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Parasite Anthropologies and the Persistence of Cultural Survivals

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Abstract: For E.B. Tylor (and J.G. Frazer), cultural survivals were those "processes, customs, opinions and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home" (Tylor 1871: I, 14-15). Culture was supposed to move in an orderly progression from savagery to civilization. Yet rather than gradually disappearing, survivals lay dormant in their cultural hosts, arising to disrupt the smooth progress of civilization. More than anachronism, they fed on the energy of the modern, masquerading as science and dragging down progress. For Tylor, the role of anthropology as a "reformer's science" was to ferret out these primeval rocks and remove them. But the other side of survivals is the possibility that they might arrest the linear progress of Western capitalism, parasitically transforming globalization in subversive ways that gesture to alternatives. This is at the core of Benjamin's and Bloch's evocation of parasitic cultures in ruins and cultural surplus. Based on an understanding of these virtualities at the core of the parasitic, we can also look at Tylor's doctrine more reflexively—as a way of examining certain assumptions which "survive" into the present of anthropological thought and that might parasitically divert energy from Western assumptions regarding culture, modernity, science and power. Indeed, the continued salience of "survivals" in Deleuze and Guattari and others realizes Tylor's greatest fears: that the spectral traces of the past will rise up to overwhelm the hegemony of the present and that anthropology-qua-parasite will be the agent of its undoing.

Keywords: parasite; junk DNA; cultural evolutionism; memes; Deleuze; Serres

In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria, Jr. delivers the classic critique of US academics and their relationships with Native Americans, broad brushstrokes that implicate anthropology for all of its colonialist paternalism, its misunderstandings and deceits. He does not hold out a lot of hope for the discipline:

> Perhaps when the implications of this book reach the tribes in the form of government programs, they will finally awaken and push the parasitic scholars off the reservations and set up realistic guidelines by which they can control what is written and said about them. (Deloria 1972:96)

Here, anthropologists are parasitic in at least two senses. On the one hand, their work, their success, and their careers have fed at the table of Native Americans, without giving anything in return—the classic parasite. Anthropologists have tried to address these in ethical guidelines by acknowledging a responsibility to reciprocate to communities, with the 1971 "Principles for Professional Responsibility" warning anthropologists against "exploitation of individual informants for personal gain. Fair return should be given them for all services." In addition, the parasite infects the host. Deloria complains that, "Many Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears that the anthropologists know everything about Indian communities" (1972:82). Reconceptualizing anthropological concerns over authenticity as contagion, Deloria condemns the spread of the anthropological taint—its ideologically loaded construction of culture and genealogy—to Native American communities who, one would imagine, re-infect their anthropological hosts with reifications of culture (Baker 2009).

One of the most depressing (and hence the most objectionable) elements of Edward Said's critique of anthropology is his insistence that colonialism is the very table upon which anthropology rests—self and other, exotic and familiar, "the primacy of ideas of exoticism, otherness, and intransitive distance between the subject and the object of knowledge" (Dirks 2004:49). If this is a parasite, then it is not one that can be excised with a bracing course of antibiotics. Rather, these are parasites multiplying at the genetic level—genealogically propagated through the baggage of anthropological dichotomies of self and other, and, in turn, horizontally infecting foreign policy and development economics, before coming full circle to anthropology as the return of the repressed. But there is a third form of parasitism that Deloria doesn't explore.

Any exploration of parasitology isn't complete without acknowledging that parasites have made us who we are today, rather along the lines of the epidemiological (and ultimately parasitic) argument that Toxoplasma has contributed to cultural diversity (Lafferty 2005).

The very same parasitism that so infects the anthropological encounter also causes anthropology to turn continuously outwards. As Adam Kuper (2001:110) suggests in a 2001 interview, “When you come to culture theory, of course, what I tried to show in my book was that American cultural theory and anthropology is parasitic on, and has to be parasitic on, a much wider and longer-running discourse about the nature and meaning of culture” (Gibb and Mills 2001:110). Here, Kuper gestures to the networked, brachiating course of anthropology itself, connecting to constellations of social and cultural theory, with the results looking more like a bewildering sidereal panorama than a stable paradigm. This form of parasitism speaks to Lowie’s characterization of culture as a thing of “shreds and patches” in a different way—as an amalgam of parasitic discourses on cultural life that combines present and past, self and other.

Anthropology may be in a “state of crisis,” but it also in a state of perpetual iteration. Haunted by the specters of our own tropes, and buffeted by periodic revivals of superannuated anthropologies in popular scholarship, Kroeber’s point that anthropology has one foot “squarely in history” takes on new salience: if it were a textbook, anthropology would be in its 200th edition (Kroeber 1935:568). The following essay is animated by the realization that anthropology is suspended in parasitic orders, both within and without. Within anthropology, that includes myths of materialist beginnings to metanarratives of interpretive ends, endless replications of outmoded beliefs, facile stereotypes, racist evocations, orientalisms; without, the troubling tendency of popular writers and other scholars to dredge up our nineteenth century past in their discussions of politics and economies, with all manner of contemporary movements explicable at the level of procrustean “tribes”. Accordingly, I engage parasitism on multiple levels, beginning with genetics and ending with Serres (1982), an etiology of parasitism that begins with the colonial baggage anthropology carries, considers the horizontal vectors over which such parasitic knowledge travels, and ends with the spectacle of anthropology parasitizing its own parasites.

Anthropology’s Parasitic Weight

With the mapping of the genome came the disquieting revelation that over 98 percent of human DNA served no apparent purpose—i.e., didn’t code for specific proteins. This was the added insult to the injury of the C-Value Paradox: not only was our genome less complex than putatively simpler organisms, but much of it was non-sense DNA. The humble onion, as scientists pointed out more than 10 years ago, carries more than 12 times the amount of DNA as humans, mostly as non-coding (and presumably non-performing) material. This DNA was initially known as “junk” or “parasitic”: DNA morally censured for “using its host, a mere material structure, our body, a survival machine” (Bardini 2011:37). Thought to be “vestiges of ancient information” (or at least those ultraconserved parts of the genome) (Loewenstein 1999:93), parasitic DNA hung on

gamely, replicating with the rest of the sequence and, in the etymological tradition of parasites, eating at another's table.

It was Richard Dawkins who connected culture to (or infected culture with) parasitic DNA. His memes, themselves parasitic culture feeding off of materialist reductionism and neo-liberal ideology, were thought to free-load off of our cognitive processes, reproducing and multiplying against all adaptive common sense (Dawkins 1976). But when he introduces memes (in a chapter that has wormed its way into more undergraduate papers than I care to recall), he does it only figuratively:

> The argument I shall advance, surprising as it may seem coming from the author of the earlier chapters, is that, for an understanding of the evolution of modern man, we must begin by throwing out the gene as the sole basis of our ideas on evolution. I am an enthusiastic Darwinian, but I think Darwinism is too big a theory to be confined to the narrow context of a gene. The gene will enter my thesis as an analogy. (Dawkins 1976:191)

Beginning as a metaphor for our cultural life, the parasitic-meme slowly begins to reproduce against culture and biology. Dawkins warns us: "In both cases the idea or purpose is only a metaphor, but we have already seen what a fruitful metaphor it is in the case of genes" (1976:196). But it's too late. By the next page, the "meme" is already a "gene," completing the double parasitism he initiated with the ascription of a kind of rational-choice theory to his genes in the first place.

> In what sense then are memes competing with each other? Should we expect them to be 'selfish' or 'ruthless', if they have no alleles? The answer is that we might, because there is a sense in which they must indulge in a kind of competition with each other. (Dawkins 1976:197)

Ultimately, Dawkin's explanation is the most parasitic of all: parasitic on cultural and social explanations in order to transform our genes into rational agents, and then parasitic on those parasitic levels in order to create a purposeful, rational-choice, unit of culture. In the grand tradition, Dawkins's parasites continue a long (cell) line of Lockean reductionism, subtending human life and nature into a neo-liberal order.

When we look to parasitic anthropology, we are confronted with the ways in which anthropology's past returns with a vengeance to influence public life—the ways, despite our best efforts, the dross of anthropology's past comes back to haunt us with specters of colonialism and racism. It's a past that we don't want: the unproductive evolutionary typologies and the "savage slots" that taint 19th and early 20th century work. And yet, it is this past that we need to acknowledge in order to understand how culture worms its way around the social, attaching itself to politics and policy decisions: "Therefore, our task is not to understand how culture operates, but to understand how explanations of culture function" (Visweswaran 2010:3).

E.B. Tylor's term for this parasite culture was "cultural survivals," those "processes, customs, opinions and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which newer has been evolved" (Tylor 1871:1, 14-15). In his evolutionary formulations, these were the remnants of the past, rendered nonsensical by the passage of time, "the non-living, the old, the culturally unfit, inappropriate, inconsistent, and illogical" (Hodgen 1931:308). In J.G. Frazer's terms, the "primaeval rock rising from a smooth-shaven lawn" was marked to be removed from the tidy, English garden of civilization (Frazer 2009[1890]:12). "Cultural survivals" are the pseudogenes of parasitic DNA: once able to encode a "functional polypeptide," they now free-load off of their genetic neighbors without contributing to reproduction (Vanin 1985).

In Tylor's scheme, "survivals" were the wrench in the evolutionary machine, the enigmatic presence of the savage among the civilized. Most of the survivals were marginal artifacts hanging on in the interstices of civilization: trivial affects like shirt cuffs as a vestige of a time when one had to cuff them back oneself, blessing people after they sneeze, or all manner of peasant superstitions that once may have made a kind of functional sense, "but are now," as Tylor writes, "fallen into absurdity from having been carried on into a new state in society, where their original sense has been discarded" (Tylor 1871:I, 94). That is, parasitic in the classical sense of language and superannuated custom—a non-functional, free-rider continuing on well after its usefulness.

But there was another kind of survival that Tylor viewed with greater trepidation: the "revival" of superstitions. In the decades surrounding the publication of his 1871 *Primitive Culture*, Tylor grappled with the popularity of Theosophy and Spiritualism, and with the explosion of occult beliefs and practices that accompanied them. Seemingly inimical to the enlightenment rationality he credited to the European middle class, the resurgence of interest in the occult threatened to upset his entire cultural scheme and to parasitically drag down the steady advance of culture. As J.G. Frazer (1890:54) put it, these were "a

standing menace to civilization" with the potential to "sink us into lower depths" (ibid). If "magic" was a characteristic of a lower "stage" of culture (qua Morgan 1877), then the anachronism of magic in Victorian London threatened not only the civilized world, but the place of science within it. How could anthropology be correct if its typologies proved inaccurate? As he writes in 1869,

> Even supposing the alleged spiritualistic facts to be all true and the spiritualistic interpretation of them sound, this does not alter the argument. It would prove that savages were wise, and that we civilized fools have degenerated from their superior knowledge. But it would remain true that modern spiritualism is a survival and revival of savage thought, which the general tendency of civilization and science has been to discard. (Tylor 1869:528)

Given that many of his friends and acquaintances were active in the spiritualist community, Tylor was moved to personally investigate their claims against his own understandings of science and empiricism. Stocking (1971:102) explores Tylor's ambivalence during this period, vacillating, on the one hand, between his rejection of superstition and, on the other, his class pretensions and the undeniably middle-class backgrounds of some of spiritualism's strongest adherents, including "Revered Moses," a key informant in his para-ethnographic investigations of London séances. Convinced of Moses's sincerity, Tylor himself recounts falling into a trance state (quoted in Stocking 1971:100). It is no accident that a great deal of 19th century fiction explores the fraught borders between science and the occult; Tylor was clearly not the only one ambivalent about the spiritual during an era that saw the "purification" of science against what were construed to be competing epistemologies (Smajić 2010).

However, by the time he completes his manuscript for Primitive Culture, he has made up his mind regarding spiritualism as both a fraudulent and primitive survival threatening to erase the gains of scientific progress by plunging the Western world into a superstitious nether-world of spirit-rapping and clairvoyance. Indeed, Tylor is sarcastic in his dismissal of what Alfred Wallace felt was the empirical truth of spiritualism (Pels 2003):

> The issue raised by the comparison of savage, barbaric and civilized spiritualisms is this: Do the Red Indian medicine-man, the Tartar necromancer, the Highland ghost-seer, and the Boston medium, share the possession of belief and knowledge of the highest truth and import, which, nevertheless, the great intellectual movement of the last two centuries has thrown aside as worthless?

> Is what we are habitually boasting of and calling new enlightenment, then, in fact a decay of knowledge? If so, this is truly a remarkable case of degeneration, and the savages whom some ethnographers look on as degenerate from a higher civilization, may turn on their accusers and charge them with having fallen from the high level of savage knowledge. (Tylor 1871:I, 156)

And yet, there's some fear there as well. Could the eruption of the occult into London society cascade into a threat against European civilization? There's also a curious double movement here. On the one hand, there's real uncertainty, as Ratnapalan (2010) points out, between what is a "survival" from the past, and what is a "continuity" from the past. And on the other, there's a question of the etiology of the savage—did it come from within or without? The trinity of "savages" Tylor lambastes--"the Tartar necromancer, the Highland ghost-seer, and the Boston medium"--move by degrees from the cultural/racial Other, to the lower-classes, and finally to the middle-class itself. In the first sense, Tylor echoes Victorian fears of immigrants from the colonial periphery, where this descent into the occult connects the putatively savage to the putatively civilized as equals and creates a space where marginalized, colonized peoples can turn on their accusers. And yet, it's unclear what the source of this parasitic infection might be—did it come from abroad? Or was it implicit in the Western world all along?

That is, this temporal and discursive contagion could be seen as awakening the savage within, like Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This return of the repressed drove the plots of the Victorian Gothic, the best remembered tales including Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), both of which hinge on contagion (the savage infecting the civilized) but also a kind of anamnesis, where the contact with the savage re-awakens a savagery just below the patina of civilization, personified in *Dracula*, for example, in the figure of Renfield (Herbert 2002). If one strain of Victorian anthropology worked to legitimate the colonial order, another tried to police those colonial boundaries—to protect the civilized from savage influences, reflected, for example, in anti-miscegenation laws in the United States. But could they keep at bay the eruption of the savage into civilized life from below, the "solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society" (Frazer 1890:54)?

Only by putting oneself in the place of Tylor, can one really understand the urgency of his "reformer's science":

> It is a harsher, and at times even painful, office of ethnography to expose the ruins of old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark

> them out for destruction. Yet this work, if no less genial, is not the less urgently needed for the good of mankind. (Tylor 1958[1871]:II, 539)

If it was all a matter of button holes and sneezing, “destruction” seems like overkill. But, of course, Tylor felt besieged on both fronts, from “below” (by the lower classes and the “savages” dwelling on the peripheries of empire) and from “above” by the alarming revivals of magic and superstition that were to crest with Theosophy and with modern, European witchcraft (Styers 2004). This lent an urgency to Tylor’s applied anthropology, and he was steadfast in his efforts to discover remnants of the occult in the English countryside. He did so as well in his service to the Pitt-Rivers museum, although the extent of his relationship to the institution still seems obscure (Larson et al 2007). And yet there’s a sense that he tried too hard.

The Witches Ladder and the Case of the Bewitched Onions

One can still see the “witches ladder” in its display case at the Pitt Rivers Museum, a long string stuck through at intervals with feathers, originally found in the attic of an old home in Somerset. Apparently, the “ladder” could be used for various kinds of mischief—stealing milk from cows or hurting people—and a witch was said to live in the home where it was discovered (Wingfield 2010). In the wake of an article (published by Abraham Colles) about the ladder in 1887, Tylor presented the object to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Manchester. However, as Wingfield recounts, “two members of the audience stood up and told him that in their opinion, the object was a sewel, and would have held in the hand to turn back deer when hunting” (Wingfield [online]). Faced with the possibility that his “ladder” was nothing more than a kind of scarecrow, he kept it under wraps at subsequent meetings (although it still ends up in the Pitt Rivers Collection anyway, with a note on its provenance from Tylor’s wife, Anna.)

But the ladder was used as *deus ex machina* in a couple of Victorian novels. In 1893, Sabine Baring-Gould published a novel, *Mrs. Curgenven of Curgenven*, where a witch-ladder is used to unleash various ills on the middle-classes (Baring-Gould 1893). Of course, the ladder (as well as other knotted ropes) features in the 15th century ideological treatise, *Malleus Maleficarum*. And, Wingfield notes, “Since Tylor’s day Witches’ Ladders have become an item in the practice of Wicca or contemporary witchcraft, into which positive wishes may be bound.” Indeed, making a witch’s ladder has become a standard in contemporary spell-books, yet the description of these rests on this suspect etymology. Tylor’s early enthusiasm for the authenticity of the ladder, and its strange, fictional half-life, suggest the confusion of that etiology. Was the witches’ ladder the atavistic survival of archaic, peasant culture? Or was it the autochthonous emergence of “savage thought” in

the middle classes, a gothic deus ex machina to spice up the Victorian novel? To bring it to a biological metaphor, was this a case of “horizontal” parasitism (savage culture spread across social classes), or was this more genealogical (savage culture always already present in the civilized)?

Christopher Bracken gestures to the love-hate relationships scholars have formed with the savage. “The curious fact, however, is that we scholars are not yet done with our savages. Indeed we continue to multiply them, projecting them onto new surfaces and discovering new avenues for their deployment. We may never be done with them” (Bracken 2007:5-6). Tylor’s fears of the savage were matched by his investment in them. His efforts to discover the savage in the English countryside and his own dabbling in the occult are the other side of the coin of the fear and loathing he expressed through his “reformer’s science”. That is to say, it is at least as important to look to the invention of the savage within as the savage without. This is certainly the case in another chapter in Tylor’s civilizing mission—the “bewitched onion from Somerset”: From, evidently, the same haul that brought the witches’ ladder, Tylor was able to procure three dried onions stuck full of pins with names written on them. As with the ladder, people who stuck pins in an onion, inscribed someone’s name into it, and hung it to dry over the fire were felt to be up to no good. But, unlike the witch’s ladder, with its uncertain purpose and provenance, Tylor evidently felt no such ambivalence over the onion, and exhibited one to the International Folklore Congress of 1891 (Wingfield [online]). It was, as Wingfield notes, an important piece of evidence for Tylor, incontrovertibly demonstrating (to him) that savage beliefs still survived among the peasant classes of rural England. In a letter written to his uncle in 1872, Tylor noted that “the thing is most interesting to me as showing how the state of mind which is that of a Red Indian or Kafir may be found, still at our very door step” (Wingfield [online]).

And yet, disaster would strike. Tylor sent the items for the archaeologist John Lubbock to inspect. Lubbock claims to have sent them back, but Tylor never received them. Apologetic, Lubbock sent inquires to the Post Office to track down the onions, but they would never reappear. It was in his pursuit of his missing onions that Tylor would undertake his own form of savagery. As Stocking recounts, Tylor used his investigations of Spiritualism to inquire of various spirits where the onions might be found,

> The spirit Sunshine spoke through Mrs Olive in childish jargon[:] me says[,] etc., hims gives my squaw, 'bout my squaw's height, little pappoose, etc. On possession the medium shook hands with us round, addressing each[. T]o me she said inter alia "me tells you somesing presently," "me likes honest doubt"[,] etc. In answer to my question about the loss of the bewitched onions she said,

> "me sees dey not lost, you get them back in two or three days, before you goes away." (quoted in Stocking 1971:94)

The fascinating thing is that this relic of savage thought, akin, as Tylor wrote, to the "Indian" or "Kafir", might prompt Tylor to undertake his own form of savagery by contacting the Native American spirit "Sunshine". This is the contagion of magic (rather than Frazer's contagious magic)—spreading from host to host, from the savage to the putatively civilized in a metonymic chain of irrationality that includes the humble village in Somerset, Tylor, his bewitched onions, the spirit medium and the (putatively) Native American spirit informant. In the end, it is up for debate who was the more atavistic: the Somerset villager for believing in the powers of a humble onion, or Tylor for visiting the spiritualists of his day to get them back (and questioning a "savage" spirit in the process). But Tylor's was not the only case where the metaphor of the savage became the metonym of savage contagion. Marx anticipates Tylor by several years with his interpretations of capitalism. "Fetishism" had made exactly the same parasitic perambulation, tracing an arc from civilized to savage and back again and, in the process, positioning Europe as parasitically best by its irrational animism. As Hornborg (2001:475) writes,

> It completes the peculiar trajectory of a concept that at one point may have implicated aspects of mainstream religion . . .and was then exported and projected—condescendingly—onto the superstitions of primitive Africans, finally to be reflected back into the presumptively secularized, economic worldview of modern Europeans.

The commodity becomes "an animated being worshipped by those who have produced it," an opportunistic savagery exploiting the void "created through the gradual mastery of nature" (Kurasawa 2004:68). Here, Marx adopts the clinical role of the anthropologist in Tylor's "reformer's science"; it is the presence of savage belief that is the biggest obstacle to a rational, enlightened future. Unlike Tylor, though, it would be the revolution that would finally excise these savage vestiges.

Over the course of the 19th and 20th century, many other scholars would take up these parasitologies, from Alfred Russel Wallace's characterization of the British as savages as compared to the Malay people he studied, to H.G. Wells's degenerationist fantasies in his descriptions of the Eloi and the Morlocks in *The Time Machine* (1895) (Collins 2008; Wallace 1869). In each of these, authors ponder themselves as savages-beneath-the-skin;

each work produces a curious doubling where representations of barbarity both echo racist evocations of the cultural, racial and class Other while still ultimately shown as issuing from within. This is what di Leonardo calls the "anthropological gambit" where the "primitive" and the "civilized" swap roles in a moment of colonialist frisson, but with one difference: it's the civilized that appears as the authentic savage all along (di Leonardo 1998).

Nowhere has this argument been more circulated than with casuistries of European fascism. Against interpretations of fascism as the apotheosis of modernity (e.g., Zygmunt Baumann [1989]), Norbert Elias insisted that the fascist impulse originated in the savage depths, a "black ideology, full of ideas more appropriate to a pre-industrial than to an industrial world" (Elias 1996:380). For Elias, fascism represented a fundamentally de-civilizing force, emphasizing the degeneration fears that always lurked beneath the assumption of unilinear evolutionary theory. For others—notably Ernst Bloch and Georges Bataille—fascism signaled the emergence of a dormant, primal savagery. Similar to the genetic fantasies evoked in the novel and film *Altered States*, fascism worked by drawing on the primitive within. As Ernst Bloch characterized it:

> Needs and resources of olden times subsequently break through the relativism of the general weariness like magma through a thin crust; indeed, this nihilism of bourgeois life, this process of the whole world becoming a commodity, becoming alienated here shows preserved non-contemporaneities in a doubly 'natural' way and preserved 'nature' in a doubly magic way. The campfires and sacrifices burn in the folkish hall. Trumpet-blasts announce the Fuhrer more powerfully than in just a Wilhelmian fashion, the thin little gardens of ideology which falsify the myth shall turn sultry and rise—in the raging masses—as a jungle. (Bloch 1991:107)

For Bloch, the degeneration of German into the "nasty, brutish, and short" jungle signified a false non-contemporaneity—the "real" non-contemporaneity would channel these primordial impulses against capitalism. Still, as false as fascism might be, "beneath all these bad anachronisms there is still a genuine one which poses a problem" (Bloch 1991:107). That is, the utopian impulse is real—more the pity that the primal, utopian urge is channeled into the magic and myth of the fascist state. In a related way, Bataille located the attraction of fascism precisely in the way it mobilized the "excess" of the proletariat, channeling its "collective energy" away from revolting against capitalism into a the trap of fascism.

But unlike Elias's, Bataille's and Bloch's ambiguity raises the possibility that the dormant savage might arise as a positive force for change, with the past containing within it the germ of revolution, however long it might have slumbered under the patina of capitalism and Weber's iron cage. Based on Bataille's reading of Mauss (by way of Hegel), this collective energy is the residue of an alienating labor process that leaves something behind.

> Bataille argued, the capacity for unproductive expenditure, removed from the social order as such, is concentrated in the mass of producers, whose existence is divided between the participation in the production of economic values (labor) and an unbounded energy, which is, strictly speaking, destructive. (Brenkmnan 1979:61)

It would be at least possible for this transgressive, extravagant impulse to work towards the emancipation of society, the unbounded energy that promises to liberate the working class from under the yoke of capitalism and the State. This is the cultural surplus that gestures towards Bloch's "utopian function," "the potential progressive content within artifacts frequently denounced and dismissed as mere ideology" (Zipes 1997:83). And even though, Bloch tells us, "the older paths and forms are mostly neglected with impunity," the "old forms partly help, if correctly deployed, with the New" (Bloch 1991:132). The past, the dormant, the atavistic, the anachronistic—these are not dead and forgotten. Instead, cultural survivals possess a kind of latency that can be reawakened and energized. Like pseudogenes, they may be impotent relics now, but need only a random mutation or two to suddenly become (re)productive.

The "cultural survivals" that are said to have led to fascism are exemplary parasite culture—archaic, hangers on, sapping the energy of progress until, finally, multiplying enough to kill the host in the frenzy of war and genocide. They are the superstructural equivalent of our parasitic DNA, the non-coding DNA that, until a few years ago, seemed to have no other purpose than to utilize the cell's resources in order to replicate itself and, in the process, confer "some disadvantage to the host" (Bardini 2011:43). But can parasitic genes be put to more therapeutic use? The possibility that some classes of non-coding DNA might be used to, say, "deliver" therapeutic genes more effectively than inactive viruses exploits the usefulness of the parasite—transposons move around the genome and work to reproduce themselves. In this, parasites are the ideal messenger—the facilitate communication because they are communicative. That is, they can be seen as interfering in a genetic-communicative circuit in different ways: blocking the completion of a message, adding to the message, multiplying the message.

This was the energy that surrealism looked to tap into, a neat, mirror-image of cultural evolutionism. Creating art from the materialist trappings of the exotic Other might awaken the energy beneath the surface of the rationalized alienated city—might liberate the primal, libidinal energy and explode into the present like Benjamin's angel. When the surrealists scoured Paris's markets for what James Clifford calls "the artifacts of culture," they were looking for that uncanny (unheimlich) city beneath the sterile metropolis, the Guinean mask that awakens love and fear in Nadja's protagonist, because of "its monumental crest resembling a railroad signal" (Breton 1960:122; Clifford 1981). Levi-Strauss in the 1940s encountered the same archaic latencies in the hybrid stratigraphies of New York:

> New York was decidedly not the ultra-modern metropolis I had expected, but an immense horizontal and vertical disorder attributable to some spontaneous upheaval of the urban crust rather than to the deliberate plans of builders. Here, mineral strata, ancient or recent, were still intact in spots: while elsewhere peaks emerged from the surrounding magma like witnesses to different eras which followed one another at an accelerated rhythm with, at intervals, the still visible remnants of all those upheavals. (Levi-Strauss 1992:49)

For Levi-Strauss, as for Benjamin, these relics were a source of alterity; they revealed "other worlds and other times." These portals were "facilities for escape" (49), and not just to other places and other times, but to alternatives.

Still, more than any others, Bataille and Bloch look to survivals as sources of disruption and transgression. Bataille's interpretations as human sacrifice—the ultimate cultural survival for Tylor and Frazer (and the ultimate target for Tylor's reformer's science)—dwell on the way they reveal in a flash the limits of society. For Tylor, the pathos of the Czech fisherman who is left to drown in order to propitiate the water spirit dramatizes the need for his reformer's science, while the image of "King of the Wood" and "the Scapegoat" are the organizing tropes in *The Golden Bough* (Tylor 1871,I:98-99). For Tylor, this was clear evidence of the looming threat of uncivilized remnants. But for Bataille, this was the "accursed share" that held society together, a cycle of violence and liberation that is missing in reified modernity (Bataille 1993). Baudrillard's interpretations of Bataille highlight their shared investments in parasitology:

> Any structure that hunts down, expels or exorcizes its negative elements risks a catastrophe caused by a thoroughgoing backlash, just as any organism that

> hunts down and eliminates its germs, bacteria, parasites or other biological antagonists risks metastasis and cancer—in other words, it is threatened by a voracious positivity of its own cells. (Baudrillard 1993:106)

Tylor's reformer's science, in other words, undermines the élan vital that allows society to continue in the first place. The "civilizing mission" betrays its own death instincts.

But if we consider parasite culture as not only dragging down the progress of culture, but the progress of the discourse on culture, then we would have to agree with Agamben's castigation of Bataille for infecting his work with the parasites of Victorian anthropology:

> Interpretations of social phenomena and, in particular, of the origin of sovereignty, are still heavily weighed down by a scientific mythologeme that, constituted between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, has consistently led the social sciences astray in a particularly sensitive region. This mythologeme, which we may provisionally call "the theory of the ambivalence of the sacred," initially took form in late Victorian anthropology and was immediately passed on to French sociology. Yet its influence over time and its transmission to other disciplines have been so tenacious that, in addition to compromising Bataille's inquiries into sovereignty, it is present even in that masterpiece of twentieth-century linguistics, Emile Benveniste's Indo-European-Language and Society. (Agamben 1988:49)

And yet, contra Agamben, I would argue that, however flawed Bataille's evocations of "taboo" and "the sacrifice" might be, they create an animating force that allows him to mobilize the proletariat's energy is new configurations of resistance and transgression. This is the paradox of parasitic culture: however much an interpretive dead-end, there is still the potential there for motility and transposition. This emphasis on mobility and forging new connections is at the heart of the reevaluation of parasitic DNA. Ninety-eight percent of our genome may be made up of so-called "junk DNA," the "noise" that is replicated in course of making us who we are, but what if that noise were, instead, construed as the precondition for the "signal"? "In order to hear the message alone," Serres writes, the receiver "would have to be identical to the sender" (1982:70). That is, a system without noise wouldn't include replication at all. The precondition for life, then, is precisely the noise of the unproductive and the parasitic. In this inversion of the

communicative (or the genetic-communicative) circuit, it's the parasitic DNA that enables the coding DNA.

From being dismissed as non-productive free-loaders in earlier generic research, non-coding DNA is being reevaluated as an important factor in transposing, translating, transliterating: the noise that interrupts—and thereby enables—DNA replication. Here, the parasite changes the conditions for the production of proteins. It is an ultimately salubrious noise. Could we say the same of parasite culture? In Serres's famous parable, a poor man has stopped to savor the smells coming from the kitchen of a restaurant, when the sous-chef runs out to demand payment. Things seem at an impasse until a passer-by comes and suggests that the poor man "pay" for his meal with the sound of his coin.

> The roast is the thing eaten, and an aroma comes from it. The coin is the thing exchanged, and a sound comes from it. If the coin is worth the roast, then the sound of the coin is worth the aroma of the food. (Serres 1982:35)

This is Serres's theory of the "third man," a noise that interrupts a system and transforms discourse. Picture a network graph: lines (edges) link together people, ideas and institutions (nodes) in a structured, directed way. But here comes a "third man," another node in the network. Perhaps a new idea, new infrastructure, new conditions. This has the effect of transforming the value of all of the "links" (edges)--not, perhaps, in a revolutionary way, but with a measurable impact. The third man shifts emphasis from one path to another, opens up new paths, closes down others. Temporally and discursively, the third comes either after or before; not part of the original communicative circuit, it upsets the static binarism of sender and receiver.

Anthropology is beset with its own parasite culture, sepulchral evocations of Victorian primitives: the dross of a discredited, colonial era that rears its orientalist head at inopportune moments, that silently reproduces itself from edition to edition of the anthropology textbooks we assign. This parasite is almost never welcome at anthropology's table; it introduces all sorts of pathologies: colonialism, racism, androcentrism, and heterosexism. And yet, could it sometimes transport us (or at least divert us) from our discursive impasses? Latour's admonition in *We Have Never Been Modern* makes complete sense in this context:

> However, we have never abandoned the old anthropological matrix. We have never stopped building our collectives with raw materials made of poor humans and humble non-humans. How could we be capable of disenchanting the world, when every day our laboratories and our factories populate the world with hundreds of hybrids stranger than those of the day before? Is Boyle's air pump any less strange than the Arapesh spirit houses? (Latour 1993:115)

Here, that old anthropological matrix combines two parasite cultures—the animism at the core of Boyle's air pump and Arapesh spirit houses, and the series of racially-inflected misunderstandings regarding magic and religion that led E.B. Tylor to theorize "animism." If the one parasitism ensures that "we will never be modern," the other parasitism re-frames the unilinear evolutionism as the circulation of agent-networks of objects—in other words, it enables Latour's work in the first place. In Serres's formulation, the parasitical misunderstanding of the Arapesh spirit house links it back to the modernity that produced it by turning an invidious distinction between animism and science into a networked agency that re-figures both animism and science.

Finally, there is that third, parasitic movement: the horizontal insertion of this recrudescent Victorian anthropology into the genetic regions of contemporary theory. Now, it is with this anachronistic vision of the "Arapesh Spirit House" (Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson and Raymond Firth by way of Donald Tuzin) that we understand laboratory practice. But this is only one example of what is, for anthropology, an ancient, parasitic insertion. There are similar parasites infesting the cultural theory all around us—the mortifying presence of anthropology's discredited past in the theories we (re)appropriate into our own work.

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* began to gain currency in US academics after its publication in English in 1987. Although Deleuze's and Guattari's work was slow to spread to anthropology (Jensen and Rödje 2010), by 2010 anthropology had taken a distinctly Deleuzean turn, attributed mostly to its parasitic appropriations of the language of *A Thousand Plateaus*: rhizomes, assemblage, deterritorialization, reterritorialization. Hamilton and Placas (2011:248) attribute the spread of Deleuze in anthropology to the "memelike quality" of the language. But while Deleuzean tropes may indeed exercise a parasitic power over their anthropological imagination, the surge in Deleuzean encounters is at least in part attributable to Deleuze's and Guattari's quid pro quo appropriations of anthropology. Seldom has a work of philosophy engaged this much anthropology, and yet the ethnographies they use are invariably drawn from anthropology's colonial past: "primitive societies," they explain, "operate essentially by codes and territorialities" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:212). Anachronistic references percolate through *A Thousand*

Plateaus, uneasy reminders that anthropological efforts to distance itself from its colonial past are sadly Pyrrhic, since it is precisely the figure of the savage that animates the discussion here, just as it parasitically inhabits recent writings on information society and the "gift economy" (Fuchs 2011). As Andrew Lattas has critiqued, Deleuze and Guattari too often (even for a work from the 1970's), stoop to stereotyping and bland orientalism.

> Primitive society is seen as a pack, as dominated by collectivity rather than individualization. Such a perspective reproduces the ethnocentrism of Durkheim and much of contemporary social thought which still sees the primitive as embodying a collective herd consciousness whilst the western self is always an individuated self. (Lattas 1991:100)

Against the backdrop of the independence and civil rights movements of the 1960's and 1970's, these evocations of the savage conjure distinctly pre-colonial times in a work that was published just after Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979). Ironically (given their politics), Deleuze's and Guattari's interventions appear to run on the very same machine that fueled Western orientalism, with "lines of flight" producing "our" multiplicities on the backs of the "primitive," who are doubly cursed in being both pigeon-holed in the savage slot while, at the same time, denied the creative actualizations of these virtual savageries.

Of course, they do this not to excoriate the "savage," but to critique the "civilized". Nevertheless, Lattas isn't buying it:

> Though Deleuze and Guattari assert the need to analyse specific assemblages of power, they often fail to do this. They choose convenient examples of otherness which allow them to homogenize other societies into a generalized Other capable of operating as the philosophical opposite of the West. (1991:101)

But there's some sense here that Lattas is arguing in bad faith, that he's not following the arc of Deleuzean aesthetics. While Deleuze's and Guattari's deployment of the "savage" and the "primitive" is parasitically redolent with exactly those recidivistic tropes anthropology has hoped to distance itself from, there are differences between Deleuze's and Guattari's approach and that of the Orientalist scholarship that Said, Asad and others critique (Dirks 2004).

Their métier is, after all, the redeployment of ideas and concepts, an excavation of Western philosophies for possibilities within these ruins. Accordingly, Deleuze and Guattari are not uncritical of their deployment of the "savage":

> It is time once again to multiply practical warnings. First, it is never a question of a return to . . . .It is not a question of "returning" to the presignifying and presubjective semiotics of primitive peoples. We will always be failures at playing African or Indian, even Chinese, and no voyage to the South Seas, however arduous, will allow us to cross the wall, get out of the hole, or lose our face. We will never succeed in making ourselves a new primitive head and body, spiritual, and faceless. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:188)

Throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, there are various qualifications and scare quotes to suggest the shortcomings of this conjuration of the primitive: "the so-called primitive" (1987:117). And yet, the "primitive" remains—a series of negative (or positive) attributes diametrically opposed to their civilized opposites. It is hard to dismiss charges that Deleuze and Guattari are merely deploying a more liberal strand of the "anthropological gambit," "objects of modernist pity, objects of consumptive lust and antimodernist redemption" (di Leonardo 1998:142).

So unsettling is their anachronistic presence, that Deleuze and Guattari are compelled to raise the question themselves:

> Why return to the primitives, when it is a question of our own life? The fact is that the mention of segmentarity was constructed by ethnologists to account for so-called primitive societies, which have no fixed, central State apparatus and no global power mechanisms or specified political institutions. (1987:209)

Here, the flexible, horizontally-organized "primitive" segmentarity is emphasized (after Meyer-Fortes and Evans-Pritchard) for the flexible and shifting forms it takes. So far, they've adduced a "segmentarity" that is very nearly an artifact of colonial anthropology. But they continue: "However, it seems to us difficult to maintain that State societies, even our modern States, are any less segmentary. The classical opposition between segmentarity and centralization hardly seems relevant" (1987:210). Does this mean that distinctions between "civilized" and "primitive" collapse together, time and distance

disappearing down a singularity of psychic unity? That division, once part of the dogma of political anthropology, doesn't hold up to scrutiny (nor does it hold up to the re-deployment of segmentarity that Deleuze develops through his oeuvre). But does that mean that "we" are "primitive", too?

> Supple segmentarity cannot be restricted to primitive peoples. It is not the vestige of the savage within us but a perfectly complementary function, inseparable from the other. Every society, every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular. If they are distinct, it is because they do not have the same terms or same relations or the same nature or even the same type of multiplicity. If they are inseparable, it is because they coexist and cross over into each other. (1987:213)

This suspension of what could be called more arboreal understandings of political development, and their replacement where both the molecular and the molar are held in Bergsonian virtuality, can be connected to a general rejection of arboreal understandings. But aren't "primitive" and "civilized" segmentarity (however entangled) still distinct? Don't they just re-inscribe all of the old anthropological survivals onto rhizomatic theory? "We could cite hunting societies, war societies, secret societies, crime societies, etc. Becomings-animal are proper to them" (1987:242). In the anthropological gambit, the tableau of the Other can always be held up for our edification on the proverbial pedestal—as long as the natives remain Other.

But, in contrast to Lattas, could something else be going on as well? Is there, in other words, a space where we might understand Deleuze's and Guattari's project as entangled in both the colonial and racial underpinning of Western modernity while simultaneously gesturing towards their subversion? In other words, could there be a parasite anthropology at work? As Deleuze and Guattari note in their introduction, the lines of flight, the becomings-animal and becomings-sorcerer, are to be understood parasitically.

> The difference is that contagion, epidemic, involves terms that are entirely heterogeneous: for example, a human being, an animal, and a bacterium, a virus, a molecule, a microorganism. Or in the case of a truffle, a tree, a fly and a pig. These combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations. That is the only way Nature operates—against itself. This is a far cry from the filiative production or hereditary reproduction, in which the only differences retained are a simple duality between

> sexes within the same species, and small modifications across generations. For us, on the other hand, there are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis, as many differences as elements contributing to a process of contagion. We know that many beings pass between a man and a woman; they come from different worlds, are borne on the wind, form rhizomes around roots: they cannot be understood in terms of production, only in terms of becoming. The Universe does not function by filiation. All we are saying is that animals are packs, and that packs form, develop, and are transformed by contagion. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:242)

The parasitic model Deleuze and Guattari develop can be seen as breaking with both monolithic models of power and hegemony, as well as with teleological utopias that are their ideological opposite. As Deleuze said in an interview published in 2006, “For me, society is something that is constantly escaping in every direction . . .It flows monetarily, it flows ideologically. It is really made up of lines of flight, so much so that the problem for a society is how to stop it from flowing. For me, the powers come later.” (Deleuze 2006:280). Here, technologies of governmentality—and the revolutions against them—come later; freedom and oppressions multiply in the social like viruses around a lesion. In other words, the social is always already pregnant with their contagion. But the ultimate consequences of the Deleuzean turn concern theory itself. Just as “the molar” and the “molecular” cannot be neatly parsed into chronotypes, so the theories we utilize operate according to a parasitic logic, entangled in assemblages of colonialism, post-colonialism and revolution simultaneously.

Lattas finds this kind of recidivism intolerable—to him, Deleuze and Guattari merely channel the cultural evolutionism of Tylor and Frazer. Certainly, just as Tylor goes to some great lengths to find the savage in the civilized, so it is for Deleuze and Guattari, who strain to craft a sorcerer-philosopher out of shreds and patches of ethnology and postmodern philosophy.

> The teleologies of evolutionism are gone, but the crass inter-species comparisons are now undertaken in the name of the radical politics of the molecular, in the name of revealing the underlying ahistorical war machine. Though evolutionism’s interspecies comparisons are stripped of their moral values embodied in hierarchical evolutionary time, nevertheless a new essentialism is produced . . .Instead of discovering the hidden primordial

> savagery in the social, we are now asked to the discover the ahistorical war machine comprised of packs and becomings-animal. (Lattas 1991:106)

It seems that Deleuze and Guattari have reinvented Tylor, but there's a difference; here they're engaging the evolutionary, not to up-end it, nor to confirm it, but to keep these parasitic orders in a state of virtuality that they identify with becoming. This is a parasite anthropology built on ultimately non-filiative cultural survivals.

The question is—what good is parasite culture to anthropology? It is difficult to read *A Thousand Plateaus* without thinking this: what do we do with these nods to discredited theories, unintelligible anachronisms, paeans to racist science? It is telling that Deleuze's apologists in anthropology rarely cite the ethnographic examples he uses, even though *A Thousand Plateaus* is rife with references to Meyer Fortes, Evans-Pritchard, Levi-Strauss and Leroi-Gourhan.

Perhaps another parasitic example is in order. In a recent collection of essays from the futurist and social scientist Ashis Nandy, we get, amidst discussions of Indian independence, post-colonialism, and urban poverty, references to shamans:

> Perhaps in the present global culture the shaman, taken metaphysically as opposition to the king and the priest, remains the ultimate symbol of authentic dissent, representing the utopian and transcendental aspects of the child, the lunatic, the androgynous, and the artist. In this he remains the least socialized articulation of the values of freedom, creativity, multiple realities, and an open future. (Nandy 2008:178)

There's a question here about the ultimate value of something like the "shaman," itself a Western reification resting on pernicious binarisms of nature/culture, western/non-western, rational/ irrational. But I would argue that Nandy's shaman is not Castaneda's shaman (nor Eliade's, nor Campbell's). Instead, the "shaman" stands in for a kind of sublimated possibility at the core of globalization—the possibility for unrest, certainly, but also the virtual potentials that have been silenced by the head-long rush into neo-liberal oblivion. Perhaps Nandy's shaman might be compared to Michael Taussig's ethnographer, a figure of magic and secrecy, to be sure, but also "a set of tricks, simulations, deceptions, and art or appearances in a continuous movement of counterfeit and feint" (Taussig 2003:278). The "shaman," in other words, is less some exoticized figure standing

outside science and rationalism than a place-keeper for the tactics on the margins, involving not only alternatives to present configurations of power/knowledge, but also the heterogeneity of challenges to the center in the oftentimes unrecognized and delegitimized tactics of the powerless.

But when I (parasitically) appropriate these terms in my anthropological work, when I trace the deterritorialization and reterritorializations of resistance against the state in the figure of the "shaman," or the "sorcerer," I also parasitically re-infect that work with a Victorian anthropology that locates the genesis of territorialization in the primitive. However: at the same time, it is because of this parasite culture that I can extend these lines of flight to emergent, machinic assemblages. That somehow, in this recidivistic conjuration of "clans" and "tribes," there might be a line of escape from the molar.

It is here, when Deleuze and Guattari are at their most parasitic, that they are simultaneously their most Bloch-ian—dredging up the past in order to seize on the latency in these moribund ethnological theories and unsettle the discourse on the State, in order to gesture to multiplicity. Positioned at the interstices of communication and relationship, it is the parasite that is best positioned to do this, to transcribe, transpose and re-order. As Serres writes,

> The parasite has placed itself in the most profitable positions, at the intersection of relations. The elementary link of this individual activity was to relate to a relation; its performances are far better in spots where several relations cross or meet. It is at the knots of regulation, and suddenly, it relates to the collective. (Serres 1982:43)

Couldn't we use our parasitic theory as a pseudo-transposon (and one we've parasitically appropriated from genetic biology) that takes us where we want to go? In their hopeful, critical appropriation of Deleuzean thought, Joao Biehl and Peter Locke reterritorialize Deleuze for anthropology by focusing on that image of the "crossroads": the parasitic Deleuze that puts different discourses and narratives within (contagious) communication (Biehl and Locke 2010:323).

Conclusion: Towards a Parasitic Anthropology

What does it mean to embrace anthropological parasitism? On the one hand, it is to admit the obvious: anthropologists are parasites that infect, disrupt, transfer and transpose; simultaneously, we are beset by all sorts of parasitic forces. It's Darwinism updated for a

more epidemiological age: infect or be infected. Tylor acknowledged the parasitism at the core of our work in 1871: “The educated man,” he lamented, “substantially uses the method of the savage”. The discursive tropes through which we communicate originate, as he said, “in the language of savages” (Tylor 1871, I:160). This may have been a source of great vexation to Tylor, but this weakness at the core of anthropology’s language may yet act as stanchion for its parasitic deployment into a world of truncated possibilities and flattened imaginations—an anodyne to one-dimensionality. Heir to Tylor, that anthropology is doubly parasitic—forced to recapitulate archaic evocations of the savage through a language that may still catalyze its transformation. That is, all the while anthropological critiques proliferate according to their own etiologies, we may also hope for ideas to opportunistically infect anthropology, to turn the discourse away from the endless refrains of theory and resistance-to-theory to something more motile, more subversive and—ultimately—more salubrious to our living host, human life itself.

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