against it (Grover, 2004; Schmitt, 2008). Of note for the present discussion is that had the city's plan succeeded, it would have imposed a border within the neighborhood for external political reasons, much like certain countries became divided into north and south – Korea and Vietnam spring to mind. No passports required and no armed guards other than local police, but perceptive walkers would have known they crossed a border.

GATED COMMUNITIES

Setha Low described a startling different tourism when she visited her sister in San Antonio, Texas. Setha Low lives in Brooklyn, New York City. Her sister lives in a gated community in San Antonio. There are walls, or at least gates, surrounding the sister's neighborhood. The gates have guards. A visitor must show credentials to gain entrance. It is a Checkpoint Charlie without the backdrop of the Cold War and nuclear annihilation. Despite the barbicans and guards, her sister's house has an automatic alarm system and auto-locking doors— that is, they could not be left unlocked. This is how Low described her tourist experience in an upscale San Antonio suburb.

> I'm stunned. I feel trapped, claustrophobic, and uneasy, as if something dangerous is just outside the door. With a flash of insight, I realize I had these same feelings while working on an archaeological dig in El Salvador. The hacienda house and yard were surrounded by high walls capped with jagged broken bottles and barbed wire (Low, 2003, p. 6).

Residents of the gated community sought fortress protection from marauders who would rob and despoil them, their property, and their lives. "Thus, residents cite their 'need' for gated communities to provide a safe and secure home in the face of a lack of other societal alternatives" (11). Such sentiments arise from beliefs about the ineffectiveness of social control mechanisms emerging from transformations in the global political economy. People erect gates and walls to protect themselves and their interests against other people whom they fear. They rely on physical restrictions and employ armed guards, because they believe violence and theft are rampant. They hold such beliefs despite the fact that, in the United States at least, interpersonal, predatory crime — robbery, rape, aggravated assaults, and similar offenses—have declined steadily for over twenty years and precipitously in the last five years. Although their beliefs do not reflect reality, their fear remains real because they appear logical (Lee, 2007).

A massive shift in wealth has impoverished a growing number of people, enriching a few at the top of the social scale, and eroding economic security for those in the middle (Kliman, 2012). The last are those who seek refuge from the poor by walling themselves in. They fear the impoverished because they fear those below them, in their desperation, will rob them and take revenge on them for their lowly circumstances. They also no longer trust the social institutions designed to channel frustrations, largely for two reasons. Lacking a comprehensible explanation for their own increasing economic insecurity, they demonize those who already have been cast off by the same economic institutions causing the insecurity — that is, the poor. Moreover, the poor are disproportionately members of racial and ethnic minorities who traditionally experienced marginalization. In sum, the middle strata fear those beneath them, not because they steal from them, but because such as explanation fits with American cultural values (Douglas, 1966). The other reason lies with a long term propaganda campaign that created a culture of fear, especially fear of crime and one's fellow citizens, in the United States. That propaganda campaign, more recently focused on terrorism, has made possible a national security state that relies on force as a first line means of social control. Force has become increasingly necessary as the possibilities for economic success, or at least comfort, have fallen away beneath the feet of more Americans. So, demonization and uncertain economic social control contribute to a culture of fear. That culture of fear leads people to seek safety behind walls, gates, guards, and borders. "These diverse approaches depict a world that increasingly relies on urban fortification, policing, and segregation to maintain social order" (Low 2003, p. 22).

INTERNATIONAL TOURING

The same forces that drive middle strata Americans behind walls of gated communities, drive people from Mexico to face hardship up to death to cross walled borders into the United States. They are different kinds of tourists. They touring is for work. Mike Davis (2005) called it The Great Wall of Capital. Teddy Cruz (2008) wrote of "an imaginary line along the U.S. - Mexico border and extending it directly across a map of the world, what emerges is a *political equator"* (p.111). Cruz' political equator and Davis' wall of capital parse people of the world into a binary class system. Not surprisingly, the system corresponds to Marx's observation that capitalism eventually results in but two classes: capitalists and workers. In the twenty-first century, it translates into Immanuel Wallerstein's (2004) world system with a center and a periphery.

Traditional tourism, tourism for pleasure, took its modern form with the rise and expansion of the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. By mid-twentieth century a burgeoning middle income population in developed countries (the capital center and global north) traveled for pleasure. During the same period, say from about 1850 to 1970, productive industries split between the center and periphery with manufacturing in the center and extractive industries including agriculture, in the periphery. This took the political form of neocolonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the late twentieth century the pattern shifted. Manufacturing moved to areas of the world with cheap labor, lax environmental protections, and compliant political orders. In the United States, it took the form of deindustrialization, first in urban centers, and later throughout the entire country. Less and less was made in the United States as US based companies out-sourced and located factories in climes more amenable to profit. Transition from a Bracero labor pool to *Maquilladoras* signifies the economic transition. The Bracero Program, or guest worker program, began during US

involvement in the Second World War as labor scarcity threatened war time production. It continued through the heyday of US manufacturing until it ended in 1964.

Since the rise of neoliberalism and deindustrialization, the same companies that used to have factories and employ workers within the United States have found more profit in locating factories in Mexico, the original home of the term *maquilladora*, and similar periphery countries. Despite the shift in manufacturing, service industries remain within the metropole. The US — partially because of government subsidies to giant corporate agribusinesses such as ADM (Archer Daniels Midland), Cargill, and Monsanto — still needs agricultural workers. It also needs workers in hospitality industries and other service occupations such as cleaning, child care, and so on. Unlike the mid-twentieth century manufacturing occupations which gained protection from relatively powerful labor unions, agricultural and service workers in the United States get little protection, either from unions or politics. Consequently, service industry jobs tend to offer low wages, little or no benefits such as health insurance and pensions, and generally tend toward the exploitive end of US employment. It is here that work tourism manifests.

The first hazard faced by work tourists from Mexico is the border area itself. Of the half million who cross from Mexico to the United States annually, about five hundred die because of the crossing. Since they cannot enter through the check points they have to go around them. For many years, they circumvented the checkpoints with treks of a few miles and possibly wading or otherwise traversing the Rio Grande River. Especially after the attacks of September 11 (9/11), the US securitized the border. A notorious fence separates Tijuana and San Diego. It runs from Brownsville, Texas to San Diego on the Pacific coast. Beginning in 1990, the United States constructed the fences in sections and stages. At points triply reinforced steel and concrete, other sections are virtual. They use electronic sensing and surveillance monitors. The US Border Patrol, subsumed under the US Department of Homeland Security after 9/11, maintains flyovers and vehicular human surveillance. The Mexico-US 'fence' rivals and in many places surpasses the Iron Curtain era borders during the Cold War. What this means for those who want to work in the United States, usually at exploitive wages, is risk of death and injury. The casualties result from preventable injuries, although some rise to the level of negligent homicide, sometimes by Border Patrol, sometimes by US vigilantes, and sometimes by the contractors who covertly move the aspiring workers (Jimenez, 2009). Using these approximations— five hundred deaths out of five hundred thousand— gives a death rate of one hundred per hundred thousand, which is many times the current US homicide rate of about 5.5 per hundred thousand. Bourgeois pleasure tourists may have anxieties about crime and terrorism, albeit belied by actuarial calculations of risk, but work tourists face very real risk of injury and death.

IDENTITIES, PASSPORTS, SPECTACLES, AND THE TOURIST GAZE

Two strains of thought converge on border crossings. I see them as homologous, but few others have commented on their similarities. In his astute analysis of tourism and social structure, Dean MacCannell (2004) observed that: "Modern society constitutes itself as a labyrinthine structure of norms [. . .] this maze of norms manifests itself in physical divisions, walls, ceilings, fences, floors, hedges, barricades, and signs marking the limits of a community, an establishment, or a person's space" (p.55)—in a word, borders. He went on to demonstrate that tourist attractions exhibit a deep structure, that is social structure, that structurates (Giddens, 1984) consciousness. "Consciousness and the integration of the individual into the

modern world require only that one attraction be linked to another" (MacCannell, 2004, p.70). I suggest that the structure and the attractions are part of the spectacle as described by Guy Debord (1967). They are what binds the attraction and the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002). The attraction is, of course, a commodity, which increasingly appears as spectacle as more and more elements of humans' primary ecological niche, culture, converts to spectacle—that is commodities.

This essay addresses the lines between the spectacles, or as MacCannell puts it, the walls, ceilings, fences, and so on. When people are on the lines, where are they? Are they in a liminal state, betwixt and between? Does liminality provide a different perspective? What does it mean to be in a border region? One answer is what the work tourists from Mexico experience. Their liminality is dangerous. In postmodern times, border zones present heightened risks for everyone in them. Nonetheless, they can also reveal the spectacle for what it is, a *simulacrum* (Baudrillard, 1981).

Borders and other boundaries both separate and connect. They mark dialectical processes. Edward Soja (2005) says: "Borders defy the limits of inclusion/exclusion, creating a distinctive space of its own, a borderlands culture that resists enclosure and confinement" (pp.33-4). It is in the borderlands that possibilities manifest. Soja Quoted from Guillermo Gómez-Peña (1993, pp.43-44).

> Border culture is a polysemantic term [...] [it] means boycott, complot, ilegalidad, clandestinidad, transgression [. . .] hybrid art forms for new – content-ingestation [. . .] different geo-cultural relations among more culturally akin regions: Tepito-San Diejuana, San Panch-Nuyorricco, Miami-Quebec, San Antonio-Berlin [. . .] a new internationalism ex centris [. . .] to develop new models to interpret the world-in-crisis [. . .] to push the borders of countries" (Soja, 2005, pp.39-40).

Soja describes a post-metropolitan milieu that nonetheless runs along lines of class, commodities, and relationships of things. In Soja's view, therefore, the liberating effect, the anti-structural effect, to use Victor Turner's formulation, of borderlands must be bound up by postmodern capitalism.

Passports: In this post-metropolitan, postmodern world capitalist system, passports allow legal transport of human bodies. Modern passports, originating after the French revolution and gaining prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century, are signs of state control. As John Torpey (2000) argued, passports monopolize the legitimacy of movement. Their prominence in the latter nineteenth century centered on Western Europe when, not coincidentally, Western European states renewed colonization in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. This neocolonialism, also not coincidentally, coincided with a new stage of industrial capitalism—monopoly capitalism in Lenin's 1916 analysis, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. In this highest stage of capitalism, almost 0ne hundred years after Lenin's analysis, capital and commodities move easily; it is people who are restricted. Passports signify two powers exercised by states. States have the power to create political and juridical subjects and to sort them into degrees of legitimacy. That is, the state assigns freedoms to individuals based on their politico and legal status. Common statuses include citizenship, age majority, residency, and so on. Depending on status, the state also signifies freedom of movement, most conspicuously across territorial borders.

At this writing in 2012, controversy in the United States reveals much about these state powers and about borders and crossing them. The controversy surrounds the US Supreme Court decision *Citizens United* (2010). In it, the court conferred free speech rights on corporations and other corporate like structures by permitting them to spend unlimited sums of money on political campaigns. The reasoning of the court equated money with speech or expression and recognized a new right of such legal fictions as corporations. Beyond its implications for particulars of US politics, the decision reveals a more profound reality — namely the ascendance of things, especially abstract things, like money and corporations, over human beings. The ways this relates to borders and their traversing shows how the state, in this case through its courts, assigns statuses. Of various kinds of things, money traverses borders most easily. It was not always so, but as so-called globalization has loosed national currency controls so as to further the interests of finance capital, money moves at the speed of light as it is carried on wireless electronic waves. According to the Bank for International Settlements by 2010 the amount of currency that crosses borders totaled just under 4 trillion US dollars per day. Money has the highest status and greatest freedom in crossing borders. Human beings need passports; money is its own passport. That is because money is a master sign for the empire of capital. Yet, it is merely a sign, as Jean Baudrillard (2006, p. 3) observed: "as political economy is gigantic machinery for producing value, for producing signs of wealth, but not wealth itself."

SPECTACLES AND THE TOURIST GAZE

John Urry (2002) asserted that the tourist "gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs" (p.3). Dean MacCannell (1999, 2008) elaborated on the semiotics of tourism, stressing that tourists seek authenticity, and tourist attractions consist of staged authenticity. MacCannell (2004) specified that a tourist attraction is a semiotic process including three moments: a viewer, an object, and a sign that interprets the object as an attraction. For example, various geological formations, rocks, require signs to distinguish them — the Blarney Stone, Plymouth Rock, and so on. MacCannell (2008) goes further. He claims "that staged authenticity, originally restricted to the limited domain of tourists and tourism, has replicated itself in every realm of social life" (p.262). Compare this to Guy Debord's (1967) *Society of the Spectacle* and Jean Baudrillard's (1981) society of simulacra. MacCannell's replication of the staged as penetrating all of social life gains specifity when applied to the social empirical, the social things we can observe. Those things, Guy Debord's formulation, are all spectacle. Debord spelled out what he meant by spectacle in his 1967 book, *The Society of the Spectacle:* "The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of communication" (p. 12). The spectacle is "not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people" (p.4).

This relationship increasingly becomes disguised by the images, as all social things including relations among human beings enter the market that capital controls. "The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (34:24). The spectacle is that universe of images commodifed. Commodifed images, or images of commodities, are congealed forms of the everyday dynamic of social life; itself continual processes, but frozen into images.

> The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities are now plain to see - commodities are now all that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity (42:29)

This commodifed world of images appears as simulacra, in Baudrillard's terms, copies with no original. Capital produces everything anew, as its lifeblood is surplus value, which only comes from the production of commodities by human beings. Their lifeblood feeds that of capital, and they become slaves to it in the process, a vampirization of human life and human relationships.Continual production of new commodities, unlike money, calls for differentiation. One commodity has to be distinguished from another. They need seams, lines, markers, boundaries, and of course borders. The patterns of the seams provide texts for structuralist readings of cultures. At least that is the origin of structuralist anthropology as enunciated by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) who derived it from the structuralist linguistics of Roman Jakobson. Jakobson, of course, pointed out that it is the pauses between, demarcating sounds, which produce words. That is, structuralist linguistics and its offshoots emphasize difference. Lévi-Strauss applied his structural analysis to kinship-based societies instead of capitalist societies, but Jakobson's basic insight applies to the latter as well. Jacques Derrida (1963, p.75) built on this essential structuralist concept to develop the difference between *différance* and *difference*. He coined the former to highlight the fact that consciousness has continual flux. It is a process, not a fixed term, and therefore requires boundaries to contain it. Although structuralism flourished and expanded its application, its historical base lies in its recognition of the importance of borders. Who or what determines where the borders lie, defines language, culture, images, commodities, and human relationships.

DIALECTICS OF BORDERS

The empire of capital needs borders. How the borders come to definition constitutes historical change within capital's empire. Therefore the seams indicate lines of power, but they also present interstices of everyday life, much like the lines between sidewalk blocks where various flora and small fauna like ants can develop and live. Michel de Certeau (1980) pointed out this latter aspect of the cracks between things; their possibilities for change and social invention. It is on the border that possibilities exist. The existence of such possibilities gets back to Victor Turner's insight that the liminal state had anti-structural elements. Turner analyzed simpler societies, as did Lévi-Strauss. Simple, kinship based, non-capitalist and non-industrial societies enforce degrees of conformity typically greater than industrialized, capitalist societies. Since free, marketable labor remains essential for modernist economies, they cannot enforce the degree and kind of social control as found in simpler societies. Turner saw pilgrimages and other liminal social institutions as providing possibilities for social change in otherwise slowly evolving, highly structured societies. It is precisely because modernist, complex societies need relative individual autonomy that such societies attend to and police their borders.

Graffiti offers a visible manifestation of both possibilities and policing. Graffiti appears on walls, using the term 'walls' in a loose and expansive way to include a variety of limens, surfaces, and locales, or 'spots' as Jeff Ferrell and Robert Weide call them. Ferrell and Weide call attention to aspects of spots applicable to the present argument. They are fluid, dynamic, anti-structural, and transgressive.

> Spots are, after all, not simply static physical locations; they are moments in the social process through which the city and the world of graffiti develop in a dialectic relationship [...]. Because of this situational fluidity, an analysis of graffiti spots is hardly amenable to GPS data, or to the sorts of numerical 'crime mapping' now popular among mainstream criminologists and law-enforcement personnel (Ferrell & Weide, 2010, p.50).

Seams, interstices, and borders of the visible world are embedded in and dependent on the society of the spectacle, as Debord described it. They represent a meta-text overwriting the commodities of everyday life, or as Jean Baudrillard (1976) puts it, they superimpose which amounts "to the abolishing of the support as a framework, just as it is abolished as frame when its limits are not respected" (p.82). Graffiti often appears on officially designated signs such as highway and street markers, indicators of attractions ("Historic Site 2 km"), and similar indexical signs, or non places (Auge, 1995).

Graffiti not only overwrites or superimposes, it challenges the frameworks of commodities. A particularly provocative wall separated East and West Berlin during the Cold War. When graffiti broke out in the 1970s, it soon appeared on the Berlin Wall. It 'turned the wall into an area of transit rather than separation" (Neef, 2007, p.427). What happened after the wall came down reveals the dialectic. Bits of the wall became commodities in the form of souvenirs, a quintessentially touristic artifact. "Even today, visitors to the Haus am Checkpoint Charlie can pick up a 5 g piece of inner German history for 20 euros. Only a few parts of the former Wall were conserved to become the official Wall memorial" (p.430). The wall memorial became the attraction, but parts of the original, not unlike slivers of "the True Cross" during medieval times, took on the peculiar mystique of commodities, traded in formal and informal market places.

As walls stitch together, they also invite transgressions and challenges. Certainly one of the oldest crimes has to be smuggling, as taxes and borders are among the first acts of states and states' co-emergent, laws. The story of one graffiti artist illustrates these inescapable dialectics. Here, a onetime graffiti artist became a soldier for imperialistic wars.

> Among the highlights of Style Wars, the cult 1983 documentary about hip hop culture and graffiti in New York City, are the conversations between teenage graffiti writer Skeme and his mother. As they sit together in their living room, Skeme tells us that: "I didn't start writing to go to Paris. I didn't start writing to do canvasses. I started writing to bomb, destroy all lines. And that's what I'm doing (Iveson, 2010, p.115).

The director of the movie re-interviewed Skeme twenty years later. Skeme had joined the US Army. He compared his role as a soldier to that of graffiti writing. "It really prepared me for the army, because graffiti was a mission" (p.116). After citing this movie, Kurt Iveson proceeds to elaborate on the war like nature of graffiti writing: authorities who pursue and prosecute writers, and the similarities of terrain - namely urban warfare.

> The wars on graffiti have helped to prepare the ground for the contemporary militarization of urban space in cities which is being advanced in the name of the 'war on terror'. And the wars on graffiti have subsequently intensified through their articulation with this other war (p.131).

Graffiti writing plays a part in domestic urban warfare about control of space. Gangs notoriously mark territory and commemorate their legends and histories through graffiti, as the vignette set in Riverwest suggested. Graffiti played a significant role in wars among gangs and, more to the point, gangs versus the Los Angeles police (Phillips, 1999). Graffiti appears wherever there are borders, because graffiti points to and signifies the meaning of space. It operates as the interpretant sign MacCannell noted in the creation of attractions, and it signifies a border. Compare graffiti to the multilingual signs on the approach to Checkpoint Charlie in Cold War Berlin.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GRAFFITI

As Jeff Ferrell explained in his 1993 book, *Crimes of Style*, graffiti artists exhibited a new and different form of relations of production. They had substantial control of the means of production. The product remained difficult to appropriate, with the possible exception of Basquiat and the high culture art scene in New York. To the extent that artists worked together, they did not develop hierarchic relations separate from the requirements of production. Graffiti art emerged contemporaneously and in conjunction with hip hop music. In contrast, hip hop music, once it moved from DJing to producing new music, lent itself to appropriation by the culture industry, which did so with élan.

The consequences are instructive. Hip hop music thrived precisely because it replicated the established relations of production. Graffiti art was crushed into oblivion by forces of the state and an anti-graffiti cultural campaign that identified its products as unworthy. They were cast not as art but as vandalism. First, Criminalizing graffiti and graffiti writers has little to do with artistic merit. Second, although some graffiti writing comes from street gang culture, much of it does not, and the criminalization of street gangs itself remains problematic in as much as they can be construed as political insurrectionary organizations at least as fittingly as criminal organizations (Brotherton, 2004). Graffiti writers ply their trade at social margins, the borders of social institutions, and on the walls separating commodities. Therefore, and thirdly, graffiti represents a challenge to claims of property ownership. Fourth, the product of their work, graffiti, presents an intrinsic ephemerality that makes it hard to appropriate and commodify. That is, it resists the inexorable spread of commodification so central to capitalism. Graffiti is anti-spectacular, in Guy Debord's sense of spectacle. Finally, graffiti is anti-structural and lends itself to a kind of *communitas* Victor Turner associated with pilgrimages, themselves a form of tourism.

> I myself tend to see pilgrimage as that form of institutionalized or 'symbolic' 'antistructure' (or perhaps 'metastructure') which succeeds the major initiation rites of puberty in tribal societies as the dominant historical form. It is the ordered anti-structure of patrimonial-feudal systems. It is infused with voluntariness though by no means independent of structural obligatoriness. Its limen is much longer than that of initiation rites, and it breeds new types of secular liminality and communitas**.**
>
> [. . .] as the pilgrim moves away from his structural involvements at home his route becomes increasingly sacralized at one level and increasingly secularized at another. He meets with more shrines and sacred objects as he advances, but he also encounters more real dangers such as bandits and robbers; he has to pay attention to the need to survive and often to earn money for transportation; and he comes across markets and fairs, especially at the end of his quest, where the shrine is flanked by the bazaar and by the fun fair. But all these things are more contractual, more associational, more volitional, more replete with the novel and the unexpected, fuller of possibilities of communitas, both as secular fellowship and comradeship and sacred communion, than anything he has known at home. And the world becomes a bigger place (Turner 1973, pp. 204-5).

Here, Turner relies on Durkheim's (1915) distinction between the sacred and profane. The sacred is removed from the quotidian, the practical and pragmatic; it occupies a space and time outside of ordinary institutions, and therefore radiates an aura of anti-structure and *communitas*. Sacred places—shrines, holy places that commemorate sacralized events, and the like, share this character with tourist attractions. It would not be excessive to say that the two, tourist attractions and destinations for pilgrimages, have the same institutional structure. Pilgrims and tourists find liberation from the individual from "the obligatory everyday

constraints of status and role, defines him as an integral human being with a capacity for free choice, and [. . .] [pilgrimage] presents for him a living model of human brotherhood and sisterhood" (p. 221). The same fundamentals obtain with graffiti and graffiti writing. Not only do they create a new supra-institutional space, but they challenge the dominant social institutions and their values. In this sense, graffiti can function as a revolutionary act that 'bombs' the status quo. *Because there are walls, there is graffiti; because there is graffiti on walls, their existence is challenged.*

CONCLUSION: THE BORDERS OF THE EMPIRE OF CAPITAL AND THE DIALECTIC

Henri Lefebvre (1974) interpreted Marx, citing chapter 48 of *Capital III*, to say that

> [T]here were three, not two, elements in the capitalist mode of production and in bourgeois society. These three aspects or 'factors' were Earth (Madame la Terre), capital (Monsieur le Capital), and labour (the Workers). In other words: rent, profit, wages—three factors whose interrelationships still needed to be identified and clearly set forth. And *three*, I repeat, rather than *two*: the earlier binary opposition (wages *versus* capital, bourgeois *versus* working class), had been abandoned (p.325)

The dialectic of capital is three-fold, and it is a dynamic process. Socialized space, that is space divided into and for social purposes enters into the process as an independent factor in that it cannot be derived from either of the other two. Social space is the locus of a moment in the process of capital production. For purposes of clarity, imagine the factory as a space where workers produce commodities. The commodities cross the threshold of the factory to enter a marketplace, where buyers and sellers exchange them so that the commodities cross another threshold, that between buyers and sellers. At this point the capitalist realizes his profit and puts it into a bank (another threshold), ready for reinvestment, another threshold that starts the process anew. In the empire of capital every threshold, or limen, is a border to be crossed, and most importantly, every limen or border in the global empire of capital is fundamentally formed by the capitalist process of production.

As in Debord's society of the spectacle in which commodities are all there is to see, space itself becomes commodifed. "In the most modern urban planning . . . *everything* is produced: air, light, water - even the land itself. Everything is factitious and 'sophisticated'; nature has disappeared altogether [...] . Natural space [...] becomes a scarce commodity. Inversely, scarcity becomes spatial - and local" (Lefebvre 1974, p.329). Or, as MacCannell put it, everything becomes an attraction, staged authenticity. Where lies the escape from this continuous process that structures not only space, but human lives? It can only be at the border.

On the border, in a liminal state, people can escape from the empire of capital, and more than escape, they can challenge it. They can produce new space, as Guillermo Gómes-Peña described it, the 'polysemantic' character of border culture.

> [T]hrough the production of space, whereby living labour can produce something that is no longer a thing, nor simply a set of tools, nor simply a commodity. In space needs and desires can reappear as such, informing both the act of producing and its products. There still exist—and there may exist in the future—spaces for play, spaces for enjoyment, architectures of wisdom or pleasure. . . So long, however, as the dead retains its hold over the living, destruction and self-destruction will be imminent threats (Lefebvre, 1974, p.348)

Those who do not just cross borders but linger there, enter a liminal space and time. As Victor Turner observed, this liminality is anti-structural, inviting communitas, and pregnant with possibilities for new human creations. Empires create borders and police them for their own ends. But the borders themselves offer anti-imperialistic possibilities, which human beings may realize in very different fashions, from graffiti to smugglers, leisure tourists to work tourists; all borders are there for the crossing. That is the basic dialectic of borders.

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