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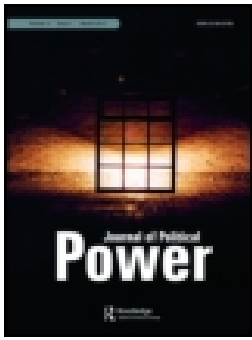
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Power in modernity: a discussion among Mark Haugaard, Clarissa Hayward, and Jonathan G. Heaney of *Power in Modernity: agency relations and the creative destruction of the King's two bodies*, by Isaac Ariail Reed, with a reply by Isaac Reed

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ABSTRACT

In this article, Haugaard, Hayward and Heaney discuss Reed's *Power in Modernity*, and the author replies. The exchanges centres on the question of whether power relations should be theorized via Reed's concepts of *rector*, *actor*, *other*, and *project*, and on the roles of performance agency in power's exercise. The contributors discuss several examples of political crises in modernity, including the storming of the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021.

KEYWORDS

Power; actor; agency; performance; power; modernity

1. Mark Haugaard

I am delighted to discuss this extremely important and original book, by Isaac Reed (2020), *Power in Modernity*, with you, Clarissa Hayward and Jonathan Heaney.

The book is highly complex and so I suggest that perhaps we structure the discussion, in a loose way, along the same developmental structure as the book. To give an overview, I will begin with few observations concerning the overall ambition and contribution of the work.

What makes this book extremely exciting is that Reed has his own voice, which makes the book unique and original. What makes it so is that Reed looks at familiar, taken-for-granted aspects of everyday interaction, and makes them surprising. Typically, in everyday life social actors take power-over command authority for granted. They take it as given that long chains of command generally work, while Isaac sees this as a surprising fact. The example that Reed opens with, colonial power, is paradigmatic of the problem of command and obedience, as the colonies were far from the command centres of power. In the case of the English/British American colonies, which became the USA, three thousand miles of ocean separated London from Philadelphia or Boston. Over such distances coercion is difficult, so to exercise effective government, there must be legitimate command power. As I understand it, the central theoretical question that this work

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tries to answer is as follows: how is violent-cum-coercive power made into legitimate power? In particular, what is the role of performance and metaphor, such as that of the King's two bodies,¹ in socially constructing the state as a social fact, which has legitimacy in the eyes of those subjected to the state's powers of command?

While Reed opens with the colonial command problem, he moves on to the establishment of the federal government of the USA and the French Republic, in the aftermath of their respective 18th C. revolutions, as exemplars of the process of creating legitimate power structures. Interpreted in a neo-Foucauldian way, it could be argued that Reed wishes to go to the zero-point moment when the legitimacy of the state was being established, thus not part of the taken-for-granted everyday practical knowledge of the order-of-things, in order to show how these structures of legitimacy were made and therefore, by implication, how these structures of legitimacy can be un-made.

One of the unusual aspects of this theorization is the manner in which Reed sees violence and coercion as contributing to legitimacy when performed in a certain way. Many theorists, following Arendt (1970), assume that violence-cum-coercion undermines legitimacy, while Reed convincingly demonstrates that violence-cum-coercion and legitimacy can have a symbiotic relationship. However, for that to happen there must be felicitous performance, whereby specific meanings that confer legitimacy upon the state are successfully socially constructed.

The book opens with a discussion of various conceptual tools that Reed uses to construct his theoretical argument. These include the concepts of *rector*, *actor*, *other*, *action* and *agent*, with which I wish to dialogue. Briefly put, *rector* is the more powerful actor, who, according to the conventions of power debates following Dahl (1968), we typically refer to as actor A, while the *actor* refers to the responding less powerful actor B, who by her response becomes an *agent* of the rector (Reed 2020, p. 10). As an agent the actor gives up her goals for those of the rector. Those who are excluded from the organizational rector/actor relationship are defined as the *other* (Reed 2020, p. 11).

The relationship between rector and actor is defined by a struggle for authorship. When rector exercises power-over actor to complete a project, rector gains authorship of the project (Reed 2020, p. 13). Conversely, actor may well be tempted to use their action for purposes other than the goals of rector, thus to become an author, thus rector in their own right. Thus, a double struggle around author/rectorship ensues (Reed 2020, p. 14–7). Reed emphasizes that rectors and actors often occupy both positions, depending upon context and project (Reed 2020, p. 16). To be an actor, as opposed to rector, means giving up some authorship, which can have its advantages in terms of avoiding responsibility (Reed 2020, p. 17). However, generally most actors want to be authors, thus rectors

Building upon the work of Julia Adams, Reed observes that there are two perceptions of the concept of agency within sociological theory. There exists the rhetorical individual-heroic version of agency associated with concepts like free will, where agents world-make in defiance of social structure, which Reed-cum-Adams rejects (Reed 2020, p. 41). Reed opts for a more grounded interpretation of agency, which is framed within a model of rectors (or principals) framing organizational projects that agents then stand for (Reed 2020, p. 40). Reed defines agency as follows: 'Agency is *the ability to send an agent into the world, and bind said agent to act on the behalf of the sender.*' (Reed 2020, p. 30 – emphasis original). Because the aims of the rector and actor-cum-agent are often different, one of the central problems of social theory is to

explain how the powerful bind the less powerful actors into predictable and compliant agent positions (Reed 2020, p. 42). In fact, the theoretical puzzle of this book is to understand how actors routinely become predictable agents of the state, as a collective rector. Part of this puzzle can be simply explained through crude coercion. However, to gain legitimacy it also has a performative aspect, whereby rector learns which performances of violence-cum-coercion will make actor into a compliant-cum-reliable agent. In turn, that compliance entails the performance of representing certain organizationally social roles (Reed 2020, p. 48). Rector requires certain roles to be performed, be they labouring or the employment of certain skills, which requires actor to perform as an agent of rector's projects. This is a relationship of mutual dependency that is always a potential source of resistance as they struggle for authorship (Reed 2020, p. 48–9).

In opposition to the above relationship, the *other* is excluded from the rector-actor-agent relationship. The other is either relegated to the category of an enemy or that of non-authorship (Reed 2020, p. 18–19). The enemy is the other who is an author but of a project that is in opposition to that of rector and actor. The concept of the other as non-author is derived from Orlando Patterson's account of slavery conceptualized as *social death* (Patterson 1982). A worker may be alienated within the community, while the slave is alienated *from* the community, therefore ceases to have any claims of personhood, thus to have any legitimate projects of their own (Reed 2020, p. 24–6). As a kind of living tool, or property, the slave-other can only represent other in a manner which denies their personhood (Reed 2020, p. 26–27).

Commenting upon this sophisticated set of conceptual tools, I wish to make the picture more complex by developing this theoretical picture away from purposive intentionality. Reed acknowledges that individual social actors can be both rectors and actors. I want to push this a little further. In Reed's view, the rectors and actors struggle for authorship, sometimes actors becoming rectors. The opposite happens too: rectors struggle to avoid authorship and present themselves as agents.

Reed's project hinges around understanding the use of metaphor to gain legitimacy and I would argue that a highly effective technique for doing this is for rector to *disclaim* authorship. When a rector in some far-flung colony claims to be acting on behalf of the King's second body this is, as Reed observes (2020, p. 118), a strategic claim to charismatic power. It makes rectors more powerful when they convince others that they are *agents* of the King. If the colony is far away, the reality is that nobody really knows what the King wants and, furthermore, the King is poorly positioned to coercively correct the agent for any misrepresentation. Consequently, the claim of actor-agency is often purely symbolic and has functional strategic objective.

Social order is conventional, thus socially constructed. In situations of radical social change, if rectors were to claim authorship of the social construction of a new social order, which is not yet part of the natural-order-of-things, they would leave themselves vulnerable to the critique that this is 'an arbitrary' social order that benefits only rector. This makes the probability of disobedient resistance from responding actors high, only coercion by rector can prevent it. However, if rectors can present themselves as an agent-actor of some higher rector that arbitrariness and perception of self-interest is removed.

When Moses founded a new society and structured it according to the Ten Commandments, he disclaimed authorship and attributed it to God. The fact that Moses was a mere agent of the supreme rector essentially reified those commandments, thus making them more compelling. Analogously, when Lenin and Mao led revolutions (acts of rector authorship), they claimed to be mere agents of the dialectical laws of history. So, in moments of social change, when a new social order is being established, it makes strategic sense to claim a sending-binding relationship to a more powerful, reifying, external source of authority.

Disclaiming authorship is strategic even for the most powerful. From the perspective of the king, the strategic point of the doctrine of the two bodies of the King is precisely that it allows the actual King, with a physical body, to claim to be the mere agent of the King's second transcendental body. The King's claim to mere agency (thus a denial of authorship and rectorship) makes the actual physical King more powerful, not less so. In fact, contrary to the assumption of rational choice, it makes strategic sense for rectors to *disclaim* authorship and rectorship.

Actors gain power by attributing their action to some higher transcendental authority. This applies equally to the democratic, egalitarian sounding, metaphor of the 'will of the people', which constitutes a second body, not synonymous with the actual peoples' physical first body. Populist leaders claim to be agents, sent by the people, as part of strategic performance of authority power. To what extent they actually represent the people, in any literal sense, is an open question. This is especially the case if we take account of the fact that the real people have many wills (plural). Therefore, the (singular) will of the people can never be realized.

This has implications for how we interpret these will-to-power metaphors. We should not take them at surface value. A good example, which I refer to in our previous discussion (also in this issue), is Emanuel Litvinoff's account of his expulsion from the local London branch of the Young Communist League. This took place at the time of Stalin's purges of Trotskyists. After joining, Litvinoff made the mistake of dating a fellow member of the YCL to whom, as it happened, the chairman of this group was also attracted. As a consequence, the chairman wanted to expel Litvinoff. However, expelling someone for dating another member of the YCL was not a plausible performance but, within the context of Stalin's purges, accusing someone of being a Trotskyist was a felicitous charge. So, Litvinoff was expelled for this misdemeanour, although he had no idea who Trotsky was (Litvinoff 2008, p. 98–107). Looking from the outside it might appear that the chairman was in sending-and-binding relationship with Stalin but that is not the case, except in an attenuated sense. Stalin was the ultimate authority, the rector, in the sense of defining what kind of performance constitutes a felicitous performance. The chairman was actually an author (with his own agenda to expel a member of the local YCL) who used a specific expedient performance of agency to realise the power-over necessary to expel a member. In terms of the metaphor of the King's two bodies, the chairman is performing the second body of Stalin but he is not really sent or representing Stalin; he is going through a ritual. As Isaac argues, correctly, the second body is a socially constructed fiction (Reed 2020, p. 193), where actors present themselves as agents of this metaphysical social construction. However, this is a performance, a piece of theatre, which is

a condition of possibility for power. As Isaac correctly observes, the indigenous populations of the US became powerless the moment they became characterized as without a rector (Reed 2020, p. 173 and 178).

We should think of the performance of social life along the lines of Goffman's characterization of the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman 1971). There is a front stage performance, which is an obligatory drama necessary for legitimate social power but, behind the scenes, there is also the backstage, where the real interests and intentions of the social actors are revealed. The problem is, of course, what is backstage is often well hidden. However, there are moments when in the front stage performance actors hint at the backstage reality. Humour is often used to do this, for instance, in the context of the new US Republic, there is the example of someone suggesting in jest that (given the people's partiality to alcohol) the sovereign could be *whiskey itself* (Reed 2020, p. 227). The idea of whiskey as rector is obviously absurd. This is strategic humour, where the objective is to reveal a truth, a backstage reality, that sovereignty is a convenient social construction. If held to account for the infelicitous acknowledgement of the backstage reality, humour provides an excuse of the form 'I didn't really mean that, it was only a joke'.

The characterization of agents as acting out *the projects* of rector, or being in a sending-binding relationship, can easily be overdrawn if taken too literally. Following Austin (1975), authority is performative, whereby the social actor performs an organisational or socially recognized social role, which can be either felicitously accomplished (successful agency) or infelicitously so (unsuccessful agency). Following Giddens (1984, p. 14–5), agency can also be, more minimally, characterized simply as the power-to to make a difference. Often, this power-to is only on behalf of some rector in the weak and attenuated sense that it entails the reproduction of certain recognisable social roles. To take the example of this academic exchange: we share a common project, as rectors, to be authors of a discussion in social theory – an original review-discussion of Reed's book. What gives us the power-to to accomplish this task is that we perform in a felicitous manner. Consequently, this article will include our institutional affiliations, suggestive of performing as agency representatives of our respective universities. The point is that we are performing in a structured context, where representing a university is a condition of possibility for serious speech acts.

Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, part of modernity entails the advance of what I term *citizen's authority*, which is form of agency that comes from the concept of citizenship (Haugaard 2020, p. 30 and 188, Mik-Meyer and Haugaard 2020). In contrast to the category of 'other', as exemplified by slaves, citizen's authority is the power-to right to author your own life and speech. This power-to right began with male property holders and, over time, was extended to male non-property-holders, women and finally to various categories of persons previously excluded from citizenship on ethnic, racial or other grounds. When a social actor claims this right, they are an agent of citizenship, which is not tied to any specific project. Thus, with the advent democracy, agency becomes a much wider and more power-enhancing phenomenon than is suggested by the definition: 'Agency is the ability to send an agent into the world, and bind said agent to act on the behalf of the sender.' (Reed 2020, p. 30 original emphasis).

I am not saying that this definition is categorically wrong, in some absolute sense. Literally it is correct, even in democracies we are agents of the metaphors 'citizen' and/or 'the will of the people'. Yet, a wider and more fluid concept of agency is simultaneously at

work. Often, felicitous front stage performance entails that a rector (in backstage reality) claims that they are mere agents (front stage), in a binding relationship with powerful rector, who may be a metaphysical social construction, such as the King's second body, God, the laws of history, citizenship or 'the will of the people'. Maybe we should think of this phenomenon as on a scale, in authoritarian social contexts there is significant binding between rectors and agents but in more complex plural societies, and in moments of revolutionary social change, strategic actors use these performances largely in order to be felicitous.

In the theatre of social life actors engage in the front stage performances behind which there is another backstage reality. When we read texts from the past, we do not really know to what extent people took these metaphors literally, or to what extent they were mere front stage rationalisations. In the feudal period, the 'great-chain-of-being' was another commonly invoked metaphor. Yet, at carnival time the metaphor was inverted, festivity and humour providing a glimpse into another back-stage reality. This raises the obvious question: to what extent do we think, especially by the late 18th C., that anyone really believed, backstage, in the metaphor of the King's two bodies?

2. Jonathan G. Heaney

I would like to begin by saying how great I think the book is. I really think that Isaac, here and in his wider theoretical work, has made an enormous contribution to the practice of social theory in general and to cultural and political sociology in particular. What stands out from this book above all, beyond the contribution to the study of power, and the defence of interpretivism and hermeneutics that it represents, is the careful and serious scholarship it embodies. This is something that, given the state of contemporary knowledge production, and the increasingly perilous status of theory in sociology (and sociology departments), has never been more welcome. Reed is one of a handful of original, creative, and intellectually rigorous theorists to have emerged in the US field in recent years and that field, and the discipline, are in a much stronger position because of contributions such as this.

And this is a wonderfully rich 'Brunswick stew' of a book, drawing on a vast range of intellectual and historical sources in its analysis of power in modernity. In many ways, the book is haunted. It is populated by a multitude of 'ghosts', from historical figures like Anthony Wayne, Little Turtle, and the (fascinating) Herman Husband, to sociologists like Weber, and Alexander, and Adams. One, I think central, though somewhat occluded ghost – or perhaps that should be *Geist* – is Hegel. This is most evident in the theory of power developed by Reed in the book (2020), with *rector* and *actor* relations evoking the lord/bondsman or master/slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology*, coupled with a notion of the 'Other' derived from Fanon's postcolonial (along with Butler's) reading of Hegel. Authorship, and the struggles over its attribution, and its denial, too, depends on recognition, misrecognition, and non-recognition. Yet beyond these probably obvious and acknowledged affinities, there seems to be a sense in which the deeper ontological basis of the book might be considered 'Hegelian'. This is in the 'processual account of action' or process ontology that Reed is tying to the critical sociology of power (Reed 2020, p. 33, fn9), which is also found in the pragmatists, Arendt, and more recently in the

work of sociologists such as Abbott (2016) and others. However, how much does the model of the social actor behind this processualism and these chains of power and their representation owe to Hegel?

This question brings another of the book's ghosts into the frame. Pierre Bourdieu, and importantly here, his lectures on the state (Bourdieu 2014), which are cited on the second page, and somewhat in opposition to which the arguments of the book take shape. Human action is 'based in the creativity and habit of persons, is organized into iterative, nested, and overlapping *projects*' (Reed 2020, p. 32), an idea that is only now being reclaimed after its attempted (ritualized symbolic) 'murder' by Bourdieu in *Outline* (1977). I think that reducing Bourdieu's work on the state to a theory of symbolic violence – a 'sociological nightmare' from which we are trying to wake – and his effective dismissal, without much engagement, as something akin to a 'central conflationist' or 'sociological imperialist' (Archer 2000) is provocative, yet somewhat tendentious, and doesn't really account for what a (mostly) dispositional account of social action can do, nor how habitus became more processual and dynamic in later accounts. In *Pascalain Meditations* (Bourdieu 2000) for instance, Bourdieu writes about practice itself as 'temporalization', as the making of human time, and of the experience of time as a 'forth-coming'. He writes, drawing on Husserl and a distinction between project and protention, a 'pre-reflexive aiming at a forth-coming offers as quasi-present in the visible', that:

what is aimed at by the pre-occupation of practical sense, an anticipated presence to what it aims at, is a forth-coming already present in the immediate present and not constituted as future. The project, by contrast, or premeditation, posits the end as such, that is, as one end chosen among all others and coloured by the same modality, that of the contingent future, which may happen or not happen. If one accepts Hegel's demonstration in which the design, the project, the *Vorsatz*, presupposes representation, *Vorstellung*, and intention, *Absicht*, which itself presupposes abstraction, the separation of subject and object, it is clear that one is indeed in the order of the conscious and the reflected, of action conscious of itself in its objective reality as the actualization of a possible' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 209–10).

There is a bit more going on in Bourdieu's account, and his model of the actor, I think, than is accounted for in the book, especially when these later reflections on time, bodies, and the distinctive conceptualization of 'strategy' are considered (Bourdieu 2000, 1990).² These reflections also prompt the question: to what extent is a Hegelian theory of action 'underlabouring' in Reed's account of action, and of power? Are 'big' theoretical questions around free will, intentionality, reflexivity and motivation (all part of the ongoing theoretical conversation in the US and elsewhere that Isaac, I know, is very familiar with) being sidestepped under the label of 'projects'?³

The aim here is not to defend Bourdieu (whose work on the state and more generally is awash with problems) but rather to interrogate the ontological ground of the book. Yet, there seem to me to be clear resonances between Reed's project and the account of the state developed by Bourdieu in those late lectures (Bourdieu 2014). These extend well beyond the differing interpretations of Kafka. Bourdieu mentions Kantorowicz repeatedly in the text and discusses the 'paradox' of the king's two bodies directly, suggesting that it is best understood with a 'house metaphor'.⁴ Bourdieu discussed Kantorowicz again in relation to the 'magical power' of the *sigillum authenticum*, and the use of royal seals and the 'chain of warrants' that go with them, and the shift in power that he

associates with the ‘mystery of ministry’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 298–301). One other key source for Bourdieu’s account of the sociogenesis of the state here is Norbert Elias (another processualist), and what he refers to as ‘collective democratization’ or the shift from (relatively) ‘private’ to ‘public’ monopolies, in which, at a certain point in the process of state formation, as networks of interdependence grow longer and more (socially) complex, power and ‘control over the centralized and monopolized resources tends to pass from the hands of individuals to those of ever-greater numbers, and finally to become a function of the interdependent human web as a whole’ (Elias 2000, p. 276). This is, for Bourdieu, Elias’s most ‘original point’ – ‘the more the king extends his power, the more he extends his dependence on those who depend on his power’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 130). These lengthening chains of interdependence and power in Elias are recast as lengthening chains of legitimation in Bourdieu, ultimately leading to what Elias called a depersonalization and institutionalization of power (Elias 2000). Central to such processes – which can be linked to the ‘creative destruction of the King’s two bodies’ – is the power of *delegation* (see also Bourdieu 1991, p. 203–219). Bourdieu writes directly and repeatedly about ‘chains of delegation’, often in ways that display clear affinities with the agency relations that Reed makes central, and the way in which this fracturing of power and differentiation ultimately results in a shift from dynastic to bureaucratic authority, and the emergence of ‘the public’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 303–309).

There are, of course, clear differences – Bourdieu ends up with the state as a kind-of ‘meta-field’, wielding a form of ‘meta-power’ on the basis of ‘meta-capital’, and as a space of competition between different fields (juridical, political, administrative etc). This emerges from the culmination of the process of concentration of different species of capital – physical/coercive capital, economic capital, cultural/informational capital and, ultimately, symbolic capital – the deployment of which is associated various ‘acts of the state’ (the ‘official’, the ‘public’ and, especially, the ‘universal’). Reed’s approach is interestingly distinct from the field-theoretical approach, and the historical case studies in the book might be understood from that perspective as part of the ‘primary accumulation’ phase of capital concentration, and the struggle over material as well as symbolic resources within the moment of emergency politics. Yet, the focus on the representation and performance of those struggles, and their interpretation, adds a key missing element to our understanding of the processes of state formation.

Performativity, too, features in Bourdieu’s account, and perhaps in ways that connect with one of the most distinctive theoretical arguments in Reed’s book around enchantment and the sacred as enduring elements of the ‘landscape of meaning’ in modernity. Bourdieu’s state is an enchanted state, ‘a collective fiction, a well-founded illusion’, with both a ‘religious’ (via Durkheim) and ‘mythopoetic’ (via Cassirer) character (Bourdieu 2014, p. 6). It is a ‘theological entity’ (that exists because people believe it exists), with (almost) magical powers, that often works on the basis of performative power. This is especially true of the state ‘official’ – whose exercise of state power can be said to feature a ‘relationship of recruitment, and then sending-and-binding between rectors and actors who act for and on behalf of the state’ (Reed 2020, p. 150) – but can also be seen as a form of ‘evocatory magic’ or ‘sorcery’, linked to ‘theatricalization’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 63) and the power of ‘nomination’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 273). Yet, when discussing the source of this state magic, Bourdieu cites Mauss, who, in his essay on magic, asks how the magician is recognized as such, suggesting that the answer is that ‘the magical effectiveness of the

magician is the whole world within which he operates – the other magicians, the magic instruments, and the believers who grant the magician his power and thereby contribute to his existence’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 298).⁵ This is a key difference in that Bourdieu’s real interest is to get to a position where the state becomes ‘the central bank of symbolic credit’ and symbolic power, the foundation of ‘logical’ and ‘moral’ conformity, especially via education, within a national territory. This ‘metaphysical’ conception of the state that Bourdieu ends up with – a sort of ‘unmoved mover’, the ‘ultimate site, like Aristotle’s God’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 11) where all chains of legitimation stop – has been subjected to quite a bit of sustained criticism already (for instance Schinkel 2015). No doubt, the central clearing we emerge into seems littered with ‘broken sticks’.

Part of the difference, then, is the stage of the process in question, i.e. when and whether the ‘claim’ to the monopoly of (either type of) violence is ‘successful’ (Weber 1978, p. 54). There are two final, and related, questions that I had on finishing the book. Reed makes a compelling case for the figure of ‘the people’ (as author) coming into being via performative power and emerging as a replacement for the king’s second body in ‘binding’ rector and actor (and excluding other) in the transition to modernity. While a number of alternative cultural perspectives on the general *problematique* are discussed, especially Foucault, I wondered if the concept of ‘the nation’, in addition, or better, in relation to ‘the people’ and its two bodies, might have warranted some more specific attention. Margaret Canovan, for example, in her pioneering work on the subject underscores the importance of the American Revolution in particular in moving ‘the people’ into the limelight and merging that polysemantic phrase – the *sovereign people*, the *common people*, and *popular government* – into a single political project (Canovan 2005).⁶ Does not the nation, as ‘imagined community’, not form part of the landscape of meaning that also binds rector to actor, and excludes other (who may technically be of ‘the state’, but never truly of ‘the nation’)? Anderson (2006), in suggesting that the nation is imagined as limited, as sovereign, and especially as community, underscores the ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ associated with nationhood, which helps to account for the frequency with which some rectors can send some actors to kill, and to die (Anderson 2006, p. 7, Heaney 2013). How does this connect with the ‘mystical’ second body of the people in modernity, and might ‘embodied domination’ not connect with a notion of embodied nationalism?

One final point, or perhaps, self-interested query, that connects to the question of nationalism concerns the emotions. There are, to me at least, some tantalizing glimpses of emotionality in the book – as they relate the model of power and agency relations, as engines (and outcomes) of violence, rebellion, and atrocity, and so on – but perhaps especially as they might relate to questions of legitimacy or, what I might call, the emotional basis of legitimation. The book owes a good deal to Weber and is successful in challenging its own Weberianism in relation to bureaucratic disenchantment in modernity. But, rather than ‘belief, does the book not suggest that submission to legitimate authority also, or even more so, rests on the emotions and bodies?

There is no doubt that, regardless of the answer to that question, the questions and answers that the book does provide have deep relevancy to the current political conjuncture, especially as they relate to an enchanted populism, inextricably bound up with fantasy and myth, and indeed, emotions (Brubaker 2017, Salmela and von Scheve 2017). Invocations of ‘the people’, and struggles over authorship, and exclusion, have dominated our collective and globalized consciousness for the last number of years. My primary

impression on finishing the book was that it was ultimately speaking about a Hegelian shift at the level of Being, of ‘world-historical’ import, born of crisis and contradiction, and passion. As we emerge from another crisis, or indeed, series of crises, one wonders what the ‘cunning of reason’, has in store for us next.⁷

3. Clarissa Hayward

I finished reading Isaac Ariail Reed’s thought-provoking new book, *Power in Modernity*, as the U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the American Capitol concluded its first full day of hearings (Reed 2020). Capitol Officer Harry Dunn recounted how, on 6 January 2021, a group of rioters wearing MAGA hats had refused his orders to leave the Capitol building, with the claim that ‘President Trump invited us here.’⁸ ‘We’re here to stop the steal,’ the insurrectionists told him, ‘Joe Biden is not the president. Nobody voted for Joe Biden.’

Dunn, who is Black, testified that he replied to the rioters that he, himself, had voted for Biden, and that the rioters responded with what he characterized as ‘a torrent of racial epithets.’

Near the end of the hearing, when the chair of the committee asked Dunn what he hoped the commission would accomplish, the officer answered with a metaphor. ‘If a hit man is hired and he kills somebody,’ he said, the ‘hit man goes to jail.’ He continued:

But not only does the hit man goes to jail . . . the person who hired them does. There was an attack carried out on Jan. 6, and [somebody] sent them. I want you to get to the bottom of that.

In Reed’s terms, Officer Dunn wants the House Select Committee to identify the *rector*; he wants it to find and to name the principal for whom the rioters acted as agents. On Reed’s view, the power of a rector (R) is the power to motivate an actor (A) to act on R’s behalf: to act in ways that help realize R’s ‘projects’ by ‘bringing about . . . future states of the world that can be interpreted as aligned with a projected state of the world, imagined in the present.’ (Reed 2020, p. 9). How does R get A to act on R’s behalf? In significant part, Reed argues, through *performance*: ‘frontstage drama’ that binds actor to rector, and defines the *other* (for example, MAGA’s racial other), who serves as the constitutive outside of rector/actor relations.

In what follows, I organize my thoughts around the three key terms from *Power in Modernity* italicized in the previous paragraph: rector (section 1), performance (section 2), and other (section 3). Using the example of Donald Trump and the MAGA insurrectionists to think with Reed about power, I suggest, first, that power consists not only in relations among Rs and As, but also in the social structures that define those relations; second, that the performances through which people produce and reproduce power relations are not directed by powerful Rs, so much as decentralized, collective performances; and third, that othering can take on a life of its own, to the point where dominating the other becomes the project that drives political action.

3.1. Rector

In his testimony before the House Select Committee, Officer Harry Dunn implied that then-President Trump was what Reed calls a rector. Trump hired the ‘hitman,’ Dunn’s suggestion seems to be, when he urged his supporters to act for him, by rushing the Capitol to try to block certification of the 2020 election results. The morning of the riot, however, Donald Trump made a very different claim. Speaking to the crowd that had gathered at a park just south of the White House, Trump declared that ‘we’ – Trump and his supporters, together – would not let ‘them’ (Congress, the ‘radical left Democrats,’ the ‘fake news’) ‘silence your voices.’⁹ Over the course of a more than seventy minute long, rambling speech, the president leaned heavily on the first-person plural, telling his followers, whom he called ‘American patriots’: ‘We’re gathered together in the heart of our nation’s capital for one very, very basic and simple reason: to save our democracy.’ Trump invoked ‘our country’ and ‘our constitution.’ He claimed to speak for ‘the people,’ whom he said ‘they’ were attempting to defraud. ‘We want to go back, and we want to get this right, because we’re going to have somebody in there that should not be in there, and our country will be destroyed, and we’re not going to stand for that.’

On Trump’s telling, he was *not* R, sending A (‘the hitman’) to act for him. To the contrary, he, Donald Trump, was A. He was the actor who acted for, who represented, the one and the only legitimate ruler/rector: the people. Of course, this move is an all-too-familiar populist ruse: a ruler or would-be ruler claims to stand for ‘the people’ – for ‘our country,’ in this case, for ‘American patriots.’ He claims to act for – including, if necessary, to fight for – that people. The populist asserts that his commands, including his incitations to violence, are authorized by ‘the people’ and claims to serve, not his projects, but theirs/ours (our democracy, our constitution, our country).

As I have argued in the past, to conceptualize power as chains of relations among human agents, who are variably positioned as ‘powerful’ and ‘powerless,’ is to overlook the power of the social norms and standards, conventions and schemas, and other institutionalized and objectified human actions that position all social beings and condition their action.¹⁰ On one reading, Reed’s account of power in modernity seems to wear the face of the powerful R, who has power and exercises it over the relatively powerless A. Yet, at the same time, it is an account of the structural power of the modern political frame: a frame that enables and constrains even Rs and would-be Rs to cite democratic norms of rectorship. This frame is comprised, in part, of the background assumptions that political power is legitimate only if ‘the people’ serves as rector; that legitimate power promotes, not the particularistic interests of the dominant or the majority, but the interests of all; and that that ‘all’ – the people – is sufficiently internally cohesive that it can function as a self-governing unity. The logical flaws in these background assumptions are obvious. In a pluralistic political society, there is no democratic R, in the form of a unified body of citizens, capable of governing itself or authorizing some A to act for it. Instead, the equation of political legitimacy with acting for ‘the people’ depends upon, and it reinforces, what Isaac Ariail Reed calls a ‘constitutive fantasy’ of social unity (Reed 2020, p. 121).

3.2. Performance

How do people come to embrace such a constitutive fantasy? How can anyone believe there is a unified body of ‘American patriots,’ a self-governing ‘people’ that sends an agent to represent it and to act in its name? Much has been made of the gullibility of Trump’s supporters, many of whom endorse conspiracy theories and believe patently false empirical claims. However, what led the rioters to experience themselves as comprising a ‘people’ whom, in his speech on January 6, Donald Trump called the ‘*real people*’ – an aggrieved American public, come together ‘to stop the steal’ – was less the discursive content of that address (and of the countless Facebook, Twitter, Parler, and Gab posts directed at MAGA ‘patriots’ in the lead-up to the riot), than what Reed, drawing on J.L. Austin, calls ‘binding performances’ (Reed 2020, p. 74–98).

For Austin, a performative utterance does not describe an already-existing state of the world, but instead produces the very reality it purports to depict (Austin 1975). As Reed notes, a performative utterance is therefore neither true nor false, but rather felicitous or infelicitous; it either succeeds, or it fails to succeed, in ‘bind[ing] the future and invent[ing] a piece of social life ‘in the very act’” (Reed 2020, p. 76). If, as Officer Dunn implied, Donald Trump was the R who sent the mob to the Capitol on January 6, then perhaps (one might think), the president ‘did things with words’ to produce that reality. Perhaps when Trump proclaimed, ‘We will never give up, we will never concede,’ and the assembled crowd roared its approval, he (felicitously) called the ‘real people’ into being. In other words, perhaps it was Donald Trump’s performance that constructed the ‘we’ that, to quote the transcript from his speech that day, would:

... walk down, and I’ll be there with you. We’re going to walk down—(APPLAUSE)—we’re going to walk down ... we’re going to walk down to the Capitol—(APPLAUSE)—we’re going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women, and we’re probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them—(LAUGHTER)—because you’ll never take back our country with weakness.

Perhaps. Yet, as even this brief excerpt from the transcript of Trump’s speech suggests, the performance that morning involved more audience participation than one might expect at a one-man show. Indeed, at the January 6 rally, as at all Trump rallies, there was a call-and-response quality to the president’s address. Trump’s calls (‘we’re going to walk down to the Capitol’) were punctuated by audience responses, which the president sometimes seemed to invite with a strategic pause, an emphatic gesture, or a drop in his vocal intonation, but which at other times *preceded*, and seemed to *elicit*, Trump’s reactions. To watch the videos and to listen to the audio recordings from the morning of January 6 (rather than merely to read a transcript of the speech) is to see the former president nod his head and hear him slightly raise the pitch of his voice just before ‘and I’ll be there with you.’ It is to hear the audience cheer, and to notice that Trump repeats, ‘we’re going to walk down ...,’ then pauses, then repeats, again: ‘we’re going to walk down to the [with vocal emphasis:] *Capitol!*’ It is to hear the cries from the crowd of ‘Yeah!’ and ‘WOOOO!’ and ‘Storm the Capitol!’ before Trump continues: ‘We’re going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women, and we’re probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them.’¹¹

This ‘frontstage drama’ was, as I would venture most such performances are, a drama through which the designated speaker and his audience *co-performed* the ‘real people’ into being. Donald Trump helped make ‘the real people’ when he intoned ‘We will never concede.’ But so did the members of the crowd when they laughed and clapped, when they donned their red caps and waved their blue flags. In short, the performance that made the ‘we’ that ‘walk[ed] down to the Capitol’ was more decentered than, at first blush, it may appear. When Donald Trump’s supporters chanted in unison, when they erupted into applause or laughter, they did not simply affirm this performance; they helped produce it.

3.3. Other

On Reed’s account, in addition to rector and actor, there is a third party to every power relationship: ‘other’ (O). R and A misrecognize, objectify, and dehumanize O. They define O as outside of their relationship, and as foreign to the project they pursue. Sometimes O is a ‘terrifying “savage” horde,’ Reed writes (Reed 2020, p. 19) (Think of Trump’s migrant caravans at the southern border.) Sometimes O is an ‘all-powerful enemy’ (like the China against whom Trump waged his trade war) (Reed 2020, p. 19). O serves as the scapegoat on whom ‘we, the people’ lay our sins: the villain whom R and A conjure as the cause of their struggles and the root of ‘the uncertainty of the world itself.’ (Reed 2020, p. 19) Rage against O binds R and A together, even as it enables a feeling of agency, a sense of collective capacity to take on the enemy whom they imagine as the obstacle to their project.

The others to Donald Trump and his MAGA patriots are not far to seek. They are, first and foremost, racial others: Black Americans like Capitol Officer Dunn; ‘bad hombres’ like the immigrants whom candidate Trump promised he would deport; ‘disloyal’ Jewish citizens who vote for Democrats; and the denizens of ‘disgusting, rat and rodent infested’ American cities, or ‘shithole’ Central American and African countries.¹² Trump’s ‘Make America Great campaign’ continued and extended a long history of American racial othering. At the same time, MAGA othered ‘radical left Democrats’; centrist (‘weak’) Republicans; and especially members of the press, whom the president repeatedly declared to be ‘the enemies of the people.’¹³

According to one prominent model of political binding and othering, rulers and would-be rulers compete to perform into existence shared understandings of ‘who we are’ that serve their interests in getting and keeping power (see Smith 2003). On this view, othering is largely, if not wholly, strategic. It serves to bind A to R and to motivate A to act in ways that promote R’s projects. This is the view adopted by many of Trump’s critics, for example, when they hold him accountable for what they argue are the predictable results of his populist performances. Thus Congresswoman Liz Cheney declared to her colleagues: ‘The president of the United States summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack. Everything that followed was his doing.’¹⁴

However, in reflecting on Reed’s understanding of power in the context of the unsettling events of 6 January 2021, I find this strategic model of binding and othering almost overly optimistic. On this view, even if there is no unified people that can serve as (democratic) rector, and even if every performance of a people into being always also produces its others,

nevertheless, politics still center on human projects. On this view, politics are driven by ‘imagined future states of the world,’ which human agents use power in order to realize. This model leaves open the possibility of an egalitarian politics and/or a politics centered on projects that incorporate respect for, even care for, the other. It is optimistic, as well, in the more basic sense that it sees politics as motivated by *some* positive vision, not just power for power’s sake, and its views othering as a political by-product, rather than an end.

The video played at the start of the hearing on the day I finished *Power in Modernity* paints a different picture.¹⁵ From the rioters’ angry chants (‘USA! USA!’), to the crush of the crowd pressing through the line of police, to the chaotic violence as the throng pours into the Capitol Rotunda, it captures an othering that exceeds the ambitions of those who fancy themselves Rs. Here O has expanded to include the ultra-conservative Trump loyalist Mike Pence, and even the police officers whom self-declared supporters of the ‘thin blue line’ assault with tasers and flagpoles. O has morphed, not only because loyalties have shifted and tactics have changed, but because othering has taken on a life of its own. If MAGA is a project – if it is a future state of the world that Trump’s supporters imagine they might bring to fruition – at the heart of that project is the domination of the other.

4. Isaac Ariail Reed

Thank you to Mark, Clarissa and Jonathan, for these excellent and perspicacious readings of *Power in Modernity*. It is with gratitude that I can report that the book has been not only understood, but artfully applied. There are, however, serious criticisms embedded in your responses as well, criticisms that I will attempt to answer in the spirit of open dialogue and disagreement.

Before leaping in, however, I would like to note that, while working on this response, I sensed an emergent through-line of conversation that appears to bode quite well for social and political theory. To see what I mean, consider an odd divide in how we teach and write theory: Foucauldian interpretation lives its own life, centered on the study of discursive formations, disciplines, and subject-formation, somewhat separate from more ‘standard’ (and, in sociology at least, more American) strategic and instrumental accountings for persons and organizations in the study of power. My book’s own engagement with and departure from Michel Foucault’s accounts of modernity and power (an engagement that was itself part of the departure from Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology noted by Jonathan) operates in the weird space in between those conversations in which Foucault is foundational and those conversations in which considerations such as the ‘incarnation of the political body after the King’ are thought to be better left to the humanities. To the former, *Power in Modernity* appears as an advocate for ‘people with projects,’ too intentional by half, and strangely connected to rational choice theory in economics, political science and sociology. To the latter, *Power in Modernity* appears as weirdly obsessed with meta-questions and epistemological hesitations – why all this worry about the body of the King when the role of the *delegated state* the making and unmaking of power needs to be addressed in such a way that public policy experts can make use of it?

However, in both recent and not-so-recent issues of the *Journal of Political Power*, and in the readings of *Power in Modernity* offered by Mark, Clarissa, and Jonathan, it becomes clear that a conversation exists about order, power, and action in social life

that encompasses these different formats of analysis and reaches thereby for synthesis and even authentic innovation. In the pages of this journal, at least, it becomes clear that the divide I referred to in the previous paragraph is not conceptual but a symptom of certain organizational divides within the (American-dominated) social sciences in the postwar era. Though surely a deeply flawed text, *Power in Modernity* aspires to participate in this conversation, and thus to be a work in the *human sciences*, a term whose own fraught trajectory through modern intellectual life reveals the promise and peril of scholarship neither scientific nor scholastic.

It is indicative of this through-line of conversation that my critics and I share the view that a scholarly study of *power* cannot be entirely disentangled from a study of *modernity*. To begin simply, we may note that this latter term refers to *both* (1) a promise about autonomy and agency in the heroic sense, variably institutionalized in societies around the globe in the last two hundred to five hundred years, a promise that people get to decide how to live their lives, rather than the King, the natural order of aristocratic privilege, the great chain of being, or fate, *and* (2) an extraordinary record of exploitation, dispossession, and dehumanizing violence visited by the agents of modernity on various others – scapegoated, enslaved, routed from home, labelled as homeless and thus inhuman, whose shadow organizes ethnonationalism when ‘rootless cosmopolitans’ are called from the vasty deep to help with the authoritarian breakthrough.

Insofar as we all operate in a meta-discursive frame that takes Karl Marx’s (1978) *On the Jewish Question* and W.E.B. Du Bois’s (2000) *The Souls of Black Folk* as foundational texts, this doubling of modernity as promise and peril is not escapable, nor should it be (at least in the analytical use of the term). I do, however, see our working understandings of transitions to modernity – and especially those understandings worked through in historical and political sociology since the 1970s – as refinable and subject to recombination. *Power in Modernity* is an attempt at such a recombination, and as such it is written in counterpoint to certain ways of modelling power, and of writing modernity, that had become background common sense for social theorists by the 2010s.

The intervention proposed by *Power in Modernity* that seems to have landed most cleanly with my critics is the emphasis on the performative. I agree with Mark that the book seeks to understand violence and coercion as (in one dimension) performative and thus consequential for what Mark would call authority-power, and it appears that Mark, Clarissa, Jonathan and I all have a broadly commensurate understanding of (political) performance: felicitous dramaturgy – sometimes violent – can create binding hierarchical relations where they did not exist before.

However, I would scramble slightly the uses of ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage,’ and of felicity, that are articulated in Mark’s comments. Mark notes that humour often reveals, or at least hints at, ‘backstage reality.’ Surely this happens, but I would be inclined to investigate when and how humour hints at, thematizes, or somehow seeks to repair *inchoate anxiety*. To joke that whiskey is sovereign may not be so much a way to admit (‘backstage’) that sovereignty is a construct which is nonetheless professed (‘frontstage’), so much as it is a way to express simultaneously a deep investment in sovereignty as real *and* a fear that its location has been lost, or that it has been distributed in such a way as to render the rendering of an ordered universe difficult. Thus, I think that we should say, both about the King’s Two Bodies and about its multiple successors in the rendering of power as legitimate (including the modern bureaucratic imaginary), that they are

evidence of the constitutive imagination at work. In the constitutive imagination, as Paul Veyne (1988) argued in *Did the Greeks believe their Myths?*, analogy is permitted and even experienced as actionable, for mythos and logos are not, therein, opposites in the sense of error and truth.

As a result, I am not sure if asking whether the early moderns ‘believed in’ the King’s Two Bodies when ‘backstage’ is the right question. My sense is that the language I discovered in the archives – and which Bourdieu also documents in his book on the state, as Jonathan points out – was part of a landscape of meaning which served both to legitimate certain power projects (and thus might have been approached, as we say, cynically), and to provide cognitive, moral, and aesthetic order to the wild and unpredictable world of early modern empire. The language of ‘projects,’ taken from pragmatism, was intended to allow for a *certain amount* of intrigue and manipulation of signs, but also to recognize that such intrigue itself rests on other tacit meanings that are not handled quite so instrumentally. I think Mark and I would agree that frontstage and backstage can be blurred or can ‘cross wires’ in this way – after all, Goffman is deeply interested in such moments of breach – but in my view, more emphasis should be placed, in the study of ‘power situations,’ on the hermeneutics of the constitutive imagination and the study of those myths that are activated in the interactions where, in Mark’s terms (Haugaard 2020), confirm-structuration takes place.

Indeed, it was to escape the battle between of theories of intention and interest and theories of sociological irony about action (‘they know not what they do’) that I sought a combination of pragmatism and hermeneutics. From pragmatism, we get people with projects – projects as ‘projections’ of worlds that may, or may not, come to exist. Yet insofar as these projects are embedded in a constructed world, one model for how this world is received and navigated is as a text before which actors stand, with certain possibilities of reinterpretation, to be sure, but never radically free ones. And so, I am theorizing that those individuals and groups who take up positions as rector, actor, and other come into relation in a space of meaning that includes, as Clarissa puts it, ‘social norms and standards, conventions and schemas, and other institutionalized and objectified human actions that position all social beings and condition their action.’ I hope R-A-O can be one way to parse out these norms and standards, and perhaps think about them a little bit differently or evaluate them from a different angle, particularly when what is at stake is the problem of representation in the sense of standing for, speaking for, or acting for another (see discussions in Pitkin 1967).

The special claim that R-A-O theory makes on our understanding of power, then, is to compel us to examine certain constitutive fantasies as solutions to the pressing agency problems that attend all efforts (democratic and non-democratic) at human organization. The narratives and figurations of who is rector, who is actor, and who is other do not always match the relational structures into which these narratives and figurations are entwined, but that is precisely why they can work to solve collective action problems that would, otherwise, be very difficult to solve (e.g. holding together an imperial power-and-profit project over long distances).¹⁶ I thus set out to understand the semiotics of affixing rectorship, agentship, and alterity to persons (individuals and groups). I think that the kinds of discursive formations I sought to study are often understood in (Foucauldian) social theory as subject-forming, and I do not deny that they might, in certain cases, do precisely that. But I moved towards a language of projects precisely because I wished to

reconnect the discursive and performative dimensions of power with those dimensions that are much more familiar to us from the tradition of political economy and are often referred to in locutions such as ‘powers and interests’ and ‘soft (versus hard) power,’ etc.

As I hope will be understandable, this effort at synthesis took some conceptual gymnastics. One instance of such gymnastics, the redefinition of agency, forms a focal point for Mark’s reconstruction of the book, and with good reason. Therein, I wanted to recognize, on the one hand, the universality of human *action* (such that Bartelby the Scrivener’s reply is always possible), and yet, on the other, to thematize an inversion of standard structure-and-agency social theory, such that, in my proposed language, *agency* accrues to the person or group *who is not acting* – who has another act in their place. Clearly, this inversion cannot cover all of what is encompassed within the agency/structure debates. What it does do, however, is force us out of a certain conflation of ‘agency’ as that which all humans have when they act, with ‘agency’ as that highly variable capacity that comes into being via processes of (sometimes large-scale) social organization and reorganization.

Jonathan is correct, furthermore, that my understanding of this second, relational notion of agency is grounded in those readings of Hegel’s lord and bondsman dialectic that had insisted on noting that implicit in the dialectic itself are two quite different versions of the bondsman – the bondsman as partially recognized *actor* and the bondsman as dehumanized *other*.¹⁷ The difference between the two is the degree to which the bondsman is ‘in the game’ of sovereignty, profit, gift-exchange, etc. – that is, in the game of human hierarchical relations – or removed from it.

The larger point of all of these engagements and intellectual reconstructions is that while all humans act, agency is variably distributed, and can become the basis for the study of power, with the latter parsed into performative, discursive, relational, and material dimensions. I would insist, in contrast to Jonathan’s critique, that I do not share Archer’s critique of Bourdieu as a central conflationist, but rather seek both to preserve the space of action and the internal conversation (Archer’s focus) as something like a human universal connoted by the term ‘action,’ *and also* to develop a different account of the ‘social and the symbolic’ than has been central to Bourdieusian social theory. That is why, in my vocabulary, the central tension is the *transformation* – always partial, always fraught, always reversable even if such reversals become the target of further efforts at domination – of actor into agent.

In ‘standards and norms’ and in codes of conduct (implicit or explicit) that regulate and represent chains of power, then, all sorts of fantastical and less-than-immediately-real-on-the-ground instances of authorship – claimed and disclaimed – circulate. In this regard, I join my critics in their cultural interpretations of the figuration of hierarchy in society. Yet, in contrast to this emphasis on the specificity of cultural construction, we must I think *also* admit as identifiable across differently interpreted settings the recurrence of *agency problems as problems of organizational pragmatics*. Mark’s example of the use of Stalin versus Trotsky in the Youth Communist League in pursuit of a romantic project (specifically, the removal from meetings of a romantic rival) is a good example of this. Indeed, it is precisely in this way that I intend R-A-O theory to be used. There may be quite concrete (‘real’) projects that have little to do with the overall metaproject of the group (‘International Communism’), or which even contravene it. These projects have a mappable relational dimension; yet when they are performed, legitimation comes into

play, and here suddenly we find fantasy ('what would Comrade Stalin really want') on the scene. R-A-O theorizes chains of power as always operating simultaneously in the world of the symbolic and the imaginary, on the one hand, and in the grubby world of interest and gain, on the other. And so, the fantasized rector and the immediate project of the concretely identifiable rector mix together, and the romantic rival in the YCL is excommunicated, 'in the name of Stalin.' Or, the justice of the peace in colonial Virginia acts slightly differently when he is called to act 'for the King.' This doubling would, then, apply also to the situations where would-be rectors disclaim authorship precisely to push through the most difficult of re-orderings, policy prescriptions, or enactments of state power.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology is itself a felicitous example of studying this doubling (though I would note that, as George Steinmetz 2006 has pointed out, Bourdieu's assiduous avoidance of the formats of interpretation derived from psychoanalytic vocabularies leaves a certain lacuna in his hermeneutics). As Jonathan notes, my work in *Power in Modernity* is, in part, intended as a counterpoint to the deployment of this doubling, by Bourdieu and many, many, Bourdieusians, in *field theory*. This is not because I doubt the existence of certain processes of differentiation in transitions to modernity (glossed by some as fields, by others as institutional logics, etc.), but rather because I seek to track the semiosis of rector-actor-other constructions as they flit across the 'spaces between fields,' (Eyal 2013) and in so doing multiply in their uses and relevance. It is important, I think, not to let the felicitous reality of the model of field theory for a certain audience of sociologists overwhelm our careful attempts to (always partially) model reality.

Jonathan argues that there is an important overlap between my account of transitions to modernity and that provided by Bourdieu's lectures on the state given at the Collège de France. I would pick out the lecture given on November 14th, 1991 (Bourdieu 2014, p. 292–304) as the strongest instance of this. Here Bourdieu gives us a transition story that goes from the 'great chain of being' with 'both metaphysical and political foundations,' (Bourdieu 2014, p. 299) – that is, the world of the King and his household – to the world of the bureaucratic official, wherein 'the mystery of the official is precisely delegation' (Bourdieu 2014, p. 301). Bourdieu certainly gestures towards the social magic of bureaucracy and officialdom; and he is, in my view, correct to emphasize the 'use of royal seals' as constructing a 'chain of warrants' (Bourdieu 2014, p. 298). But his story of the transformation itself is remarkably organizational-functional, in the sense that, for Bourdieu, it is the division of tasks that is the driver of change and thus ultimately responsible for the emergence of modernity. Bourdieu thus describes the world of delegation – long chains of rectors and actors – remarkably well.¹⁸ But in the end he sees the generation of what he calls a 'historical phenomenology of bureaucratic acts,' in terms of the long-arc *routinization of charisma*, in line with a 'classical' Weberian interpretation of modernity as rationalization:

This is *inherent* to the process; from the moment that you cease to have a single charismatic leader, who can decide everything on the basis of his charisma, that is, his exceptional gift in the face of exceptional situations, etc., you are led into a process of this kind, with, *naturally*, at each point in the network, mandatories who have to take advantage of all the guarantees that the system produces . . . as the king's affairs become

what is called necessary, so the *division of labour* becomes necessary. What I am describing is a genesis of a universe, the genesis of a division of labour of domination (Bourdieu 2014, p. 302, emphasis added).

There is a singularity of transition here – even if we attribute social magic, rather than social-functional advantage, to modern bureaucracy – against which I try to articulate a different vision in *Power in Modernity*. My response to Jonathan, then, would be to point out that *On the State* does not sufficiently comprehend the experience of political modernity as a *negative space*, such that ‘no one is sure who the sovereign is when the sovereign is the people,’ a condition that induces ‘not disenchantment but the proliferation of a plurality of different enchantments, and uncertainty about what organizes them’ (Reed 2020, p. 227–228). Instead of focusing on this negative space, and the remarkable variation of figurations and narratives that rush in to fill it, Bourdieu leaps, via routinization and the ‘division of labour,’ to the bureaucratic state as metafield, and thereby misses what is central to any cultural account of political modernity, namely that the ‘*corpus mysticum* demands to be rewritten’ (Reed 2020, p. 227).¹⁹

All of which brings me to Clarissa’s truly excellent reading of 6 January 2021 and its aftermath in American politics, in terms of ‘rector,’ ‘performance,’ and ‘other.’ I agree that the performance was (partially) decentralized in the specific sense that the crowd at Trump’s rally in advance of the storming of the capital was also performing, and indeed that a kind of emergent format of call-and-response was part of the generation of energy that became the motivation to use force as itself a performance. This recalls several recent papers in the sociology of performance that emphasize audience responses and performances as themselves a space of variation (Taylor 2021, Malacarne 2021). These relationships between rectors and actors-turned-agents often have a dimension of give and take – power is dependent upon its dependents, and thus there is often a concern with the ‘rules for ruling’ that runs parallel to immediate agency problems and various efforts to accomplish clear and limited projects. It is also the case that Donald Trump’s own rhetoric was a theatrics of ‘we the people,’ which demands an interpretation, not only in terms of an analysis of ‘populism’ as a theme or political tendency, but also via a kind of overall picture, drawn from theory and history in equal part, of what Clarissa calls ‘the structural power of the modern political frame.’

It does not strike me as a contradiction that Trump’s rhetoric both posits and inserts him as a rector of his immediate agents and larger group of followers, and also performs him as the agent of ‘we the people.’ Indeed, this is the essence of his alchemy as a performer, binding agents (voters) by both interpreting himself as ‘of the people’ and, thereby, carrying through in public a certain, highly restrictive notion of who the ‘real people’ are. Insofar as his performances are felicitous for certain audiences as truly embodying the people – as their agent, as their avatar, as their advocate – his relational rectorship is maintained and enhanced.

This theoretical conversation, then, reveals certain disagreements I have with frameworks for understanding power that have developed since Clarissa’s (Hayward 2000) genre-bending and conversation-defining work placed Foucault’s departure from the Gramsci-inspired ‘facing’ of power in Steven Lukes’ (2005) classic text firmly on the agenda for all who seek to theorize power. Since that intervention, certain claims about the anonymity of structures of power have become commonplace in social theory. I understand and accept that an important aspect of modern power relations is,

sometimes, their anonymous, capillary, and diffuse character, particularly when the distribution of capacity in society is dependent upon the enactment of practices grounded in expert knowledges whose very claim on our bodies is referred to an expertise, or discourse of truth, whose effectivity is enacted by claiming no moral or political valence at all – e.g. the psychological expert in a criminal trial that opens Foucault’s lectures to the Collège de France in 1974–75.

However, I am deeply trepidatious about making this the central theoretical frame for comprehending ‘politics,’ and for writing a theory of transitions to political modernity. I worry that we have developed an intellectual tendency, as critics of power, to take expert discourse at its own word as effectively controlling (or defining) social reality. Such indeed may be the aspirations of certain modern experts, or a tendency in certain aspects of the modern *episteme*. But, to me, the very efflorescence of Trumpism exemplifies precisely the difficulties with the anonymization of power in critical theory. Let me use the episode so adroitly analyzed by Clarissa to explain what I mean.

The binding of Trump to his followers and vice-versa, as well as the process by which elite agents of Trump (e.g. Steven Bannon, Steven Miller, etc.) are both bound to him and yet also steer him and his crowds, is a modern, pathological reigniting of the trope of the two bodies of the King. Trump’s largesse with hamburgers for football champions, and clear tendency to treat the American government as family patrimony, indicates a semiotics of power in which the political body is enacted, as in *Ubu Roi*, through the appetites of the body of the leader. Trump’s grotesqueries articulate both a politics of resentment and an imaginary investment in a certain kind of body in American nativism.²⁰

Yet in a broader sense, Trump is not alone here qua rector of the Federal Government. A longstanding tendency of American presidential politics is the way political communication obsesses over the body, family, and house of the ultimate rector, because therein is a kind of indication of the state of the political body as a whole. The first body of the president *represents* the ‘body of the people.’ In a pluralistic polity grounded in part on a party system, this *Presidential theology* will always have a ‘partisan’ dimension, and thus be subject to the strategic rationalities of polling, publicity stunts, primary challengers, etc. What is perhaps more important to note, however, is the continual way in which this theology exceeds any containment by iron laws of oligarchy or party strategy, spilling into a world of interpretation and counter-interpretation that can shift the very ground upon which ‘strategy’ plans. On January 6th, the yearning for the return of the King met up with the desperate scapegoating of others, to forge a bond according to which violence and risk were the necessary, even exciting, corollaries to a feeling of belonging and a demand for recognition as ‘the real people.’

Are we not, then, compelled to redraw our understanding of the *structural power of the modern political frame* in terms that note less the need to cut off the head of the King in our own political philosophy, and note more the strange way in which the death of the King’s Two Bodies creates a set of new coordinates for the writing of political myth, coordinates that include, as one vector, the push towards a singular embodiment of the people in an authoritarian leader (‘I alone can fix it’)?

The empty space left open by the King admits – as has been endlessly studied in political philosophy – the occupation of the place of the sovereign by ‘the people.’ And with this comes a specifically cultural problem of power, namely figuring the

people. Michael Walzer, in considering the end of the divine right of Kings in Europe, once wrote that ‘however one pictures god, he does not look like a council or a crowd’ (Walzer 1993, p. 15). I do not know if this is true, but it does point to the rather difficult pragmatics of putting ‘the people’ on stage as the ultimate decision-making body. If the people are sovereign, and thus the ultimate constitutive fantasy for there being something so ontologically secure as ‘the state,’ then the performance of decision becomes a recurrent problem, and thus a recurrent space for wild interpretation and counterinterpretation. That this excess is just as constitutive of political modernity as the advent of ever-more strategic rationalities is a central point of my book, and I do think the current political crisis in the USA bears this out rather terrifyingly. Clarissa and I, then, are in agreement that a ‘strategic model of binding and othering’ is ‘overly optimistic,’ at least when it comes to understanding the impetus to domination embedded in political modernity.

At the same time, if we wish to follow through on this post-Foucauldian move, it may be that we have to examine the mythological dimensions of a democratic politics that *resists* authoritarianism. A democratic society will also have to provide figurations, narratives, and performances that bind political agents to ‘the people.’ Since Sorel, the relationship between myth and the left has, of course, been rather fraught. Here I merely wish to point out that the maintenance and expansion of democratic institutions – a matter on the tip of the tongue of countless American intellectuals – requires, not only incentives, strategy, and written law, but also normative commitments that are *perhaps* best described in terms of myth. I do not think there is a strategic rationality, or individual incentive, that accounts for why someone would spend her after-work hours in November 2020 counting votes under threat of physical harm and social media profanation. Election officials who do not bend to calls from the President are also performing as agents of the people. Perhaps this democratic counter-move to rising authoritarianism can be studied as politics via the giving of reasons. But perhaps it is also a matter of deep story.

It thus appears to me that the ultimate difficulty, both analytic and normative, is the wide variation – we might even say *hermeneutic volatility* – in the meaning of ‘the people’ as a dramatic feature of modern politics. Jonathan is correct to suss out that I explicitly sought to write *Power in Modernity* without engaging in an argument about nationalism. That is because, in my view, the ‘body of the nation’ – and the different varieties of nations and nationalisms carried through modernity – is but one instance of the *figurations of the people* in transitions to modernity. There is a larger, admittedly ungainly puzzle here in the transition from Christendom to Europe and its colonies (to take one example of a transition to modernity). For example, in the history of the political culture of the Atlantic world, ‘the people’ has also meant ‘the working class,’ ‘the dispossessed,’ ‘those represented by the advance guard,’ ‘Aryans,’ ‘Jews,’ ‘Blacks,’ and so on, as well as ‘French,’ ‘Germans,’ ‘Haitians,’ and ‘Americans.’ Throughout the modern age, both those who wish to defend themselves against ‘rootless cosmopolitans’ and those who have been part of the Black and Jewish diasporas (for example) in the Atlantic world are, in some sense, for some discourse, ‘the people.’ And so, the question I ask is how these peoples have been figured, and how those figurations have been used to secure or upend hierarchy.

And so we arrive, finally, at the question of ‘the other,’ whose disruptive locutions – voices from the dark, from the dispossessed, from the refugees – shadow various triumphs of ‘the people’ in modernity with uncanny precision. Here, Clarissa and I agree that othering can become its own metaproject, relentlessly dedicated to molding and inflecting countless, more practical projects. Furthermore, if I read her correctly, she and I are in agreement that *radical othering as a metaproject* is one of those excesses that is not ‘in excess of’ modern politics, since it is ubiquitous in the modern age. The excess, at a certain point, becomes the point.

With what can such forces be countered? It is not a question to be directly answered here. What I can say is that the disentanglement of equality from sameness that is the essence of the pluralist project will have to, at some point, confront the recurrence of agency problems in the making and unmaking of social and political representation and organization. To stand for, speak for, act for another – this is to create an agency relationship of some kind or another, and thus invite problems of control, conflicting interests, and fraught or objectionable representation. And yet this is also, in some sense, the human condition in a normatively positive sense – for what could be more human than to take up a project, on behalf of another, and yet also to make it one’s own?

Notes

1. I have followed the old-fashion convention of capitalizing King, as in this context it is a form of reification. Reed (2020) also follows this convention.
2. This tendency to focus on Bourdieu’s earlier work is true of many other advocates of ‘projects’ in social theory, for instance Archer, for whom projects emerge from our ‘concerns’ and are used to form our ‘practices’, all of which is mediated by our ‘internal conversations’ (Archer 2007; see also Burkitt 2016).
3. This is not to suggest that there isn’t a rich seam to be mined within what Charles Taylor calls the ‘qualitative view’ of action in Hegel, in which unreflective action is primary, and conscious reflection a secondary ‘achievement’, bound up with the notion of expressivity and the embodied life process (and ultimately, with the all-pervasive activity of Spirit) (Taylor Taylor, [1983]2010). The issue is that aspects of the model of the actor remain somewhat implicit in the book.
4. For example, he suggests that ‘in order to understand the famous paradox of the king’s two bodies analysed by Kantorowicz, you need only make use of house logic: there is the house and there is the king. In other words, to the extent that the house is a kind of body – in the sense of what the scholastics called *corpus corporatum*, a corporation – belonging to a house means acquiring the logic of the “thought of the house”, devotion to the house, to an entity that transcends its agents . . . In other words, the very ambiguity of the notion of the house as a reality transcending the individual has to be taken into account in order to understand this transition to the constitution of a transcendent entity’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 257).
5. ‘The same is true with the act of state: how does the seal, *sigillum authenticum*, come to have this magic power to transform someone into a professor, for example, by the act of appointment?’ (Bourdieu 2014, p. 298).
6. She writes: ‘The *people as nation* claimed their right to self-rule as a special, distinct collectivity – but did so in terms that linked nation, republic and sovereignty to *people in general*, the bearers of universal natural rights . . . the Revolution established a resonant and enduring *myth of the sovereign people* in action (Canovan 2005, p. 27).
7. ‘It is not the universal Idea which places itself in opposition and struggle, or puts itself in danger; it holds itself safe from attack and uninjured in the background and sends the particular of passion into the struggle to be worn down. We can call it the cunning of

reason that the Idea makes passions work for it, in such a way that that whereby it posits itself in existence loses thereby and suffers injury' (Hegel, 1955, cited in Taylor ([1977] 2012, p. 392).

8. Transcript available at <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/january-6-house-select-committee-hearing-investigation-day-1-full-transcript>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
9. Transcript available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/08/politics/trump-january-6-speech-transcript/index.html>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
10. See, for example, Hayward (2000, 2018).
11. A video of the full speech is available at <https://www.wsj.com/video/trump-full-speech-at-dc-rally-on-jan-6/E4E7BBBF-23B1-4401-ADCE-7D4432D07030.html>. Accessed 1 September 2021. Compare with this video, shot from the point of view of the crowd, which foreground the audience reactions. <https://www.yahoo.com/now/video-shows-crowd-reaction-trump-172206556.html>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
12. In a 2016 presidential debate, Trump referred to undocumented immigrants as 'bad hombres' when he claimed, 'We have some bad hombres here, and we're gonna get 'em out.' In August 2019, the then-president invoked an anti-Semitic trope when told reporters: 'I think any Jewish people that vote for a Democrat, I think it shows either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty.' One month earlier, he tweeted that Representative Elijah Cummings's Baltimore district was 'a disgusting rat and rodent infest mess.' In 2018, he reportedly asked in a meeting about immigration why the US would want immigrants from 'all these shithole countries,' such as Haiti and African countries, rather than from majority-white countries like Norway.
13. He made this claim, for example, near the start of the January 6 speech, when he said, 'Our media . . . [has] become the enemy of the people. It's become the enemy of the people. It's the biggest problem we have in this country. <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/january-6-house-select-committee-hearing-investigation-day-1-full-transcript>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
14. See <https://cheney.house.gov/2021/01/12/cheney-i-will-vote-to-impeach-the-president/>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
15. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXnHIJkZZAs>. Accessed 1 September 2021.
16. I would note then that I am trying to address a problem in the making of early modern empires that was laid out with extraordinary precision by John Law (1984), though I propose a very different account of how the problem was addressed, elaborated and, in a certain sense, 'solved.'
17. In the opening parts of *Power in Modernity*, I develop the concept of 'other' via Orlando Patterson's external critique of Hegel in *Slavery and Social Death*, relegating certain debates about Hegel to (long) footnotes. But I think that the articulation of rector-actor-other as a frame for understanding power relations can also be arrived at via immanent critique, as is evident in some of the key readings of Hegel in 20th century social and political theory. I take this as one of the meanings implied by Jonathan's perspicacious comment that the book is haunted by Hegel. See in particular Fanon (2008) and Buck-Morss (2000).
18. For example, Bourdieu writes that, 'in these acts of delegation, something very important happens: power is divided . . . Power fragments, that is clear, but there's more to it. We come back to the problem of the mad king that always preoccupied the canon lawyers: the person who countersigns controls, and the king is himself controlled by the person who countersigns . . . the ministers themselves have an interest in the perpetuation of this routine; they are happy to countersign, but also to be countersigned because they are afraid of being challenged for acts of the king . . . In other words, they want to guaranteed in relation to both above and below.' (Bourdieu 2014, p. 300).

19. Bourdieu misreads Kantorowicz as, broadly speaking, a Weberian about the medieval and modern worlds. As I attempt to show in a paper-in-progress, Kantorowicz should be read as a *response to* Weber, articulated in the idiom of his generation of German letters. This idiom was deeply concerned with precisely those aspects of modernity – sometimes labelled as ‘political theology’ – that Weber had disavowed, at least in his more ‘rationalist’ moments.
20. The power of the grotesque in politics, and in communicating the inevitability of sovereignty through the absurdity of the leader who wields it, was addressed by Michel Foucault himself. See discussion in *Power in Modernity*, pp. 249–250.

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