

Stick-To-The-Script: Established Rationality and Organizational Politics in Cinema

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ABSTRACT

In order to better understand the nature of power within organizations, I offer a position tracing back to a civilization's established rationality on how Hegelian and Marxist master/slave dialectics must be performed. I point out that the master/slave relationship has a coded gendered quality to it where masculine bodies dominate feminine ones. By using Lacanian psychoanalysis, queer theory, and Deleuzian metaphysics; I attempt to describe how power dynamics within the organization require scripts and codes that allow for a workplace performativity that inscribes the continuation of oppressive and repressive regimes. In order to best describe a society's thoughts on the subject, I interpret the way that power dynamics are portrayed and talked about in Hollywood movies. I choose several films to analyze including Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, Mike Judge's *Office Space*, and Boots Riley's *Sorry to Bother You*. Each film is from a different technological and cultural era which should allow us to best understand what is constant between each film, thus revealing the underlying rationality of the power relationship of the modern and postmodern organization.

INTRODUCTION

We should not stray too far down the path away from using psychoanalytic theory to properly explain the world we live in; or, at the very least the way as we experience it. It is true that psychoanalytic practice within the clinic is full of its own flaws, which have been rooted back to Freud himself refusing to accept a scientific backing while still calling it a science. Freud's fatal flaw to the psychiatric method of psychoanalytic practice was basing his findings mainly on clinical observations. However, the theoretical side of psychoanalysis, much like the other theories it is often paired with (i.e. Marxism), gives us the tools and proper vocabulary to be able to navigate the world around us. For example, take Freud's most notorious theory: the Oedipus Complex. It matters not whether any concept of Oedipus exists to the world in itself, as a social construction it is real to our experience even if it does not exist in the Real. This is because Oedipus as the ideology that backs existing patriarchal structures in the Western tradition must be understood through its rooting not only as Oedipus in the familial triangle but larger as Oedipus as the wider social structure. As Deleuze and Guattari have claimed in *Anti-Oedipus*:

"Only in appearance is Oedipus a beginning, either as a historical or prehistorical origin, or as a structural foundation. In reality, it is a completely ideological beginning, for the sake of ideology. Oedipus is always and solely an aggregate of destination fabricated to meet the requirements of an aggregate of departure constituted by a social formation. It can be applied to everything, in that the agents and relations of social production, and the libidinal investments corresponding to them, are made to conform to the figures of familial reproduction" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 101).

To them it is clear: Freud rather than creating the Oedipus complex as the structure of society had discovered it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 53). Oedipus as an ideological backing exposes capitalism's (along with past systems of hierarchy) rationality embedded in hierarchical, more specifically, patriarchal system of social oppression and individualized psychic repression. Deleuze and Guattari find that clinical psychoanalytic practice is inherently conservative as it reinforces existing ideology by binivocalizing Oedipus into the analysand's signifying chain of desire thus continuing the forwarding of lack and castration where there exists nothing but material desire in the form of Real drives. Furthermore, Guattari's militancy against psychiatry in general reflects Oedipalization as the analyst takes on the role of the social father with their monopoly on knowledge that castrates the analysand into submission.

Using the framework laid down by Freud and which Lacan later synthesized with Hegelian dialectics, psychoanalysis continues to be just as relevant in the modern world as its Marxist counterpart in a critique of established rationality and ideology. Indeed, Deleuze argued: "structures [do not exist in the mind, they] exist in the immediate impossible real" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 97). To be sure, to Deleuze and Guattari: Oedipalization occurs in the socialization of subjects from a societal ideology rather than an individual's psychic repression influencing their society.

Within a Marxist framework, the domination of the slave by its master has its origin in a three factor process: (1) the fear of the master's castration from the phallus – to be understood further as the material drives of *castration anxiety* for the master or *castrated subsistence* of the slave (2) this fear leading to one party (the master) establishing a symbolic system of law and conceptual network associations– to be understood further as *rationality* which reifies subjectivity (3) this dialectic between master and slave creates performative actions of master (masculine) and slave (feminine) which lead to a false consciousness and the impregnating of meaning into rationality – to be understood further as *ideology*. The master, through his control over rationality, has the means to create phallic-signifiers that justify his position and are reinforced over the society through his ideological project. These three factors inspire the performativity in the workplace: workers and managers act out a ballet of replicating social and psychic repression, thereby evading more traditional forms of oppression, balancing the imaginary and symbolic orders. This performativity reinforces perceptions of the office power structure and secures the master's monopoly on discourse. As philosopher Slavoj Žižek states: "Performatives are, at their most fundamental, acts of symbolic trust and engagement. When I tell someone 'you are my master!' I oblige him to treat me a certain way" (Žižek, 2006/1, 45).

Understanding the structure of workplace domination will lead us to a better understanding of power, its origins, and how it may be opposed. Equipped with such a critique, we may diminish, at the very least, any surplus-repression present within the established power structure. Utilizing psychoanalytic, queer, and social theory, I will uncover the origins of workplace domination and shed light on the various forms it takes today.

Such an effort is important to society as it has the potential to structure a more horizontal distribution of power upon such an understanding. However, before such is possible it is necessary for inquiry and praxis to be synthesized into intelligent action. Action attempted in the past against hegemonic power structures is too often captured and reintegrated into the system; failing to bring significant change. My next task at hand will be to differentiate between action from *pseudo-action* (action for action's sake; a sort of interpassivity). To help us draw such a distinction, let us take a look at one industry in which we all find fluency with.

One of the most common ways Americans are exposed to systemic critiques is through Hollywood films. By examining some of the film industry's most critical anti-work, anti-capital, and anti-boss films we will arrive at a solid framework to view the power structures they critique. Each film offers its own particular take on how to 'resist' the master, but every film inevitably raises serious skepticism towards revolution or reform. In most cases these films steer away from presenting an 'anti-master' message—one that calls for revolution. Instead they offer a message of individual resistance by becoming the 'anti-slave'. However, the question remains: How is it possible to resist the master's ideological project without falling into their trap of recuperation? How do we separate activities that are bound for recuperation from those of active and effective resistance? Or, as author Naomi Klein states: is resistance truly not enough? In order to explore these question we must turn to psychoanalytic and queer theory.

LITERARY REVIEW

Who controls the rules, the rationality, and the established reality principle of today's experience? In order to explain first, I will begin explaining the structure of the unconscious under a Lacanian approach. Secondly, I will explain how it relates to power using Allen and Foucault. Thirdly, I will show how Žižek uses Lacan to critique ideology under capitalism. And finally, I will use Butler's performativity to show how gendered roles of domination and submission perform their duty within the big Other.

Lacanian Structure. Before we begin, we must first understand Lacanian psychoanalysis and its roots within the project of structuralism and semiotics. More specifically we must first explain Lacan's view on the three orders: The Symbolic, The Imaginary, and The Real. The Symbolic and The Imaginary both attempt at finding the meaning of The Real. The Real is unable to be experienced by human senses which gives it the nickname from Lacan as 'the realm of the impossible' or, better yet, The Real is the Kantian world in itself that which escapes signification or imaginary identification (Felluga, 2011). Therefore, The Real must be interpreted through the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders to experience it through the human consciousness although that which evades meaning continues to evade our desire; thus is the tension between The Symbolic and The Imaginary vs. The Real (Felluga, 2011). Humans, being symbolic creatures, must create signs in order to communicate and experience the outside world to one another using their sensibilities and intuitions. If one talks about a tree, they are doing no more than using the technology of language (a sign) in order to portray their meaning of the symbolic figure they stand in for what the tree is within the realm of The Real. The signifier for the sign is within the realm of The Symbolic (Lacan, 1993, 184). This is in contrast to the *signified*—the concept of the sign, being in the realm of The Imaginary (Lacan, 1997, 87). A community of humans in a social unit must come to a consensus that a signifier is attached to its signified, thus creating the sign in the signification process of denotation. Lacan later introduces the concept of a *signifying chain* in order to illustrate how a sign may have multiple signifiers, all of which may lead back to the same signified. For an analysis to be properly analyzed, the analyst must work their way through the symbolic signifiers in order to function on a level of signified conceptual imagery (Fink, 1997, 87); so too is the function when analyzing social and cultural phenomenon.

The Imaginary is the realm where the narcissistic phantasy is played out without the barriers of logic or established reality (Felluga, 2011). This order is called by Lacan: 'the order of fraud' due to its inability for the subject to replicate this realm within The Real as it is dominated by the feeling of righteousness for the neurotic's mind and its inability to doubt its own truth claims or reality checks. The Symbolic on the other hand is an order justified by established language and law. The individual symbols 'T', 'R', 'E', and 'E' mean nothing if there is no rule that together they mean the word 'TREE', and the word means nothing if there is no rule that 'TREE' represents the concept of the physical object with wood, bark, and leaves. Lacan calls The Symbolic truly 'the realm of absence' due to there being nothing there but rules and established logic holding the fabric of the nothingness together. The rules or laws of this Symbolic Order are established on an unconscious level by what Foucault would call an *épistémè* (Foucault, 1984, 72-73). The knowledge, laws, morality and rationale/formal logic of a certain space are rooted in the time period of which they are measured. Along with this power is what controls knowledge and truth.

If we see the small *a* in between the three orders we can understand that this other (*autre*) represents not only us but our *sinthome*. The *sinthome* could be properly translated into English as 'symptom' but it is not simply a symptom as we find today. Bailey describes Lacan's view of the *sinthome*: "In 1957, he had come to the view that a subject's symptom came into being in the process of the unconscious, and that this process involved acts of language, or discourse: the symptom is 'inscribed in a writing process'" (Bailey, 2009, 105). Because the symptoms of the subject are sewn into the fabric of their meaning mechanism to The Real and holds the subject's three orders in a stable fashion (Bailey, 2009, 107), the subject can act violently against curing themselves of their symptoms as they have a primal identification with them. Lacan defines the *sinthome* as a 'pure *jouissance*' as it is unable to be symbolized as acting-out can be (Lacan, 1963, 112). The *sinthome* exists outside of meaning and is the central concept within a subject. This pure enjoyment is traumatic and can lead to a subject identifying with the symptoms that plague them (Bailey, 2009, 108).

Through Nietzsche we come to the conclusion that it is the Master who creates the fabric of reality through their creation of what is considered rational discourse by defining what is permissible through language; rather, what is rationality (Nietzsche, 2006, 3). The master is the one who creates reality, whereas the slave can only react to the master's ideological project. Hence, Nietzsche's views on slave morality and the slave's reaction in the form of *ressentiment*. Through his ideology: 'all roads lead to Rome' or perhaps Paris would be a better analogy as Napoleon,

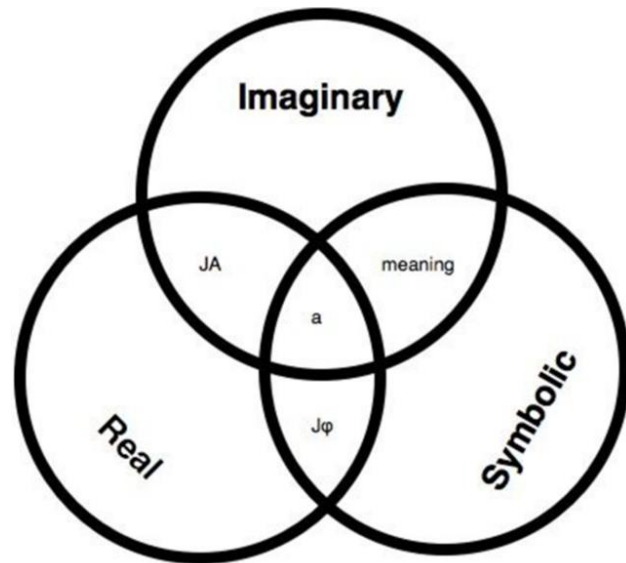


Figure 1. Lacan's three realms: Imaginary, Real, Symbolic.

in his positioning as the master, created the bourgeois notion of the nation-state where the members of the French nation, in their positions as the slaves, followed their master down the roads in which he had paved for them. And, coincidentally, all roads happened to lead (as intended) down the path to the master's will. Of course, Rome or Paris, in this analogy, means domination through coercion of varying degrees both repressive and oppressive. We shall return to this point later on.

Gendered Castration. We must understand that the master (to be referred to here as the masculine within psychoanalytic tradition) dominates his subjects (to be referred to as the effeminate) to castrate them. This is due to the Oedipalization of society which holds that male bodies dominate female bodies (Again, simply because a concept is a social reality does not make true; yet, we still find ourselves living within it and thus we have a need to describe it as such). This can be further elaborated through Althusser's ideological state apparatuses reinforcing ideology through material rituals and practices which interpellate subjects embedded with ideological consciousness (Althusser, 2001, 83). By being dominated, the male subject loses his (symbolic) phallus due to the castration he receives; thus, transforming him into a symbolic effeminate within the interpersonal relationship. The phallus cannot be denied but its symbolic power can be denied access either as a site of personal power or of resistance to the master's power (Allen, 2015, 28). Allen describes how masculinity and the act of 'being fucked' carries a humiliating and shameful connotation to men: "For a man to be fucked, he must submit, place himself beneath, and become the bottom in the hierarchical structure of the language of fucking" (Allen, 2015, 29). Is the act physical alone in its nature?

We should now reflect on a story from the life of a youthful Julius Caesar whom as a fresh military officer was engaged in a homosexual relationship with the Anatolian king of Bithynia, Nicomedes. Later amongst his rising political career in the senate, his enemies, such as Cicero, would bring the affair to attention in order to slander the military conqueror. But it was not that Caesar was bisexual or had homosexual relations as this was common practice in Roman culture. Rather, it was meant to slander Caesar for the passive role he played in being fucked by Nicomedes (Neill, 2011, 200). Upon his successes in Gaul, Caesar's soldiers would chant: "Caesar conquered the Gauls, Nicomedes conquered Caesar" (Neill, 2011, 200).

If the phallus itself is symbolic in nature, why would the 'fucking' not be too? Foucault, Halperin, and Bersani all agree that, within the discourse of contemporary society, to be 'fucked' is to be sexually feminized into passivity (Allen, 2015, 31). However, does it not follow that in a discourse on power that the sexual 'being fucked' would translate to the social 'being fucked' as in "my boss really fucked me here" or "that dude really fucked him up". Through this understanding we may see how the boss or the other may feminize the male without even touching him. This symbolic 'fucking' allows for a dialectical relationship between master and slave. Understanding this transition we can continue with Allen:

"To be 'taken on his knees' is to be denied claims to masculinity and most notably to be denied the power of the phallus. When power is taken from men, the specter of castration cannot loom far behind. This castration is not necessarily about the physical act, though undoubtedly that is part of the fear, but rather about the displacement of the phallus's power. So much of culture is dependent upon the phallus as a guarantor of life, as a symbol of power, and as central to how we differentiate humans" (Allen, 2015, 33).

Power is about the phallus. To increase power one must castrate others; for within power is a zero-sum game. Increasing others' castration while holding one's own phallic power creates a distance between interpersonal subject's. This is the lens of Oedipal ideology at work. It should not surprise us to learn that chimpanzees often target the genitalia in violent confrontations with one another (or humans). Why is this? The phallus holds the symbolic power of the master and in order to dominate them they must castrate the phallus from the master. Although we know that the phallus is not just physically a sexual organ, it exists at a farther and more profound level in the realm of the symbolic and the imaginary. In human cultures, the covering up of genitalia (a practice absent for our great ape cousins) amplifies helps our power dynamics in so far as it hides the physical phallus and thus enlarges the power of the imaginary and symbolic phallus.

In Totem and Taboo, Freud describes the primal scene where the brother horde decides to rebel against the primal father in the original Oedipal sin (Freud, 2018, 116-117). The brother horde kills the father, separates him from the phallus, and cannibalizes his body. In 2013, the same scene was observed by Jill Pruett in a band of chimpanzees (Pruett, 2013). This is not uncommon in the wild. The brother horde in Freud's theory then feels the guilt of the patricidal act and creates laws to ensure the act will never happen again (to them). This is Freud's origin of repression of man by man. This guilt felt by the brother horde of the ghost of the father is immortalized by Lacan as the symbolic *Name-of-the-Father* (see below) which is a signifier to which the big Other does in fact exist even if it does not (Coelho dos Santos, 2016, 586). For Lacan: "The father, the *Name-of-the-Father*, sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law – namely, his sin" (Lacan, 1978, 34). To our vocabulary, this act of creating an association of laws and logic on a plane of concepts is to be called: *rationality*.

Ideology. The big Other is an illusionary otherness, one that exists within law and language but at the same time doesn't. Lacan's famous thesis on the big Other is that it doesn't exist; meaning that while it exists for us it has no real materiality outside our consciousness. Lionel Bailly states that "the [big] Other is Society, the Law, etc. – the whole set of hypotheses within which the Subject is constituted – it is an illustration of the fact that the Subject is part of an order which predates its birth and is exterior to the self" (Bailly, 2009, 66). In attempt to explain the big Other, Žižek relates it to Mexican soap operas where the actors have little to no time to memorize a script, as they are written for every day broadcast. So in order to ensure a smooth production, actors wear an earpiece in their ears that lets the director tell them what to do ("confront him for sleeping with your sister. Now hit him. Now embrace him and kiss") (Žižek, 2006/1, 8). This 'voice of God' that the soap represents is how the big Other operates: something we can always fall back on and know that we are safe. It is an external feeling that does not exist outside of our internal conscious. The big Other is the Symbolic Order:

"The symbolic order, society's unwritten constitution, is the second nature of every speaking being: it is here, directing and controlling my acts; it is the sea I swim in, yet it remains ultimately impenetrable—I can never put it in front of me and grasp it. It is as if we subjects of language, talk and interact like puppets, our speech and gestures dictated by some nameless all-pervasive agency" (Žižek, 2006/1, 8).

Discourse between small others is never just the small others, alone; there must always be the big Other, omnipresent, which mediates these interpersonal relations. The big Other must be the third to any situation. One such example is when we feel guilty for being paid at our full salaries during a slow day at work, or taking a break to check our phones. We can feel the big Other's gaze, we are never alone. Rather than a panopticon or surveillance the big Other exists within the symbolic. It is rationality as its entanglement of law, language, and ritual practicing continuously force a performativity of correctly learned roles within the social field. The big Other is much like a father figure that tells us right from wrong within the Foucauldian 'regime of truth'. This father (the master) identity is described by Žižek:

"A real father exerts authority only insofar as he posits himself as the embodiment of a transcendent symbolic agency, i.e., insofar as he accepts that it is not he himself, but the big Other, who speaks through him, in his words" (Žižek, 1996, 139).

The father does not command *his* wish, but represents the embodiment of the big Other's wish. During the coronavirus pandemic, a person wearing a mask in rural Texas would illicit one response from locals and a person refusing to wear a mask in New York City could be met with another totally different reaction. In both cases, the responders to the masked/unmasked party are allowing the big Other to act *through* them. The same may be pointed out when a boss positions himself within the authoritative discourse played in interoffice power relations. One's boss may become a completely different personality if the situation calls for his social chameleonic shapeshifting; one minute they are telling a story about a barbeque last weekend, the next they are twelve feet tall and spitting acid as they speak the word of God (the common hierarchical organization one shares with his or her boss) saying "you must, you will; you shan't, you won't". These words of order come not from inside the boss, but rather from the established big Other that is found within all members of the organization and all members of society. Every member knows the law of the father; all members at some level identify with the father's will. This embedded rationality found within the members of the group is signified by the *Name-of-The-Father*. It should be understood that the big Other works in tandem to socio-symbolic hierarchy. The *Name-of-The-Father* is an external signifier that ensures that a subject internalizes the symbolic order. Lacan describes a scene in the mirror stage when the child, upon realizing themselves in the mirror, will look over their shoulder back at the parent for assurance that they see it too (Lacan, 2006, 76). This other in the parent is representative of the big Other of which the child realizes its imago together with the big Other (Lacan, 2006, 76). Lacan was adamant that the mirror stage does not stop after the *I* function of identification; rather, that it continues for life and we are constantly met with mirrors that commit ourselves to our subjective identities within the Symbolic order and our imago within the Imaginary (Lacan, 1988, 17).

Further exploring the phallus, Žižek points out that the phallus is in itself a signifier which structurally is an organ detached from the body, an organ without a body in the reversal of the Deleuzeian Body without Organs (BwO) (Žižek, 1996, 140). The authority one receives from ownership of the symbolic phallus grants the subject the right to master-hood not only from himself, an authority believed not only by himself, but by the effeminized slaves of which he reigns over within the symbolic order that rationality demands through the big Other. Žižek uses the example of a judge to illustrate his point:

"When the subject is endowed with symbolic authority, he acts as an appendix to his symbolic title, i.e., it is the big Other who acts through him: suffice it to recall a judge who may be a miserable and corrupted person, but the moment he puts on his robe and other insignia, his words are the words of Law itself" (Žižek, 1996, 141).

Today the coworker with whom one shares a cubicle is a peer; tomorrow they are infected with the symbolic power of the phallus. The previous relationship must be forgotten and the new relationship, formalized. No longer may the days of youthful binge drinking together be brought up as the phallus has castrated the relationship between comrades. The power of the phallus given to the new authority figure results only from castration of the flock. But the master has also been castrated; his connection to the brother horde severed due to his new phallic authority. In order to protect his symbolic authority, the master must now create an ideology that interprets the established rationality; thus interpellation of subjects embedded with the master's ideological project. He must exist not on the same echelon as the slave; but, rather become something transcendental to it by objectifying himself by a signification of power.

“Suffice it to recall the proverbial highly placed manager who, from time to time, feels compelled to visit prostitutes in order to engage in masochist rituals in which he is ‘treated as a mere object’: the semblance of his active public existence in which he gives orders to his subordinates and ruins their lives is sustained by the fantasies of being turned into a passive object of other’s enjoyment” (Žižek, 2004, 391).

As the master is now a signifier of authority itself, an object representing the symbolic power of the phallus, the workers must denounce his subjectivity, in a Hegelian sense, in order not to break the formality of the relations. They must no longer be friends; however, this does not stop management in the office from attempting to blur the lines of power in a particularly postmodern performance: “I am your friend; this is not a job it’s a career; we are all like family here; we are a team; we empower our workers; I am a servant to you”.

As Žižek points out, it is easy to blur the line between an empty gesture made to be rejected and the paradox of the ‘willing’ free choice (Žižek, 1996, 153). Attempting to be friendly as management creates an environment where the worker is free to deny the master’s request, but never will. Denying the master may harm the artificial platonic relationship between the two. There is a psychological difference between being *commanded* to work a Saturday and being *asked* to work a Saturday. Either way, the worker will be working over the weekend. But the worker will remain their free self in the former and lose his or her freedom of choice in the latter, since they believe it was their own decision to work. The worker’s choice to work Saturday is based on the need to help the friendly manager out. Blurring the lines between forced labor and doing a favor for a friendly guy.

“Since, at the level of Ego-Ideal, the subject wants the semblance of a free choice, the superego injunction has to be delivered ‘between the lines’. Superego articulates the paradoxical injunction of what the subject, its addressee, has to choose freely; as such, this injunction has to remain invisible to the public eye if the Power is to remain operative. In short, what the subject effectively wants is a command in the guise of freedom, of a free choice: he wants to obey, but simultaneously to maintain the semblance of freedom and thus save face. If the command is delivered directly, by-passing the semblance of freedom, the public humiliation hurts the subject and can induce him to rebel; if there is no order discernible in the master's discourse, this lack of a command is experienced as suffocating and gives rise to the demand for a new master capable of providing a clear injunction. ” (Žižek, 1996, 153-154)

Žižek describes a scene from the Marx Brothers where Groucho is caught in a lie and answers: “who are you going to believe, your eyes or my words?” (Žižek, 2006/1, 33). This backward logic, upon analysis is not so unorthodox. In what Freud would call this ‘fetishist disavowal’: *I know that this man, in his business suit and his coffee mug, is largely incompetent and has no place being in the title of management; yet nonetheless I am treating him with respect and submitting to his authority as his insignia and rank tell me that when he speaks he might as well speak the word of God himself.* A judge may be corrupted, but his signifiers (a gable, a black robe) make me believe he is the law itself (Žižek, 2006/1, 33). Where the person who prefers their own sensory evidence to confirm the world as it is will fall short at this point because it is not what the boss or judge does but rather their intertwining within the symbolic order, the big Other, that confirms their positioning (Žižek, 2006/1, 33). Such insignia and titles are external to the subject and therefore when they become the signifier for the big Other, the subject loses touch with itself as it is castrated from the distancing of what it is opposed to what it must function as within the symbolic order (Žižek, 2006/1, 34). “This gap between my direct psychological identity and my symbolic identity (the symbolic mask or title I wear, defining what I am for and in the big Other) is what Lacan calls *symbolic castration*, with the phallus as its signifier” (Žižek, 2006/1, 34). From this we may understand the phallus as a symbolic insignia rather than a real organ that gives vitality to the subject.

It is through the Ego-Ideal that the subject interacts with the gaze of the big Other who tells me how I must act and how I am received (Žižek, 2006/1, 80). The Ego-Ideal is how we wish to be perceived by The Symbolic of the big Other’s gaze, the Ideal-Ego is how we perceive ourselves in The Imaginary realm, and the superego is that punishing and destructive force from The Real which exists in the distance between the two (Žižek, 2006/1, 80). Lacan later introduces another agency in the form of *the law of desire* which demands that the subject act along the

lines following its desires. It is critical for us to remember that for Lacan, *the subject's desire is the desire of the [big] Other* (Lacan, 1978, 38). Žižek writes:

“For Lacan, the seemingly benevolent agency of the Ego-Ideal that leads us to moral growth and maturity forces us to betray the ‘law of desire’ by way of adopting the ‘reasonable’ demands of the existing socio-symbolic order. The superego, with its excessive feeling of guilt, is merely the necessary obverse of the Ego-Ideal: it exerts its unbearable pressure upon us on behalf of our betrayal of the ‘law of desire’. The guilt we experience under superego pressure is not illusory but actual – ‘the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one’s desire’, and superego pressure demonstrates that we effectively *are* guilty of betraying our desire” (Žižek, 2006/1, 81).

Capitalism holds the ability to influence a subject’s desire to increase its power simply due to its hierarchical nature. Thus the subject will attempt to mediate the psychic repression from the superego by attempting to close the gap between the Ego-Ideal and the law of desire – a task which is impossible as it attempts to remove lack from the function of the symbolic subject (Žižek, 2006/1, 81). Easily enough to understand, the nature of capitalism itself is based on the coercion of atomized individual desires. Whether the individual desires are superficially materialist or a drive for deeper autonomy, both are forms of advertising within the everyday experience of which capital influences the worker into working against his or her own good and identifying with the goals laid out by the master. The shaping and reinforcement of desire is an ideological feat which has been illustrated well by Althusser’s theory of ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 2001, 80). To Althusser, ideology is equated to an imaginary relation to real relations (Althusser, 2001, 82). Our current inquiry holds us to look into the ideological state apparatus of Hollywood films.

Within the cultural ISAs the workers are castrated and targeted due to their *jouissance*. The enjoyment of which all subjects are ideologically targeted is the desire to enjoy wealth. This desire can be met by the masculine father who has the power to give *jouissance* (Žižek, 2006/2). Because his domain is in human management, the master is a pervert that shows us not what we desire, but what to desire (Žižek, 2006/2). What the worker desires, or rather what the master’s phallic-signifiers must point to in order to maintain control, is the transformation of the worker to the master. The *phallic-signifier* is any object that symbolically justifies the master’s symbolic authority, title, and right to *jouissance*. Such a symbol may be seen in upscale restaurants where the waiters, bartenders, and hosts wear a dress shirt and black tie whereas the management on duty are seen with full suits. This signifier points to justify the master’s discourse within the interpersonal relationship.

Symbolism within the master-slave dichotomy has existed for thousands of years whether it is the Pope’s white clothing to promote his purity and voice of God on earth separating him from the other believers or the Holy See itself representing the eternity of God, thus separating the office of the Papacy from other clergy and worshipers. Within the monarchy, the crown as an insignia aims to differentiate the King from his subjects by wearing rare jewels and metals, something that lower classes could not hold. The symbolic authority granted by the crown shows its authority as a phallic-signifier even more than any deity could grant. God can bestow power to man, but man must enforce his rite over others. Rationality (The Symbolic) and ideology (The Imaginary) must work together if the master’s will is to be protected. Ideology can only interpret meaning onto a symbolic system of rationality; the two must work in tandem to control discourse.

Within the Lacanian discourses (as seen in *Figure 2*), the master may only be thwarted by the hysteric. In response to Althusser’s theory of ‘ideological interpellation’, Žižek claims that “hysteria emerges when a subject starts to question or feel discomfort in his or her symbolic identity” (Žižek, 2006/1, 35). The hysteric’s discourse questions all the master’s positions and begets the formation of the new master. This is because the hysteric, as the agent, starts from a position already castrated and neurotic (\$ in Lacanian algebra).

S ₁	Master-Signifier	The locus of the Subject; the central signifier of which the Subject is constructed.
S ₂	Knowledge	<i>'savoir'</i> or pure knowledge/ability to know.
\$	The ‘barred’ subject	A castrated or neurotic Subject conscious of its lack.
a	<i>l’objet petit a</i>	The object cause of desire. What the Subject’s cause is for engaging in discourse.

Figure 2. Lacan’s Terminology and Algebra.

As Lacan famously states to student revolutionaries of France in May ‘68: “Revolutionary aspirations have only one possibility: always to end up in the discourse of the master. Experience has proven this. What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will have one!” (Stavrakis, 1999, 12) It is today’s master who wishes not to admit to his high position; but, rather that he is instead a ‘servant’ of the people (Žižek, 2004, 388). This position is much like the boss in a postmodern office who would rather his workers believe him a friend rather than reveal his true identity – the master who holds the phallus. Žižek elaborates Lacan’s four discourses:

“The master-signifier effectively occupies the place of the ‘agent’ which is that of the master; the *objet a* occupies the place of ‘production’, which is that of the inassimilable excess, etc. And it is the redoubling, the gap between the element and the place, which then sets the process in motion: a master hystericizes himself by starting to question what effectively makes him a master, etc. So, on the basis of the discourse of the Master, one can then proceed to generate the three other discourses by way of successively putting the other three elements at the place of the Master: in the university discourse, it is Knowledge which occupies the agent’s (Master’s) place, turning the subject (\$) into that which is ‘produced’, into its inassimilable excess remainder; in hysteria, the true ‘master’, the agent who effectively terrorizes the Master himself, is the hysterical subject with her incessant questioning of the Master’s position; etc.” (Žižek, 2004, 390)

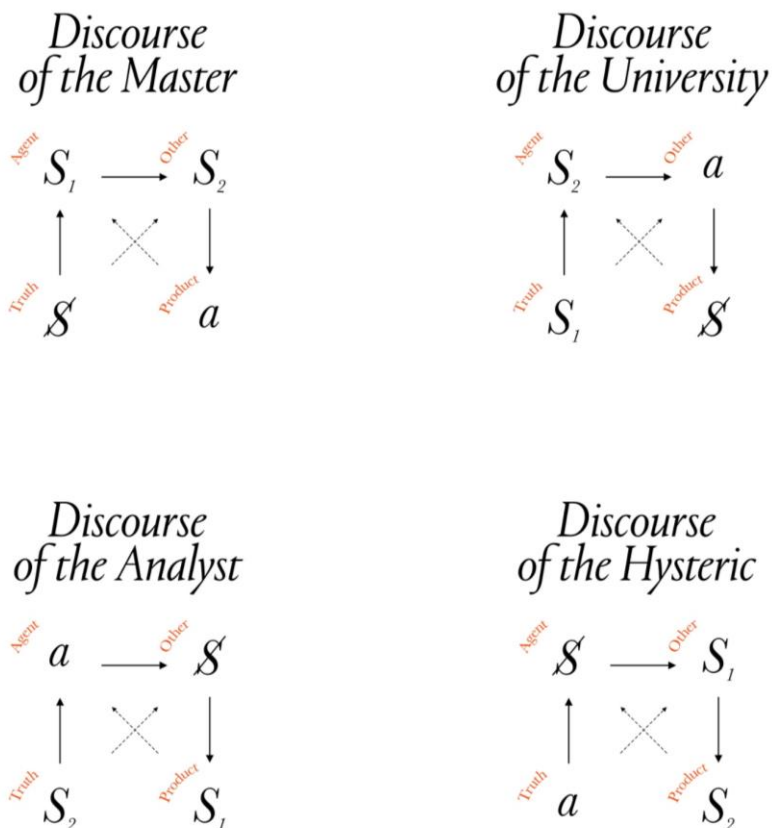


Figure 3. Lacan’s four discourses.

Within the discourse of the master, castration (\$) in the truth position creates a situation where the master, the agent of this discourse, must create a master-signifier (S_1) that justifies his right over the surplus-enjoyment (a in the production position) created by the slave/workers labor (S_2) and appropriate it from the other in order to remove the master’s castration and thus castrate the other instead (Bailey, 2009, 158). Today, however, it is through his expertise and heightened knowledge that the modern master justifies himself rather than birthright or symbolic investiture of past ages. In this way, the modern master uses the discourse of the university as knowledge is the product that castrates the other. The childish phrase from educational public broadcasting has never been more true: *knowledge is power*. The master’s knowledge justifies the symbolic phallus granted to him, further reinforced by the titles and authority gifted by the big Other (Žižek, 1996, 402). It should be stated clear that just because a master can use a master discourse does not mean that they are in any way forced to keep within the discourse of the master. In fact, as we have shown above, most modern masters use university discourse.

We can best understand Lacan’s discourses by their functioning between the subject’s lack or castration. For example, the discourse of the university holds the agent to have a monopoly on knowledge of which the other desires. When the other partakes in discourse with the university they are instantly castrated by the lack of knowledge of which they must submit to the institution in order to learn. However, this is the true castrating principle of lack within the discourse of the university: *the more the other learns what they desired to learn, the more they realize they know less than they thought* (Bailey, 2009, 158). This has been illustrated by the Dunning-Kruger effect. Bailey describes the main interest of intuitions to perpetually maintain a fantasy for the public in which it is always needed (Bailey, 2009, 159). In his book *The Parallax View*, Žižek states the Soviet Union functioned on a “pure reign” of the discourse of the university due to its institutionalization through hyper-bureaucratic capitalism (Žižek, 2006/3, 298). As supply chains increase their efficiencies in today’s capitalist societies, it is no wonder that the master of today operates within the same discourse as the bureaucratic rationalized Soviet Union – or perhaps a more relevant example: the PRC.

We should know illustrate the discourse of the hysteric as it will help us understand our examples later. With this discourse, the barred subject (\$) is driven by its *objet petit a* to address the master-signifier (S_1) of the other in order to reveal the responding truth (S_2) (Bailey, 2009, 160). Bailey states: “The discourse of the hysteric is held by anyone

who is on the path to knowledge; indeed Lacan says that the desire for knowledge does not lead to knowledge, and what *does* is precisely the discourse of the hysteric” (Bailley, 2009, 161). The hysteric attempts to expose gaps within the master’s ideology by strategically siding with the lack or surplus in their master-signifiers, by casting doubts on their truth claims and consistently failing to identify within the master’s project of control (Pauwels, 2019, 57). By continuously asking questions to the master, the hysteric gains knowledge and at the same time creates a situation where the master no longer believes their own symbolic law; thus the master becomes castrated once more. This hysteric discourse is seen in Žižek’s most infamous catchphrase taken from Milgram’s *Bartleby, the Scrivener*: “I would prefer not to”. Such disillusionment from the master’s discourse accelerates the failure of the master’s ideological project by exploiting doubt. In a more traditional discourse of the master, the hysteric’s discourse proves to show resistance by passivity.

“Lifelong indentured servants most characteristically expressed discontent about their relationship with their master by performing their work carelessly and inefficiently. They could intentionally or unconsciously feign illness, ignorance, or incompetence, driving their masters to distraction. Even though the master could retaliate by refusing to give his servant extra fringe benefits, he was still obliged to maintain him at a subsistence level if he did not want to lose his investment completely. This method of passive resistance, provided it was not expressed as open defiance, was nearly unbeatable” (Harper, 1968, 48-49).

Performativity. Because Freud believed that gender was a state of mind rather than a physiological predisposition, it has been stated that within the psychoanalytic tradition the master is to be referred to as ‘he’, the hysteric as ‘her’ (Gray, 2016). This is due to the Greek root of *hysteria* meaning “womb” (Gray, 2016). These are only labels and have their history in the bourgeois tradition of Freudian psychoanalysis of Vienna aristocracy – hysteria was originally thought to be a housewife’s disease. However, it would seem that the masculine master identity is the dominator of the feminized slaves, who are required to be submissive and passive due to their castration – as Foucault had above confirmed: to be male is to dominate and active as to be female is to be submissive and passive. Remember, the one who is fucked versus the one who does the fucking is important here. These gendered roles within the power dynamic speak to the master’s discourse by the construction of gender and sexuality itself. The performativity of these roles are not unlike the performativity of gender, as laid out by Butler.

“Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements which, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power [...] The performative is thus one domain in which power act as discourse [...] Importantly, however, there is no power, constructed as a subject, that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability. This is less an ‘act’, singular and deliberate, than a nexus of power and discourse that repeats or mimes the discursive gestures of power” (Butler, 1993, 19).

The performativity of power furthers power itself. As Pascal’s wager on Christianity states: “Knee down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe”. This idea is quite backward from how we understand church-goers as we typically think that they go to church because they believe; rather, they believe because they go to church. This is the nature of performativity. The way that we perform what we believed to be the ‘right’ way to do power, or the ‘right’ way to submit to power reinforces power itself and makes it a real experience. Again, I must stress the reader to think of Althusser’s understanding that there are no more ideas but rather material practices governed by material rituals and defined by material ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 2001, 83). The performativity of an individual makes a subject; ideology does in fact interpellate a subject from an individual. There is no subject outside of ideology we do not follow ideology rather we are constantly *doing* ideology (Althusser, 2009, 85).

“There is no subject who is ‘free’ to stand outside these norms or to negotiate them at a distance; on the contrary, the subject is retroactively produced by these norms in their repetition, precisely as their effect. What we might call ‘agency’ or ‘freedom’ or ‘possibility’ is always a specific political prerogative that is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms, in the interpellating work of such norms, in the process of their self-repetition. Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status, but are always negotiated within a matrix of power. ” (Butler, 1993, 22)

Hence, the social reflects its norms from the totality of sexuality from which the subject reflects its performativity of what it means to be a subject. Butler further states that performativity is not to be understood as self-expression or self-presentation, but rather as a resignification of highly invested terms (Butler, 1993, 28). The performance of a role is not dependent on the actor’s ability to simply act. It is dependent on the actor’s ability to mimic what the actor’s unconscious already knows. The actor does not know what it knows and therefore bases its performativity off of these unknown knows. Social constraints, threats of punishments, and taboos operate to reinforce the repetition of these normative actions (Butler, 1993, 22). All of which creates subjects which go on to create more subjects.

“If a performative provisionally succeeds, then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes a prior action and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices. ” (Butler, 1993, 20)

Returning to Foucault, the repressive hypothesis reinforces Oscar Wilde’s views on sex and power: “everything is about sex, except sex, sex is about power”. Believing that the repression of sexual desires and sexuality in general has been prevalent since the Victorian era furthers the ability for sexuality to cohabit the social world in its entirety (Foucault, 1990, 17). *Everything is about sex* even if we fail to recognize its repressed position. Natural it should be that homosexuality be repressed as a perversion as power models become more and more meritocratic. The sexuality involved in power dynamics speak to domination of man by man being of homosexual nature. Understanding that power itself is at its base sexual, brother dominating brother would be need to be coded as taboo. However, when speaking of the sexual domination by the primal father—epitomized through the divine right of kings and birthright to power—the power domination is asexual as it involves a spiritual order (God himself commands it). So too when the symbolic order shifts from a spiritual base to a material one.

Overall, the research of how power is viewed from a psychoanalytic and queer theory perspective is quite in-depth. However, there is much missing about the subtlety of how power is used in the postmodern office by seemingly non-antagonistic and ‘friendly’ masters. I aim to look further into discourse within the office to understand this further. The research should be looked deeper at the postmodern ‘new spirit of capitalism’ which alludes to job satisfaction and contentment rather than an *artistic critique* of the system based on real labor relations (more on this later). The way that we understand interpersonal relationships between masters and slaves within the office is critical to the advancement of the study of power.

METHODS

By looking at media representations of office power structures I show the underlying ideology of the master. By using the hysteric’s discourse in the Lacanian sense, I point out what the culture industry is properly addressing, what it is failing to address, and why. I examine three Hollywood films from different eras—(1) *Modern Times* (1936), directed by Charlie Chaplin (2) *Office Space* (1999), directed by Mike Judge (3) *Sorry to Bother You* (2018), directed by Boots Riley – I aim to show how the film industry has reacted to the changing sociopolitical landscapes within capitalism from Fordist to post-Fordist systems of production and life. I decided on this data due to all the selected films having a critique of industrial and post-industrial capitalism. All films are widely known to be critical of their respective eras and of the dehumanizing powers of wage labor and systems of capital. The data collected is all open access. Data was observed from hard copies of the films themselves. I analyzed the data by attempting to find common themes within each film. Upon choosing the data it was first decided that I would look at common themes portrayed in the discourses between characters playing management and employee roles. By pinpointing select characters based on their performative roles within the office context it was decided that three main bosses and three main employees would serve as the base for analysis. Each from different films: the factory president, Bill Lumbergh, and Steve Lift as well as their hysteric counterparts: the Tramp, Peter, and Cassius.

While there is no way to be completely unbiased to a topic due to the way our minds construct our reality based on preexisting rationalities and data, I should be transparent about my potentially skewed opinions on topics; especially ones as divisive as class relations. It should be understood by the reader that I have based my studies in business, more specifically marketing, as well as sociology and political science. I have never held ownership of a company and the only capital I currently own is on the stock market. However, it should also be stated that I have held many positions in middle-management within multiple vertically organized businesses and institutions. Of course it should be clear that I have worked my share of years as a wage-laborer as well. In my time in the workforce I have worked within such industries as marketing, food service, broadcast, media design, factory/manufacturing, security and the military in many different positions not all of them beholding power over others on the job.

Overall, the objective of this paper will be to understand how the master/slave dialectic works within the contemporary era and how it functions and reifies itself through rationality. As is stated in the 2017 Italian film *Call Me by Your Name* directed by Luca Guadagnino: ‘*Film is a mirror of reality and it is a filter*’; the big screen is able to mirror our societies while still filtering out the horrible parts. This is why comedy films are some of the best ways at critiquing established rationality due to their ability of enabling the viewer to take another step toward interpretation. A comedy can deal with extremely repressive topics while entertaining those that would otherwise never have sought out such topics. This ability to view the naked established rationality in our society allow us to better think sociologically within interpersonal and social discourses. Power is established and kept due to its rationality which supports hierarchy; therefore, it makes sense that if sociology is interested in power it should be interested in its rational base. Within a patriarchal performative, feminine subjects are forced to perform as masculine ones in order

to command power they deem necessary. It is in the field of sociology best interest to explore how power holds a gender quality and to where this comes from.

FINDINGS

Focusing first on the most prevalent and obvious critiques of the nature of office life and the power structures that compliment them we should look to the *artistic critique* of the three films. In their book, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello distinguish two forms of critiquing capitalism in the media: *Artistic Critique* and *Social Critique*. The former is based around the “ideals of liberation and/or individual autonomy, singularity and authenticity”, the latter focusing on “inequalities, misery, exploitation and the selfishness of a world that stimulates individualism rather than solidarity” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, 176). The films do have a monopoly on the *artistic critique* – as most films of their nature do.

I will begin my findings by starting to look at the films’ artistic critique of their social surroundings that result in an oppressive culture for the individual. Next, I will look at the social critiques within the three films that cause a social repression on individual psychic repression. Within the social critique I lay out three subsections: Castration, Reification and Performativity. Both will allow us to conclude and answer our original question: *Who constructs the rational world we live in?*

Artistic Critique

Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* begins with the mantra projected on screen: “Modern Times! A story of industry, of individual enterprise—humanity crusading in the pursuit of happiness”. This fades into a herd of sheep running in close quarters, which then transitions to a herd of workers rushing to the factory in the same manner. This is clearly an emotional lamentation of the lost autonomy and individuality typical of the Fordist era assembly line of standardization in production. Consequentially, urbanized populations were transformed closer to a herd of ‘sheep’ than men. In the same sense, the choice by Chaplin to continue to make a silent film even after the invention of sound strips is an artistic way to show how only machines and the president of the company (representing the owners of capital) have a voice. None of the workers may speak, only the capitalist. It is not until later when the Tramp (Charlie Chaplin) forgets his lines while singing and begins to improvise off script that he is granted a voice as a reward for breaking the social order. At this moment, the Tramp has effectively broken through the wall holding him back in the symbolic order. The Tramp clocks out for a break in the restroom then leans back on the sink to catch his breath when the president is transmitted on the screen/wall and tells him to “quit stalling!”—a critique of the individual autonomy by the filmmakers and the efficiency pushed for on the body of the worker. In the film, the Tramp has a job on the line which is so repetitive and demeaning that even after working he is still plagued with nervous twitches; the phantom tightening of imaginary bolts. This critique demonstrates how the exploitation he experiences as a worker is impacting his personal health and well-being. Later on, the Tramp suffers a nervous breakdown after a workplace accident caused by lack of safety measures in response to the president’s commands of higher production. This movie is often used as an artistic critique of capitalism. It was even used as a narrative in 2019’s *Joker* on class consciousness when the wealthy members of Gotham’s high society are enjoying a film at the theatre and laughing together at the Tramp deal with his trials.

In Mike Judge’s *Office Space* the characters all start out stuck in traffic and alienated from one another within their cars. This type of scene represents the castrating and emasculating effects that the workplace has. One character, Michael Bolton (David Herman) listens to gangster rap in his car as he is stuck in traffic and is consistently creating an image of himself as a tough guy. However, consistently he is castrated by his working conditions and power structures within his office. The workers, who once had expressions and lives of their own, must now be formalized and standardized into the optimal employee and leave their personalities at home. It is important to point out as well that there are no signs of carpooling in the traffic jam, all the commuters are alone in their respective boxes separated from each other. As we progress to see an average day of work for the workers at Initech we quickly understand that Judge would like us to see that the white collar office work is no less repressive than the blue collar factory work seen in *Modern Times*. This is epitomized by the quote said by Peter (Ron Livingston) to his co-workers at Initech: “humans weren’t meant to sit in cubicles and listen to a manager go on about mission statements”. To be sure, this critique is leaning on capital’s inability to give enough autonomy to its workers without consistent micro-management. It entraps and isolates them from one another and pushes its own narratives of what it means to be a good worker. Later on, we see Joanna (Jennifer Aniston) being coached by her manager (Mike Judge) for not wearing enough pieces of flair on her uniform saying: “fifteen [pieces of flair] is the minimum, we want you to be able to express yourself here”. A forced sense of happiness that must be regulated. Similarly, the same sentiment is being made here where the manager tells Joanna that he wishes for her to be able to express herself, yet still requiring the uniform to be adhered to. As in *Modern Times*, *Office Space*’s Initech office feels like a Fordist assembly line for white collar workers filled with

highly repetitive actions such as the receptionist repeatedly saying: “Corporate Accounts Payable, Nina speaking. Just a Moment” or Peter’s job being nothing more than changing the dates on computer software from 1999 to 2000. This liberation from the repressive cubicle-filled office is immortalized in the classic scene of the three main characters destroying their arch-nemesis, the copy machine. A liberation from the mundanity of contemporary office life. In this scene, the three put to death this agent of organizational oppression that has plagued their emotional and mental stability for years thus signaling their liberation from Initech’s domination.

Boots Riley’s *Sorry to Bother You* is framed as a revolutionary call to action in its surface level critique of capitalism. The film tends to show lower paying jobs as easy to find, yet extremely repressive. For example, the telemarketing job that the main character, Cassius ‘Cash’ Green (LaKeith Stanfield), interviews for hires him even after he lies repeatedly to the hiring manager. The job is continually portrayed as unfulfilling and management is constantly on the worker’s backs about signing new customers in order to reach the promoted rank of ‘power-caller’—a title used like a carrot on a stick to keep the workers dialing. The motto: *Stick-to-the-Script* (S.T.T.S.) is justification for the standardization of factory styled impersonal selling which is paired with the proclamation by management that “anyone of you could be a power-caller”. A classic use of a symbolic rationality pairing with imaginary ideology to reinforce the real power structures. Using this type of baiting management is able to coax the workers to continue to delay gratification in order to have the chance at the possibility of higher yields in the future. This is until the workers go on strike and management decides to promote Cassius to a power-caller. The film is showing management’s labor-busting tactics as a way to critique its monopoly on power. Specifically, the film is using the rationality of hierarchical power to support an ideology of the ‘temporarily embarrassed millionaire’ rhetoric that reinforces the status quo.

Social Critique

The social critique as described by Boltanski and Chiapello speaks to the problems with inequality and suffering within the system itself as opposed to the artistic and individualistic critiques made in such films like *Fight Club* or *American Psycho* against consumer culture where consumerist ideology that idealizes material objects makes objects out of people. While analyzing the data we found that three main *social critiques* outside of the *artistic critiques* are made by the films’ directors. This social critique includes a three-step cyclical process which all steps reinforce each other: (1) the fear of castration from the phallus due to Oedipalization of humanity – *castration anxiety* as the established condition of human experience (the reality principle) (2) this fear leading to one party (the master) establishing a symbolic system of law and associations of which supports their power – *rationality* (3) the creation of a false consciousness or fantasy that impregnates meaning into the rationality – *ideology* (the Real = the Symbolic + the Imaginary OR Castration (Lack) = rationality + ideology).

Castration in the Office. Both the Master and the Slave have the desire to retain the phallus. This phallus must not be removed from the subject or else it will lose its power. However, neither party wishes to risk outright conflict based on merit without assurance against retaliation where either subject could be castrated. Yet, the paradoxical relationship between fear of castration and power itself is that the way the subject grants a buffer away from the fear of castration is to gain power by castrating others symbolically through rational means. This rationality is established to place the master in a position of power due to it being considered rational; meritocracy is one such example where an association is made between concepts of experience and knowledge. Ideology then is crafted to support this rationality; for example, *the master is in charge because he must know more about the job based on his experience*. Another intersection of rationality and ideology being used to give meaning to the Real is by associating money and morality together. With this rationality, ideology can create a meaningful fantasy in the form of a meta-narrative which holds that it is good that capitalist have money so that they can donate to charity; they donate to charity because of their morality which reinforces their monopolies on wealth.

Ideology can also decode meaning within rational associations. This is seen in the softening of oppressive power relations between the master and the slave. The rationality still creates associations between power and coercion but ideology can push a meta-narrative that changes the meaning of coercion without changing power. Instead of violent oppression seen in more traditional power structures we can enjoy soft repression with a smiling face. The phenomenon often described by Žižek as the ‘postmodern father’ shows its face in both *Sorry to Bother You* and *Office Space* where the structures of power are less traditionally clear. According to Žižek, the traditional or modernist father would attempt to get his child to visit his grandmother by commanding he go see her by threat of violent punishment. However, the postmodernist father tries to make the child identify with the fact that he really does in fact want to go see her by saying something like “you know it would be really nice to go see your grandmother, you don’t have to if you don’t want to, I only want you to do it if you really want to, but she would really appreciate it”. This is the nature of contemporary totalitarian power within the office today.

Under the traditional father's command, the child retains his or her inner freedom, he is only visiting their grandmother because they are forced to do so—he or she has no choice in the matter. Under the postmodernist father's appeal, the child has the illusion of choice which blurs the lines between its freedom and its consciousness. The child understands the implications of not visiting his or her grandmother yet there is no threat. Rather there is a friendly plea from the father (the master) to please do his wishes. The father's appeal is stronger than the command because it ensures not only compliance but identification with one who enjoys the act. *The child will not only do the act, but they will enjoy it too.* The child will do the act as to not hurt the fragile friendly relationship with the father. The child not only partakes in the act, but now he or she must want to do the act, he or she must love to do the act, otherwise they simply wouldn't have done it. Any child would know that saying 'no' to the father's request will result in the same punishment as the traditional father (perhaps less violent due to cultural reasons protecting from child abuse) but instead the decision is less clear whether the choice was theirs to make or not. In fact, some may argue that the child *wants* the father to give them the command. Furthermore, the child partakes in the action not only because they do not want to hurt the relationship with the father, but also now because he or she finds that they really *do* love the action after they takes it. This psychological mess finds itself to be the basic form of the postmodern domination.

We see this same narrative in *Sorry to Bother You* while appealing under postmodernist tactics by the new manager Diana (Kate Berlant) when she proclaims to the telemarketing staff, "You are not employees to me, we are team members, we're family here". Cassius responds with "does that mean we get paid more?" to which Diana responds in a softly embarrassed chuckle: "No...but, what is capital, right? I would argue that social currency is more important nowadays". The attempt to cover power with a smiling face is the side effect of the master's castration anxiety. The reason it works so well is due to the slave's castration anxiety. Both do not wish to return to a more openly repressive system of domination as it would harm the illusion of freedom necessary to both sides. They both wish to remain within the fantasy; within the ideology because to step outside the Symbolic and Imaginary would be to meet the traumatic Real. Instead what we now have is Bill Lumbergh (Gary Cole) from *Office Space* passively aggressively asking us to come in on Saturday because "that'd be great", and also Sunday too, "Mmkay? Thanks". Dom Portwood (Joe Bays), another manager, pats Peter on the back with a smile after lecturing him on putting the wrong header on the TPS reports. Dom might as well be saying: "I know I've castrated you right there and made you feel small and powerless, but we're really buddies so you shouldn't feel bad. Keep working hard for me so you may continue you're castration, thus saving mine".

In *Sorry to Bother You*, Steve Lift, the CEO of the almost slave-labor firm WorryFree – where one can remove their worries of the outside stresses or anxieties and instead work in squad bay style camps and factory conditions for a small paycheck – shows admiration and friendship for Cassius. Lift tells Cassius: "I just think you're awesome" after just seconds after asking him to undergo an experiment to change him into a half-horse half-man *equestrosapien*. This experiment is meant to help production efficiency on the line by building stronger workers with the DNA of horses. Lift, after telling Cassius about the procedure, explains that the reasoning for changing humans into horse-people comes from a completely rational backing. An amazingly on-the-nose example of rationality working with ideology to give meaning to the Real that reinforces the status quo. This command with a smile and a cherry on top is reflective of the postmodern condition. Castration anxiety stops masters from being open with their power and only allows them to closed coercive action, weaponizing psychology and exploiting synthetic personal relationships with their slaves all in order to maintain a semblance of equality while reinforcing the status quo. To the slaves, their castration anxiety furthers identity with the master as a way to keep from losing the phallus they imagine to have. *One day, I'll be the master and I won't have to deal with this anymore.*

Rational Reification in the Office. Which brings us to the next point: Rationality's association with sex and power. This sexual nature to domination leads us back to our quote by Oscar Wilde. In order to castrate and dominate another subject – to transform them into an object of sexual domination – the dominating subject must remove the phallus from the subject in order to feminize them. Power is in the common public arena, a struggle for domination over the phallus. This is largely why sexual harassment and power inequalities go so often hand-in-hand within the workplace. Men in power who constantly dominate other men look to actualize their sexual drives in the Real.

Within our films this can be seen in when Peter is afraid that his girlfriend, Joanna, slept with his boss, Bill Lumbergh. The visuals in his nightmare are a naked Lumbergh holding Joanna's leg up and sipping coffee as he asks Peter to bring him the TPS reports. This fear that Peter holds is an Oedipal dream. Lumbergh representing the father, within his actual role as the master, Peter the child (the slave), and Joanna the mother or *objet petit a*. The sexual domination from the father comes from his monopoly on the *objet petit a* which reinforces his phallic power. In this case the master has penetrated the dream of the slave to monopolize the slave's product: *objet petit a*. This is a clear example of the discourse of the master. For a more on-the-nose example, in *Sorry to Bother You*, Cassius's girlfriend Detroit makes her own earrings and in one scene the earrings read "murder, murder, murder" and "kill, kill, kill"; the

next time we see her earrings they are a glittered phallus symbolizing the violent rationality behind the ideological project. On the way up to the power-caller floor in the elevator, the voice in the elevator tells Cassius “Welcome power-caller, today is your day to dominate the world. You are in your sexual prime. We hope you haven’t masturbated today”. The sexuality relating itself here to the domination of a capitalist sales force is revealing in and of itself. Domination in any sense is sexual as it reverts us back to a pre-genital phase within the Oedipus Complex. *In order to dominate under capitalism one needs their libido placed in an active position.* This Oedipalization of the office in a similar way to the Oedipalization of the family unit creates a situation where it seems natural or correct to be castrated by one’s boss.

In *Office Space*, the character, Tom Smykowski (Richard Riehle) represents power’s reification best as his perverted identification with the symbolic causes him to dive deep within the capitalist system. This is best illustrated when we first meet him and begins to lecture the three protagonists about how to escape the labor structure. Smykowski tells them: “You know, there are people in this world that don’t have to put up with all this shit. Like that guy that invented the Pet Rock? You see, that’s what you have to do. You have to use your mind... and come up with some really great idea like that and you can make millions. Never have to work again”. To which Michael states: “You really think the Pet Rock was a good idea?” And Smykowski returns with: “Sure it was. The guy made a million dollars”. Smykowski’s deep embrace of the master’s discourse shows when he values an idea based on the master’s terms; namely, that an idea is good if it makes money. This leaves Smykowski in a slave position to where he is castrated from meaning-creation and must take the master’s ideological project without question. Later on in the film, after Smykowski is fired after being unable to describe what he actually does, he attempts to kill himself. It is clear that after identifying with the master’s value system, Smykowski believes his life to be valueless due to his inability to create revenue. Thus, he is castrated once again even within his own familial structure. After deciding not to go through with his suicide, Smykowski backs up out of his driveway and is hit by a drunk driver to where he wins a million dollar settlement; alleviating him from work but leaving him disfigured. To him, however, the money alone is enough to be happy about. This is informed by his adoption of the master’s ideology that gives value to the money commodity.

This identification of Smykowski with his repression is best illustrated by the identification with the *sinthome*. Smykowski has, instead of created new meaning by creating new ideology, identified with his symptoms of being a capitalist subject. The slave rather than desiring a new reality has submitted and desires to continue his own oppression. This is because of the trauma of pure *jouissance* that keeps him desiring to be fucked by the master as to do otherwise would mean to change his entire life. A truly complacent and depressing character created by Mike Judge to act as a mirror for our own identification with our *sinthome*.

Another example of the reification found within *Office Space* is when the three protagonists are at the restaurant Chotchkie’s and Peter asks: “What if we’re still doing this when we’re fifty?” Samir (Ajay Naidu) then says: “It would be nice to have that kind of job security”. Samir’s response shows how deeply rooted in the symbolic system he and the other’s in *Office Space* truly are where Peter is finding it harder and harder to take part in. By completely missing the depressing aspect of Peter’s question and instead worrying about job security this shows Peter’s alienation from his peers on the level of ideology. This is an overall theme throughout the film where Peter constantly is looking for recognition or someone to see him in his crisis. At many times in the film Peter tries to hysterically question the master’s discourse and every time he gets a response that affirms his hysteria and reifies the master’s ideology on to him. Peter and the Tramp continuously use the discourse of the hysteric in order to resist their respective master’s whereas Cassius remains castrated the higher he tries to climb in the corporate ladder. Cassius remains the other within the master’s use of the discourse of the university.

Within *Modern Times*, Chaplin works at a factory where the main engineer is never seen with a shirt. This tells me that t

Performativity in the Office. In *Office Space*, Peter has a meeting with the two Bobs (John C. McGinley and Paul Wilson) during which he tells them about his daily routine, which can be summed up as “working just hard enough not to get fired”. This seems to be the epitome of white collar work where often entire positions or even departments are commissioned although they have little to do throughout the week. This performativity that the workers engage in is not the conscious act, but the unconscious ideological drive to continue within the framework of their roles as workers. To confront the fact that they have nothing to do would be to confront the intersection of meaning and poke holes in the fabric of the master’s project; thus, confronting the traumatic Real. *For most it is better to go with the flow than to enact change.* Such is the experience of Capitalist Realism.

This breakdown in the performative structure is seen when Peter ignores and walks past Bill Lumbergh, and his boss’s attempt at reprimanding him (and thus creating more power for himself) fails. Lumbergh then stands in the hallway, alone, small, and castrated from the phallus. The same is found after Peter blows Lumbergh off after altering

his cubicle and telling his boss to “come back later, I’m busy”. When confronted against the expected performativity of this hysteric passivity, the master loses his power of force and his ideological lack is now exploited (to where rationality can be confronted). Earlier in the film, Peter has three different bosses lecture him about missing the same header on his TPS reports. Each manager approaches Peter one after another and says almost the exact same thing, in almost the exact same way. This is narrating on the mundane performative acts of the office.

In *Sorry to Bother You*, Diana, the female manager, acts in a way that would be typical of a male gendered manager as she codes her personality in a ‘one of the boys’ form of speech, body language, and behavior. In the elevator up to the power-caller floor, Diana acts dominating and assertive almost as a predator towards Cassius in a sexual nature much the way a male would traditionally do if he were preying on a subordinate female. This speaks to the performativity of her role in regards to the accepted and reinforced gender narrative of domination. As we have learned above from Allen, to be in charge is male; to dominate is male; in order to be the manager, Diana must perform her role as a gendered man would in order to hold the phallus (Allen, 2015, 31).

The way that Lumbergh’s body language and positioning of himself as well as his demeanor and speech toward his employees furthers his performativity as the master. Not only is performativity the performance but it is a reinforcement of the status quo by the master applying his powers. Lumbergh’s phallic-signifiers of nicer clothes, coffee, and stature speak to his position of power and reinforce his place and the slave’s place within the ideological-rational system. The master holds control not from any legitimately *real* power held over the slaves; rather, his power is reinforced by continuously performative discourse that makes it unquestionably rational that he is in control. Standing like the master is as good as being the master.

The ‘*Stick-to-the-Script*’ motto from *Sorry to Bother You* is a performative itself as it ensures clean and conforming actions that not only create an atmosphere of labor and production but reinforces the need for power inequalities by not allowing the workers to think on their own. Instead, the worker must read the script in order to standardize production of telecommunication sales. This situation, where the subject partakes in the traumatic enjoyment yet outsources the pleasure to an other (the script), leads to a position of *interpassivity*. The hegemonic power of management aims in this instance to create an atmosphere void of thinking in order to crush dissent and possible labor movements later seen in the film. If the worker is under the performativity of the master’s discourse, they will never need to think on their own, only act with the currents of the office.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As we understand the hegemonic discourses to change we understand that the changes are bound to change policy only as it is clear that changing one master for another still keeps the slave at the bottom. As Egner points out in her article *Hegemonic or Queer?*, if one desires to change policy, use hegemonic discourses to change; however, if one decides to deconstruct ideology, use a *queer* discourse (Egner, 2019, 142). Queer discourses, in this case, being relevant due to our above understanding of domination as a gendered performativity which holds a masculine master and feminine slave. Egner states that hegemonic discourses often support neoliberal rhetoric and promotes assimilationism to normalized ideals (Egner, 2019, 141). Such discourses are predicated on established collective false consciousness that have a rational reinforcement to the status quo (Egner, 2019, 144). For example, Egner points out that queer members of LGBTQ+ movements find that hegemonic, homonormative, and dominate parties of the larger LGBTQ+ movement reflect an experience that is predominately white and middle-class (Egner, 2019, 149). This queering of gender is vital to the hysteric’s discourse to fight the master’s ideological project. The hysteric must become not anti-master, but *anti-slave*.

In order for a meaningful change that removes the castrating power of performativity within power structures to take place, we will need to queer gender categories first. The associations within rationality that link the concept of domination to the concept of masculinity and the concept of submissiveness to the concept of femininity must be queered on the ideological level before they can be interacted with on the level of rationality. This happens on a passive level as opposed to an active one. By becoming educated on how ideology codes meaning into the symbolic order of rationality can we begin to queer gender categories that support power under an Oedipalized culture.

This means the negation of the power placed over the master must not be actively resisted, but rather that the slave must negate what it means to be a slave, what it means to submit to the master’s power. Hegemonic discourses attempt to negate and equalize the power dynamic away from the master whereas queer discourses attempt to negate the effect of powers on the slaves. What is needed now is a rethinking of passivity within the Marxist framework.

Furthermore the closing of hegemonic class mobilization on the power of creating and changing policy that is beneficial to the working class has always and will always find itself a failure in the long run due to established rationality. *One cannot deconstruct the master’s house with the master’s tools*. Nietzsche would have his qualms with the hegemonic liberal movements of the contemporary era that support assimilationist ideology. He might have

seen them as having slave mentality based in *ressentiment*, the feeling of lack and inferiority making the slave lash out at an abstract oppressor ‘blamed’ for its own lack. This is the standard operating procedure for the anti-master resistance using a hegemonic discourse to political change. Instead, the anti-slave, much like the Nietzsche’s anti-Christ, ought to find solace within the order of the *Uberman* of which queering accelerates toward.

It is imperative to understand Deleuze’s concept of the plane of immanence when I attempt to explain rationality. Within the plane of immanence material is represented on a flattened plane of existence. It should be stated that immanence is not immanent to substance; it is substance. If one were to think of a graphical model, concepts would be in an X position where representations on the symbolic realm would be in a Y position. The concepts exist from a material reality, one that our human cognition cannot interact with. We are only able to interact with the representation of concepts by our sensory intuition. Therefore I present rationality as a metaphysical association between concepts and the representation of concepts. Rationality therefore exists as a tool of representation from the Real concept to the Symbolic sign. Where ideology is itself existing in real-time and ever changing due to its individual or group fantasies; rationality is a relatively static operation. This is due to the subject’s falling back on its body without organs which has been recorded on by the prevailing socius; in this case the body of capital under capitalism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 10). This association building is much like Google searches: the user types in what they wish to search and the algorithm uses keywords to make associations to get the best results.

It is best to understand our movement along the plane of immanence like the toy we play as children where we might place our hand or face on a screen of pins and when we pull back it still maintains its impression on the surface of the pin art toy (the recording process on the body without organs). This movement is our real transportation through consciousness of which Bergson has shown exists within the temporal space (Cunningham, 1914, 526). Where we traverse through space and time we interact with material concepts which leave their representational imprints on our consciousness and create a neural network of conceptual associations within our mind. But this theory can be better fleshed out in a future paper. As of now all that is needed to understand the theory I am attempting to lay out is that material drives (whether they be castration-anxiety or subsistence) are represented with conceptual associations within rationality on the plane of immanence and then interpellated through ideological fantasies both through the master and the slave’s performativity.

We should understand the synthesis of Marx’s superstructure and Lacan’s three orders. Where the ideological level falls neatly within the order of the imaginary; the Material base is often confused with being in the Real. This is false as even Marx himself sees the exchange of commodities as symbols for transferring human labor; therefore placing the material base within the order of the Symbolic. Marx writes:

“Nevertheless under this error lurked a presentiment that the money form of an object is not an inseparable part of that object, but is simply the form under which certain social relations manifest themselves. In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labor spent upon it. But if it be declared that the social characters assumed by objects, or the material forms assumed by the social qualities of labor under the régime of a definite mode of production, are mere symbols, it is in the same breath also declared that these characteristics are arbitrary fictions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind” (Marx, 2013, 60).

Therefore we may see that the material base is but a symbolic construction that is only a representation of the real material objects on the plane of immanence. The way these objects are represented and how they are associated together is the function of rationality. The fantasy surrounding it, which impregnates rationality with meaning, is ideological. These ideological fantastical artifacts find home within the realm of Hollywood films such as the ones analyzed within this paper. By reinforcing rationality, ideological artifacts (in the form of art, religion, advertisements, etc.) create a collective social unconscious which gives consent to the mode of production and reifies its processes; including the fetishism of its power structures.

We should understand that the desire/drives that exist in the Real exist as a flat network of nodes and flows within a proto-material plane. In order to interact with this plane, the unconscious must create associations with representations of partial objects from this raw data. This is the nature of rationality. Therefore we can say that rationality exists on the Symbolic, but it would be a closer description to say that it exists as a liaison between the Real and Symbolic orders. For example, under capitalism there are rationalities that exist in the form of meritocracy and Oedipus. The former justifies knowledge creating power; the latter justifies power under transference from father to management. However, this rationality alone is not enough for social repression to transfer into psychic repression. In order for this to happen the subject must first create their own personalized fantasy in the form of ideology. This is how subjects reify their own desire for repression – this is best seen in our *Office Space* example with Tom Smykowski’s identification with his *sinthome* so as not to be forced to have a traumatic experience with the Real due to finding a cure to his symptoms. The table below illustrates the process.

Figure 4. *These elements work together to create social reality.*

	MASTER (MASCULINE)	SLAVE (FEMININE)
Material Drives (Real)	The need to retain the phallus. (<i>Castration-Anxiety</i>)	The need to survive. (<i>Subsistence post-castration</i>)
Rationality (Symbolic)	The creation of phallic-signifiers as justification for domination due to a lack in the slave's symbolic power. (<i>Creation of the big Other</i>)	The recognition of the master's network of conceptual associations that rationalize his power. (<i>where queering can take place</i>)
Ideology (Imaginary)	The master creates his ideological project that reifies the big Other and interpellates subjects into ideology. (<i>Performativity justifies oppression</i>)	The slave submits to the master's discourse by performing within the master's ideology. (<i>Resistance by Hegemonic movements</i>)

The master's ideology breaks down similarly to Stephen King's *IT*. After the failed 'Ritual of Chud', the losers' club must defeat the entity, Pennywise, by refusing to believe the Imaginary power he holds and force him to reveal himself in his true form within the symbolic realm (revealing him to be a small and weak shell of what he has portrayed himself to be). They do this by using a hysteric's discourse to question against his ideological project and questioning the powers he had held over them revealing him for who he really is: a shapeshifter who's power lies within the fear and belief of the slaves. The master is not unlike the dancing clown in that his oppression is laid behind a veil of repressive but friendly aesthetics; in reality the clown is a beast concerned with his own powers. The acceleration of his demise is rooted in the awakening of the losers club to see him for what he is. Using this hysteria they become an anti-slave to his power until the creature can no longer fight back. Accelerationism is an advance toward this dialectical contradiction between mater and slave: a removal of the true master's veil.

In psychoanalysis, analysts are trained to spot certain *false activities* taken by the subject. These false activities are most observed when the neurotic knows the analyst will ask him or her a question they wish not to answer, so instead, the neurotic will continue talking and talking in order to evade a break in speech where the analyst may ask the question they fear (Žižek, 2006/1, 26). Simply put, the neurotic does not wish to get better out of fear of losing themselves by removing their symptom. The neurotic has identified so much with the symptom that losing it would mean losing themselves. This is how pseudo-action works as a false activity within the realm of political activism as the left sometimes desires to remain in an active role of resistance more than to fix the actual problem. To see a change would mean that the activist would no longer have anything to resist. Žižek describes that we need to be aware of taking actions for actions-sake without proper ideas backing it as it leads us to such pseudo-action. Žižek states:

“Even in as much of today's progressive politics, the danger is not passivity but pseudo-activity, the urge to be active and to participate. People intervene all the time, attempting to 'do something', academics participate in meaningless debates; the truly difficult thing is to step back and withdraw from it. Those in power often prefer even a critical participation to silence – just to engage us in dialogue, to make sure that our passivity is broken. Against such an interpassive mode, in which we are active all the time to make sure that nothing will really change, the first truly critical step is to withdraw into passivity and to refuse to participate. This first step clears the ground for a true activity, for an act that will effectively change the coordinates of the scene” (Žižek, 2006/1, 26-27).

This active role of protest in the form of pseudo-action is best illustrated in *Sorry to Bother You* when a woman throws a cola can at Cassius during a labor protest and is later given a sponsorship from the cola company. At the end of the same film, Cassius and his coworkers have successfully unionized their workplace after a long struggle. However this action failed to address the structural problems with ideology that allowed for these offenses to happen which will only create another problem of the same veracity at a later time. In the end, Steve Lift is still hailed as a hero of science for creating the *equestrosapiens* and the workers are still exploited for their labor even with a union. *The system creates a prepackaged ideology that we may subscribe to in order to remove our dissonance.*

By refusing to play the master's game, as Peter does by quitting his job at the end of *Office Space*, the performativity of what it means to be master and slave is questioned. This may be the most dangerous form of rebellion as it is impossible to co-opt if the slave removes the threat of castration himself. Peter removes himself from the discourse of *Initech* but instead of transcending discourse entirely, he reverts to another job. By using the hysteric's discourse the slave can use the master's discourse against his own ideology, toward queering systems of conceptual associations which support power structures. An praxis of accelerationism which exploiting lack within the master's ideological project, may prove itself useful. Žižek has stated that an possible praxis is an over-identification (or *subversive affirmation*) with the master's discourse which holds that the slave ought to over-identify with the established superego in order to bring its obscenity into light and thus manipulate the process of transference with the ruling ideology (Žižek, 1993, 65-66).

Žižek states in his documentary *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*: "There is nothing natural about desire... we have to be taught desire, Cinema is the ultimate pervert art, it doesn't give you what you desire, it tells you how to desire" (Gourgouris, 2010, 106). For the viewer, the film is gazing back onto them just as they are gazing it. For Lacan, the way the subject views this artform is reflective of the mirror phase. When the subject watches the character interact on the screen they see themselves within the character: "What would I do?", "Could this happen to me?". These characters show some form of rebellion, but they do so in a way that is still sustainable to the larger symbolic order, the Big Other. Peter stops working, but is only promoted. Cassius whistle-blowers but makes the company's stock prices rise. It is only in *Modern Times* where the Tramp is seen leaving the system all together, walking off into the sunset. He and his partner take on the real risk of daring to live for themselves, brandishing the courage to face the unknown.

LIMITATIONS

As stated above, psychoanalytic theory has had many critiques attached to it as any theory that is well over 120 years old. Most notably, the reader should understand that the Oedipus complex and psychoanalytic sociology is a descriptive theory rather than a pragmatic tool. Among others, Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out that Oedipus is not only an individual crisis within the familial structure ('nuclear' families) but also a structure that one lives under in society (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 55). It could rather be said that we do not live under Oedipus, but rather that we *do* Oedipus. The two criticized Lacanian psychoanalysis for further continuing the Oedipal cycle by failing to see desire and the unconscious for what it is: desiring-machines inscribing the body without organs which creates the subjectivity of individuals. They write: "the symbolic order of Lacan was diverted, used to support an Oedipus structure applicable to psychosis, and to extend the familistic coordinates out of its real and even imaginary domain" (Deleuze & Guattari., 1977, 359). Oedipal rationality, as they place it, has existed within human society since the beginning but it is not entirely a priori, rather it finds a home in the patriarchal milieu of capitalism among other hierarchical structures of the past. The reason for choosing to take such an approach is that we do in fact live currently under the Oedipalization of capitalist society. We do in fact live, breath, and work within the Oedipus-as-structure even if we can escape Oedipus as an individual crisis within the family unit. Each time we engage in transference and connect the father imago to that of the boss, politician, coach, law enforcement, or analyst we have suffered from an Oedipus-as-structure (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 82). Deleuze and Guattari have correctly shown that it does not need to be this way and that revolutionary action will succeed only beyond Oedipus; however, until then by using descriptive theories we can understand the way it works in practice. As they state: "a revolution – this time materialist – can only proceed by way of a critique of Oedipus" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 75).

Again from Deleuze and Guattari, their project removes the individual fantasy from the subject and replaces it entirely with group fantasy only (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 63). This may present a chance for further research within the three step power processing of organizational performativity as the subject would then rely on the organization rather than their own neuroses. Perhaps this better illustrates the functioning of power relations within the workplace by allowing the individual to fantasize of the greater accumulation of power and acceptance from his alienated peers. Individual fantasies are more directly related to childhood experiences and are extremely personal by nature whereas in group fantasies the ego is lost and the institution has an immortality attached to it: "Sure, I may die, but the Corps will live on forever" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, 62). These group fantasies may be better to explain the way that individuals can not only tolerate oppression, but desire it. For example: *My boss at work may work his or her employees to the bone, but at the end of the day we are all in it together, right?* As Lacan states in *Seminar XI*: "The real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real" (Lacan, 1978, 41).

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