

homeless of Itchy Park describe this process in terms of “becoming somebody else”—an alternative being that slips in to fill the void left by the chemically induced flit of memory, thereby subsuming a person’s agency and rendering him or her a ghost unto him- or herself. In this sense, the blackout as an alternative mode of being-in-the-world—existing as absence rather than living as presence—cannot help but evoke Otto Rank’s (2009 [1914]) psychological motif of the double, itself a prominent theme of the uncanny. Like a mirror that reflects back only a shadow of the beholder, the Jekyll and Hyde quality of the blackout ensures that these addicted escape artists invariably find themselves caught up in a situation arguably uncannier than the very one they were trying to flee in the first place.

In the alternative bodily realm of the blackout, there is no projection toward a future, no nervous sense of ongoing anticipation, just the dissociative drift of chemically induced anaesthesia, of a body politically activated by the imperceptible time-out of intoxication. Intractably present, the blackout is at once immanent and negating. This, then, is political action from the absent core of a self, an actively blind way-of-being that implodes the dominant regime of time while simultaneously challenging what it means to be a subject. Indeed, as I hope to have shown, once a person has slipped into the opaque cocoon of the blackout, both presence and memory are no longer grist for the future’s mill. The exhaustion of living within society’s brackets is thus subsumed into addiction’s perspectival alterity, through which a radical alteration of self is set in motion. Viewed from this perspective, addiction’s vicious cycle need not, for once, be dragged under biopower’s moral microscope, as an object at once ripe for cure and punishment. Rather the “cycle” (if that remains the word in play) is far better understood as the need, itself forever just out of reach, to circumvent the tragic pull of memory by using intoxicants to forget oneself. In this sense, the daily cycle of blacking out and waking up alive endured by people like Ash renders vivid the embodied tension that resides at the heart of homeless-addicted being, namely, the paradox-ridden struggle of having to escape the crisis of one’s own presence by continuously living as an absence.

Joshua Burraway’s bulemically overtheorized case study of Ash, a 60-year-old homeless alcoholic who drinks himself blotto (almost) every single day, was going to reproduce anthropology’s original sin of clever theory-building on the backs of vulnerable exotic others who are writhing in agony on the coals of history—even as ethnographers celebrate their noble agency. His playful genre of academic freestyle rap, however, has the strategic overall effect of generating empathetic appreciation for the common humanity we (should) share with the most unworthy pariahs of our society. He is protesting the failure of late-liberal society to take responsibility for its structurally vulnerable populations.

Burraway does this by evoking the structural political economic forces that are brutalizing ever-growing masses of “de-historified” people who have been expelled by both global shifts in the economy and the local administration of a disciplinary biopower that imposes an all-too-convincing symbolic violence of medicalized pathology onto individuals who fail to self-regulate themselves productively.

Having somewhat obsessively spent much of my life conducting fieldwork with homeless heroin injectors, crack smokers, and fortified liquor drinkers—not unlike Ash—in US inner cities (Bourgeois and Schonberg 2009), I congratulate Burraway for what must be his tremendous personal reservoir of patience, solidarity, and stamina. He befriended the most boring, lowest-status subset of postindustrial, post-social-democratic society’s indigent poor: the superannuated “winos” who tend to defecate and urinate all over themselves and spew endless platitudes of philosophical self-justification—ad nauseam (Bruneteaux 2016). More practically, they have lost the crucial capacity to reciprocate effectively in the moral economies of exchange of anesthetic substances (Bourgeois 1998) and assistive acts of violence (Karandinos et al. 2014) that define the boundaries of sociality among networks of indigent street addicts and generate the high-stakes drama of betrayal and solidarity on the edge of urban survival that can make life worth living.

Because Burraway invokes my adaptations of the concepts of “moral economy” and “lumpen subjectivity” in reference to indigent addiction, I want to clarify some of the material states involved. In the United States—which is arguably the heart of the globalizing punitive neoliberal beast, the boredom of unemployment, and the exigency of killing time when one does not have the option of cultivating one’s cultural capital—produces a vibrant hypersociality and self-interested generosity that has fueled a multibillion-dollar narcotics retail economy in the poorest, most segregated inner-city neighborhoods. In a perverse contemporary manifestation of Marx’s phenomenon of primitive accumulation, coercive state policies of criminalization have subsidized an artificially profitable global narcotics industry that is premised on the premature death, incarceration, maiming, and exhaustion of its customer base as well as its labor force (Bourgeois and Hart 2016; Bourgeois 2018).

Not unlike the term “lumpen,” Marx’s 250-year-old concept of “primitive accumulation” needs to be reframed, however, in order to understand the rising rates of premature mortality that have accompanied the dramatic global (and local) in-

---

## Comments

### Philippe Bourgeois

Semel Institute of Neuroscience/Department Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, 760 Westwood Plaza, Suite B7435, Los Angeles, California 90095-1759, USA (pbourgeois@gmail.com). 25 X 17

### Predatory Accumulation, Addiction, and Lumpen Subjectivity

Theory is never right or wrong; it simply helps us see some things more clearly even as it obscures others. Initially, I feared

creases in social inequality unleashed by a corporate-dominated finance-, high-tech-, digital-driven globalized capitalism. Marx's concepts were, understandably, trapped in his era of utopian enlightenment idealism and were plagued by a racist evolutionary linear understanding of modernization that endures today. Nevertheless, we can still benefit from his demystifying critical insights on the violence that drives market forces, shapes consciousness, enables globalization (colonialism and imperialism), and distributes life chances unequally across social classes and continents.

I find it useful to think of our disconcertingly abusive moment in twenty-first-century history as being driven by “predatory accumulation” in contrast to the mechanisms of “primitive accumulation” and dispossession that propelled the rise of mercantile and industrial capitalisms in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Returning to the retail endpoint of the global narcotics industry in the US inner city, where a premature die-out of an ever-larger and younger generation of unemployable addicts is occurring, a slew of special interest groups and industries have eagerly jumped into the fray to suck out the minimal amounts of illicitly generated capital that accumulate locally and channel them back into the mainstream licit economy. More creatively, these punitive services providers have also inadvertently or opportunistically tapped into legal taxpayer dollars as public budgets for law enforcement, criminal justice, and medical emergency have exploded to manage the human fallout from the profitable mesh of poverty, unemployment, segregation, and the global narcotics industry.

The punitive right hand of the US state has increased criminal justice budgets exponentially since the 1980s, with a sevenfold increase in the incarcerated population between 1970 and 2005 (ACLU 2011). This gold rush of public investment in punishment bloats the unionized overtime pay of police officers and prison guards, inflates the salaries of lawyers and judges, and multiplies the lucrative contracts available to ancillary correctional services industries and construction firms. Furthermore, law enforcement-justified civil asset forfeiture mechanisms and court fees and fines unashamedly expropriate both legally and illegally generated accumulations of capital in the inner city and reinvent it in repression.

The politically weakened left hand of the state also mobilizes substantial tax dollars for clinicians and social service providers through the allocation of psychiatrically mediated disability subsidies and court-mandated drug and mental health treatment alternatives to incarceration (Hansen, Bourgois, and Drucker 2014). More cynically and purposefully, within the private sector, the hyper-profitable behemoth of Big Pharma has bamboozled primary care physicians to massively overprescribe analgesic opioid pills (Quinones 2015) and lobbies pediatricians to overprescribe antipsychotics to indigent foster care children with “behavioral problems” (dosReis et al. 2011). Two new generations of suburban and poor rural whites have been channeled into opiate addiction in a nefarious but unintended licit feedback loop that resupplies disposable addicted customers to the illicit inner-city street-corner heroin, cocaine,

and methamphetamine markets (Mars et al. 2014). Overdose rates reached historic highs in the United States in 2016, and, coupled with rising rates of suicide and substance abuse-related liver and cardiovascular disease (as well as industrially marketed fat- and sugar-coated food/soda poisoning), the life expectancy of poor whites has decreased since the 1990s in a historic reversal of modern secular trends (Case and Deaton 2017).

I thank Burroway for empathetically stirring up the visibility of the useless suffering (Levinas 1988) of homeless addiction in his gentrifying London park through his brilliantly playful theoretical calisthenics, but I fear (in the United States, at least) that this population's sacrifice has inadvertently spawned a profitable swamp of predatory opportunists—some cynical but also possibly well meaning—who are only too eager to manage the collateral casualties of “late liberalism.” Meanwhile, of course financial capitalism often buttressed by old-fashioned oligarchal warlordism continues to run amok across the globe, laughing all the way to the bank.

Research supported by NIH grant UL1TR001881 with comparative contextual data from AA020331, DA037820, DA038965.

---

#### William Garriott

Law, Politics, and Society Program, Drake University,  
507 University Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50311, USA  
(william.garriott@drake.edu). 21 XI 17

In “Remembering to Forget,” Joshua Burroway has provided an account of blacking out that avoids the standard reductionist interpretations, be they moral, psychological, or even biopolitical. His existential account, rooted in an appreciation of the interplay between memory and forgetting in processes of self-making, provides fertile ground from which to think through the significance of the blackout for the homeless addicts of Itchy Park. The blackout is, in Burroway's hands, a means of managing those otherwise unmanageable memories that interfere with the self's ability to perdure. It is also, he suggests, a mechanism for coping with and combatting the lumpenizing effects of post-Thatcherism London. This is part of why individuals like Ash, one of the many homeless addicts who reside in Itchy Park, can find in anesthetic intoxicants like alcohol a feeling of wholeness, of being put back together, of becoming somebody else.

This treatment of the blackout pushed me to rethink stories from my own fieldwork on methamphetamine (Garriott 2011)—stories like those of Ken Burdette. Ken was a truck driver and one of the earliest users of methamphetamine in the small community of Baker County, West Virginia, where he lived. He was exposed to methamphetamine during his regular trucking runs for the local poultry industry, between West Virginia and California. Like Ash, his substance use was part and parcel of his relationship to capitalism. But whereas Ash used substances to engage in a politics of escape and resistance, Ken used stimulants like methamphetamine to make the most of his place