

Research Article

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On the Happening of “Frank’s Place”: A Neo-Heideggerian Psychogeographic Appreciation of an Enchanted Locale

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Abstract: In this experimental article, I employ what I term a neo-Heideggerian approach that entails harnessing a selective amalgamation of the thought of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) as a hermeneutical energy, which I direct towards my account of a series of personal psychogeographic experiences that have entailed encounters with an enchanted social space otherwise obscured within the working-class suburb of Scarborough, Ontario (Canada). I engage this neo-Heideggerian hermeneutical energy not as a professional philosopher but rather as a working culturalist interested in exploring how Heidegger’s thought can be made “to do” in the contemporary multicultural world. Accordingly, I seek to redeem his thinking from crass accusations of being commensurate with a white-inflected blood and soil nationalism.

Keywords: cultural studies, Heidegger, phenomenology

In Memory of Christopher Innes (1941–2017)

And as [Peter] Minshall commented: how can anyone expect the art of Mas “to take a step forward when no one is brave enough to write in terms of world culture the truth about what is happening out there?”

—Christopher Innes, Introduction, *Carnival: Theory and Practice* (xiii)

Introduction

In this experimental article, I employ what I term a neo-Heideggerian approach. This appropriative approach entails harnessing a selective amalgamation of the thought of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) as a hermeneutical energy, which I direct towards my account of a series of personal psychogeographic experiences that have entailed encounters with an enchanted¹ social space otherwise obscured within the working-class suburb of Scarborough, Ontario (Canada). I engage this neo-Heideggerian hermeneutical energy not as a professional philosopher, which I am not, but rather as a working culturalist interested in exploring how Heidegger’s thought can be made “to do” in the contemporary multicultural world. Accordingly, I seek to redeem his thinking from crassly reductive accusations of being indelibly commensurate with a racist ethnocentric white-Germanic blood and soil nationalism. As I hopefully demonstrate, there is continued value in engaging with

¹ In employing the term “enchantment,” I am thinking of the insights of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). As the anthropologists Monaghan and Just write in *Social and Cultural Anthropology: A Very Short Introduction* (2000), enchantment denotes a condition in which individuals feel “spiritually integrated with the surrounding social and natural world,” whereas the disenchanting malaise of modernity has entailed a shift to pure rationalization, which has seen many people become “imprisoned by their own rules and procedures in an ‘iron cage of rationality’ from which there... [is] no going back and no escape” (66).

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Heidegger's body of thought, which enhanced my appreciation of my random discovery of the beauty of a rich culturally pluralistic oasis in an otherwise seemingly disenchanting working-class suburb.

The particular venue that I discuss in this article cannot be formally identified, for to do so would be to open it to the commodifying impetus of neoliberal capitalism. Were I to actually identify this locale, a watering hole bar, it would instantly be frequented by readers, eventually "discovered" by self-interested voyeurs, yuppies, and *Bobos* or *bourgeois bohemians*,² and soon deterritorialized by a crowd of rapacious onlookers who would kill its enchanted vibe, though surely enrich its owner in the short-term. For the sake of simplicity, I will simply term this place "Frank's Place" in honour of its owner, whose name is indeed Frank, and whose establishment, or perhaps more aptly "anti-establishment," is a place where a frank culturally pluralistic fusion of peoples from all races and ethnicities routinely occurs.³ Though ensconced within a working-class suburb, "Frank's Place" hosts a variety of characters from all walks of life. On any given afternoon or, especially, evening, you can find workers such as myself drinking alongside off-duty police officers, business executives, lawyers, politicians, drug dealers, borderline itinerants, and the occasional television personality or NBA star. Virtually all those who discover "Frank's Place" adhere to an unwritten rule, which is that you respect the magic of the locale by allowing its rich cultural *Dasein*⁴ to reveal itself unimpeded, which entails protecting this special space from nosy photographers, inquisitive "fans," and general opportunistic types who are seeking to acquire socio-economic-cultural advantage via crassly strategic "networking" machinations. Those who violate this unwritten code will quickly find themselves marginalized at the establishment, as virtually all of the regulars who frequent the venue recognize and appreciate it for what it is: essential magic in an otherwise disenchanting era.

An Overview of an Informal Hermeneutical–Phenomenological Methodology

Though it may initially seem strange to some to employ Heidegger's thought in the service of exploring cultural diversity, Heidegger has a philosophical track record of expressing curiosity about intercultural exchange. The first person to introduce me to this aspect of Heidegger's thought was the Canadian social philosopher Goulding, who teaches at York University (Canada), where I served as his teaching assistant for 3 years. Goulding is a well-travelled character and a scholarly polymath who is fluent in Mandarin, Japanese, German, and ancient Greek. His knowledge of Heidegger is encyclopaedic. In the course of his own research and studies, he has harnessed Heidegger's thought and hermeneutical power in order to explore East–West intercultural connections.

It was Goulding who encouraged me to find my own access points into Heidegger's assemblage of thought. In a 2015 graduate seminar that I took with Goulding at York University entitled "Frankfurt and Freiburg: East/West Dialogues," I learned of Heidegger's engagement with East Asian thought, which essentially originated

² See Brooks' book *Bobos in Paradise* (2000), in which he employs the term *bobo* or *bourgeois bohemian* to designate how the bohemian spirit of the counterculture became fused with the traditional bourgeois mechanisms of white-collar capitalism, thereby facilitating the new capitalist spirit of an information age that recognizes the commodifiable value of cultural dissent.

³ I am well aware that there are some cynics out there who might be tempted to mock me here and refer to the American philosopher Frankfurt's now famous 2005 book, *On Bullshit*, originally published as a 1986 essay, which serves as a Frankfurtean critique of bullshit. Trust me when I say that "Frank's Place" is an establishment where the bullshitter will soon enough be challenged and called out. As Frankfurt writes in his book: "The fact about himself that the bullshitter hides, on the other hand, is that the truth-values of his statements are of no central interest to him; what we are not to understand is that his intention is neither to report the truth nor to conceal it. This does not mean that his speech is anarchically impulsive, but that the motive guiding and controlling it is unconcerned with how the things about which he speaks truly are." (55)

⁴ As Barbara Bolt notes in *Heidegger Reframed* (2011), *Dasein* is derived "[f]rom 'da' and 'Sein' ('being')" (174): "Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' for the fundamental fact of being-right-there that characterizes human existence. It relates to the German term for 'Being,' 'das Sein,' i.e. 'the to be' or *existenz*." *Dasein* is not an abstract entity, but rather what it means to be, what it means to exist. *Dasein* is constituted by being-in-the-world" (174).

when Heidegger entertained a variety of Chinese and Japanese scholars at Marburg and Freiburg universities. These scholars included Xiong Wei, Shen Youding, Tanabe Hajime, and Kuki Shuzo (Goulding, “The Forgotten Frankfurt School” 171). As Goulding notes in his “East/West Dialogues” graduate syllabus,

Beginning in 1921 at University of Freiburg, and extending over a five-decade period, many East Asian scholars study with Martin Heidegger. Yamanouchi Tokuryū reads Edmund Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, and later teaches Greek philosophy and phenomenology at Kyoto University; Tanabe Hajime, a kingpin of the Kyoto School shares both Heidegger’s affinity for discourse on ontology and nothingness, and aversion to technology; Kuki Shūzō dialogues with Heidegger on the Japanese aesthetic of *iki* いき, and in 1933 publishes the first book on Heidegger’s *Being and Time* entitled *The Philosophy of Heidegger*; Watsuji Tetsurō is the first to introduce existential philosophy to Japan; Nishitani Keiji engages in extensive discussions in Germany from 1938 to 1940, and again in 1964 and 1972 – primarily on comparisons of Buddhist emptiness and Heidegger’s nothingness as the essential unfolding of Being; Tezuka Tomio is the inspiration for Heidegger’s 1959 “A Dialogue on Language: Between a Japanese and an Inquirer”; Hisamatsu Shin’ichi, a Zen Buddhist monk, conducts a colloquium with Heidegger on “Art and Thinking” in 1958 and composes a unique haiku poem on the occasion of Heidegger’s death; Tsujimura Koichi sees Heidegger as a signpost leading from Zen Buddhism to philosophy; Xiong Wei studies at Freiburg in the 1930’s and later supervises the translation of *Being and Time* into Chinese in the 1980’s; Hsiao Shih-yi begins a translation of *Daodejing* with Heidegger in the 1940’s; and Chang Chung-yuan, a renowned philosopher from University of Hawaii completes his own *Daodejing* translation with input from Heidegger in the 1970’s. The above interactions can be basically categorized into two camps: the Japanese scholars who focus on Zen Buddhism; and the Chinese scholars who focus on Daoism (although there are moments of healthy crossovers). The Zen Buddhists engage Heidegger’s idea of nothingness with Buddhist emptiness (*sunyata*, *kū*, *kong* 空); the Chinese scholars generally focus on *dao* 道 as a way of meditative practice interpenetrating with Heidegger’s *weg* of hermeneutics and phenomenology, and his pathbreaking interpretations of the ancient pre-Socratic Greek λόγος (laying, saying, waying). (Goulding, Syllabus)

Though a mere graduate syllabus, this document alone is a testament to Goulding’s profound scholarly knowledge of Heidegger’s lifelong commitment to fostering East–West intercultural dialogues and exchanges.

And yet, Heidegger’s evolution as a thinker who was interested in intercultural exploration does not end with East Asian thought. In 1962, when he was more than 70 years old, Heidegger made a journey to Greece. Curiously, while Heidegger had long discussed Greece’s rich philosophical history in his writings, he had never travelled to Greece itself. Fortunately, he kept a travel journal of his experiences during this brief journey. This gem of a literary–philosophical work would lie unpublished until 1989, when it was released in Germany as *Aufenthalte* by the venerable Frankfurt am Main publishing house Vittorio Klostermann. It would not appear in an official English translation until 2005, when it was published as *Sojourns* by SUNY Press via a translation by scholar and Orthodox priest and archimandrite John Pantelimon Manoussakis.

In 2019, I published a *Fast Capitalism* article on *Sojourns* entitled “The Solace of the Sojourn: Towards a Praxis-oriented Methodology and Ethics of Deep Travel in Martin Heidegger’s *Sojourns*.” I want to build here on some of the observations that I make in this article before returning to my discussion of “Frank’s Place” and its unique cultural *Dasein*. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how the informal hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that is discernible within *Sojourns* was of use to me in theorizing my experiences at “Frank’s Place.”

As I note in my *Fast Capitalism* paper, the title of Heidegger’s journal is an apt one, “for as the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates, a sojourn denotes ‘[a] temporary stay at a place’ (‘sojourn, n.’)” (Urie 143). In making his journey to Greece, Heidegger “seeks both a temporary physical stay there as well as a temporary mental immersion in the mythic essence of its ancient *Dasein* or being” (Urie 143). Ultimately, his journey turns out to be “less a sojourn in one particular place than a series of sojourns in a variety of Greek locales, several of which afford him temporary mental sojourns via which he is able to experience fruitful phenomenological encounters with ancient Greek *Dasein* and its constitutive mythic elements” (Urie 143).

The implicit hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that Heidegger employs throughout *Sojourns* is distinct. As I contend,

Heidegger neither relies solely on his rationalist presuppositions about Greece nor argues that the visceral or empirical experience of traveling there is enough to allow for the discovery he seeks. Instead, he seems to fuse rationalism and empiricism in relation to mental attunement, thereby developing a unique form of hermeneutic phenomenology that might grant him a psychogeographic traveling experience via which he can gain sojourning access to Greece’s originary culture. In

this respect, he is not concerned with the modernized Greece that is present but rather the mythos-dominated Greece that is absent. (Urie 143)

Specifically, Heidegger is concerned with the frequently distortive effects of a burgeoning modern tourist industry, which like an “alien power enforces its commands and regulations” on Greece (55), thereby deterritorializing it of its complex cultural *Dasein*. Heidegger’s unique hermeneutical–phenomenological approach, implicit throughout *Sojourns*, leads him to cultivate a sense of awareness within himself via which he can remain mentally open to the Greece that reveals itself rather than the Greece that he has read about in his studies. In executing this approach, Heidegger avails himself of a hermeneutic aid that is found in the etymological significance of the Greek work *aletheia* or *ἀλήθεια*. As he puts it, “It is only seldom then and after long preparation that we can succeed in looking at the presence of that which had once received form and measure from the field of *ἀλήθεια*” (35). While the Romans had rendered *aletheia* as truth, Heidegger recognizes that the term had actually denoted “unconcealment” in ancient Greek. As Heidegger scholar Bolt writes in her book *Heidegger Reframed* (2011), “For the Greeks, as for Heidegger, truth is not propositional, but rather it is a revealing that brings forth the being of something out of concealment forth into unconcealment” (171).

What Heidegger discovers in Crete, to his evident surprise, is an “*Egyptian oriental essence*” (23; emphasis mine) that reveals itself to him at the palace of Knossos at Herakleion. This revelation heralds a moment of *aletheia* or unconcealment for Heidegger, which turns out to be at odds with much of his formative Eurocentric conceptualization of ancient Greece. In building on his Westernized scholarly understanding of Greek culture and history and, for the first time in his life, venturing to Greece itself, Heidegger experiences an encounter with the traces of an ancient Greece that had been in intercultural dialogue with Africa via Egypt. Though clearly a revelation for Heidegger, this historical Greek–Egyptian intercultural connection is of course today widely acknowledged and increasingly explored. As classics scholar Garland notes in his book *Ancient Greece: Everyday Life in the Birthplace of Western Civilization* (2008),

By claiming to be the oldest people on the face of the earth, the Greeks were able to [misguidedly] feed their sense of national pride and to claim special status among the other people they encountered, although it is fair to state as well that educated Greeks, like the historian Herodotus, were open and forthright in acknowledging the debt of Greek culture to other, older cultures, notably that of Egypt. (1–2)

In his 2014 book, *Wandering Greeks: The Ancient Greek Diaspora from the Age of Homer to the Death of Alexander the Great*, Garland has further explored the notion of ancient Greece as a historical locale that was defined by immense cultural fluidity.

In essence, a moment of *ἀλήθεια* presents itself to Heidegger in Crete, where what is unconcealed for him are the traces of an ancient Greek world that was defined not by a static monoculture but rather a dynamic form of intercultural exchange with the continent of Africa. The revelation that here presents itself to Heidegger is that the ancient Greeks were members of a complex society shaped by culturally pluralistic currents. This ties in with an etymological understanding that Heidegger would later outline in his book *Early Greek Thinking* (1975), in which he differentiates *logos* from modern conceptualizations of “reason” or “logic” in order to posit that it had meant “the laying that gathers” in ancient Greece (76). Roughly explained, this had denoted an informal process of cultural communication via which the ancient Greeks had laid out differing ideas and gathered them together in a deliberative manner that had disclosed their fundamental essence.

Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology and “Frank’s Place”: Working Towards a Neo-Heideggerian Approach

Although today regarded as a deeply controversial philosopher whose work is all too often reductively construed as being commensurate with a white Eurocentric “blood and soil” ethos, Heidegger can be repurposed towards culturally pluralistic exploration. Indeed, *Sojourns* points towards the continued evolution and development in Heidegger’s thought. In this respect, it is interesting to consider that his recognition of an

“Egyptian-oriental essence” in Crete (*Sojourns* 23) comes not from library study and the lecture hall, but rather from taking his preconceived scholarly notions of Greece out into the world and seeing how they measure up to the Greece that reveals or *unconceals* itself to him.

While the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry for Heidegger emphasizes how he had “officially rejected one of the keystones of Nazism, namely its biologically grounded racism,” this entry also specifies that Heidegger’s 1945-era lectures had made highly insulting reference to Africans possessing “no history” (Wheeler). Offensive and culturally racist though such references may be, it is nonetheless important to bear in mind that they emanate from an earlier Heidegger.⁵ This Heidegger is not the man who later travels to Greece in 1962 and divines an “Egyptian-oriental essence” in Crete (23), which had historically defined ancient Greece with respect to its intercultural liaisons with Africa via Egypt.⁶ Similar to Malcolm X, who began to increasingly question the racist, historically corrupt teachings of Elijaah Muhammad after visiting Africa and discovering a continent teeming with religious, cultural, and racial-ethnic difference, Heidegger was a *protean* being whose life journey saw his thought evolve with time.⁷

When I first read Heidegger’s *Sojourns* and wrote the original draft of my *Fast Capitalism* essay, I was a doctoral graduate student studying Heidegger on the side while researching and writing my dissertation. Since this period, my life has changed considerably. Today, like so many overproduced humanities and social sciences PhDs, I am working outside of the academy and functioning as an independent writer and scholar on the side. While my initial encounter with Heidegger was that of the graduate student, I subsequently reengaged with his work and the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that is implicit within *Sojourns* while working a physically laborious job in a plant environment. In Heideggerian terms, it is after I was *thrown* into the world from my comfort zone of the academy that I began to develop an even greater appreciation for Heidegger’s insights.⁸

Specifically, it was this experience of plant labour that compelled me to reconsider Heidegger’s insightful discussions of *Being* amongst *beings* in a *Gestell-ized* environment subject to rigid rules, regulations, time control, and disciplinary modes of surveillance.⁹ While in graduate school I had much time to pursue the vocation of thinking and study amongst other privileged denizens of the academy, my subsequent immersive return to the neoliberalized and routinized world left me longing for moments of transcendence or *being-in-*

⁵ I am here reminded of the British-Guyanese cultural theorist Gilroy’s discussion of cultural racism in relation to Thatcherite Britain in his book *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (1987). Building on Frantz Fanon’s observations in his book *Toward the African Revolution* (1964), Gilroy notes,

The evolution of racism from vulgar to cultural forms described by Fanon has introduced a new variety which stresses complex differences rather than simple hierarchy Thus today’s British racism, anchored in national decline rather than imperial expansion overseas, does not necessarily proceed through readily apparent notions of superiority and inferiority. The order of racial relations has become more subtle and elusive than that. (40)

⁶ For an informative yet methodologically flawed account of this history, see scholar Bernal’s book *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987). For a unique essay that explores the interconnections between Heideggerian phenomenology and African philosophy, see Abraham *South African Journal of Philosophy* article “On the Nature of Language: Heidegger and African Philosophy” (2008).

⁷ For an interesting biographical account of Malcolm X as a protean being, see historian Marable’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (2011).

⁸ Defining *thrownness* or *Geworfenheit*, Bolt writes,

In its thrownness, Dasein is catapulted involuntarily into existence. Thrownness is momentum, the flux or process of life. In being thrown into the world we get caught up and carried along by the forces of chance and randomness. This is at the base of our anxiety. We are already present in it. We are thrown from the past into the present and from this present we project into the future. (183)

⁹ As Bolt notes of *Being (da Sein)*, “Heidegger is concerned with the question: what is the meaning of Being? While this question is unanswerable, its unanswerability is precisely the point. It is this questioning things in their Being that rouses us out of our habitual way of thinking about the world” (172). By contrast, Bolt writes of *being (da Seiende)*, “A being is anything that has existence – humans, animals, objects etc. Human beings are distinguished from other living organisms by their concern with their very Being. An understanding of Being is the fundamental fact of human existence” (172). Defining *Gestell*, Bolt notes how it “involves an ordering and mastering of what-is” (174): “The ordering that reduces objects to standing-reserves belongs to the dominion or sovereignty of *Gestell* (enframing). It is characterized by a way of thinking or knowing or revealing that sees things as a means to an end, i.e. instrumentalism” (174).

the-world.¹⁰ It was, oddly enough, at “Frank’s Place,” where I found such rare moments of existential authenticity, and it was my past academic engagement with *Sojourns* and its implicit hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that allowed me to intellectually process these experiences. Stultified as I had become by the drudgeries of physical labour and routine, it was the rich, dynamic cultural *Dasein* of “Frank’s Place” that provided me with the intermittent visceral jolts needed to once again enliven me to the sheer possibilities of *being-in-the-world*. As a nondescript Canadian Trinidadian-owned establishment, “Frank’s Place” is hidden in plain view as a meeting ground where culturally pluralistic *ἀλήθεια* is frequently disclosed. Put simply, “Frank’s Place” provides daily doses of Dionysian-style *Carnival* in its purest form.¹¹

My encounter with “Frank’s Place” came via the recommendation of a Sri Lankan co-worker who had discovered this locale on his own and wanted to introduce it to me and two other co-workers, one of Guyanese descent and the other a Muslim from an Albanian–Macedonian background. Throw in my status as an agnostic WASP, and we had the perfect cultural mix to add to “Frank’s Place,” which offers brief Dionysian sojourns from the world of *Das Man* via a pluralistic, jazz-like cacophony of voices, which exist in opposition to *Gestell-ized* notions of multiculturalism favoured by corporate conglomerates like Coca-Cola, which are more interested in assimilating diversity into a neoliberal matrix than they are in authentic cultural pluralism.¹² After all, as the great independent Left cultural–political critic Hedges writes in his book *Death of the Liberal Class* (2010), “While it seems on the surface to be a movement for social change, the [corporate] campaign for cultural diversity [alone] does little to perturb the power elite. It does not challenge economic or political structures that are rapidly disempowering the... working class.” (125) With this in mind, what one encounters at “Frank’s Place” is what the late, great Canadian Bajan writer Austin Clarke referred to as “omniculturalism,” which he preferred over multiculturalism given omniculturalism’s emphasis on finding commonality in difference and its ability to appeal to people across the political spectrum, regardless of whether they identified as “Left” or “Right” in orientation (Few).¹³ Amidst the omnicultural environment of “Frank’s Place,” discussions unfold as an organic phenomenon of ongoing dialogue and interlocution rooted in authentically populist *agonistic* exchange.¹⁴

In discovering this rich, omnicultural agonistic locale, I found sojourns from my current place of plant employment, which had essentially forced me into an increasingly subjectivized state via a benign disciplinary panoptic apparatus that had quite effectively compelled me to feel as though I was constantly being surveilled as an individual subject. This, of course, was the ostensible end-goal of working in such a recently neoliberalized and over-managed environment, which had diluted the powers of collectivity by making my co-workers and I feel as though we were all atomized subjects who at any given moment could be subject to the “discipline and punish” dictates of our neoliberalized managerial apparatus.¹⁵

¹⁰ Literally translated from German, *Das Man* means “the one” or “the they.” As Heidegger scholar Dahlstrom notes in his book *The Heidegger Dictionary* (2013), Heidegger employed *Das Man* “to designate Dasein in its average everyday way of being-with others, where, figuratively and literally, it exists by following the crowd” (207–08). As Bolt notes, *being-in-the-world* pertains to “the understanding of being itself” (172): “Dasein cannot understand itself isolated from the world in which it lives. Dasein’s understanding is not derived from abstract theorising, but from the concrete experience of being-in-the-world” (172).

¹¹ For a superb brief discussion of the significance of Caribbean Carnival in both a Canadian and an international context, see the late, great interdisciplinary scholar Innes’s Introduction to the magnificent book *Carnival: Theory and Practice* (2013), which is a collection of essays that Innes co-edited with scholars Annabel Rutherford and Brigitte Bogar, who was his wife at the time of his death.

¹² Discussing Coca-Cola’s now renowned 1971 television commercial “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke” in his book *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* (2014), music and cultural journalist Chang writes, “Buy the World had stumbled upon a key to unlocking not just for Coca-Cola, but for all of American business, the young world of the coming Global Century. From Capital’s dream of one America, a New World Order might be born” (64).

¹³ For an interesting discussion of omniculturalism, see Moghaddam’s July 19, 2014, *Psychology Today* article, entitled “Why Omniculturalism, Not Multiculturalism, Is the Solution.”

¹⁴ Appropriating and building on Carl Schmitt’s “friend/enemy” distinction in her influential 2018 book, *For a Left Populism*, Mouffe replaces “‘antagonism’ (struggle between enemies)” with “‘agonism’ (struggle between adversaries),” noting, “The agonistic confrontation is different from the antagonistic one, not because it allows for a possible consensus, but because the opponent is not considered an enemy to be destroyed but an adversary whose existence is perceived as legitimate” (91).

¹⁵ Naturally, I am here thinking of Foucault’s book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975). For an interesting recent related account of work in our current era of technocratic neoliberal capitalism, see Cray’s book 24/7 (2013).

Ruminating on the historical significance of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and his invention of the panoptic apparatus in his essay “The Eye of Power” (1977), conducted as a conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot, the late social philosopher Foucault (1926–1984) notes,

There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. *A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost.* (155; emphasis mine)

While at “Frank’s place” there is also a “minimal cost” at stake, this comes only in the cheap economic price of a drink or a few drinks, which need not be of an alcohol-based nature. For this small price, what I and many others have discovered at this establishment is the reverse phenomenological escape from the prison-house of subjectivity into the raw, real world of ongoing intersubjectivity and *Dasein* pure.

Another pivotal Heidegger text, introduced to me by Goulding, which helped me retroactively make sense of my experiences or sojourns at “Frank’s Place” is Heidegger’s essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935–1936). Here Heidegger writes,

Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole supporter of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names – art. (17)

Accordingly, Frank is a *being* who elevates his craft of bartending and hosting to a level of sheer *Carnavalesque* artistry, thereby giving meaning to his existence and his work. At the same time, he has also enlivened others, otherwise stultified by the forces of *Das Man* and the drudgeries of hard work, so that they too can participate in the artistry that is the rich social tapestry that he regularly brings to life at his establishment or, perhaps more aptly, *salon*.

As Heidegger writes in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “The artwork opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this revealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the artwork, the truth of beings has set itself to work. Art is truth setting itself to work” (165). Continuing, he later specifies, “Art then is a becoming and happening of truth” (196). Clarifying this position, Bolt writes, “Art is a revealing or bringing to truth. Art operates in the realm of the meaning of Being” (172). Construed in this sense, true art thus allows *aletheia* or *λήθεια* to disclose itself, thereby facilitating *Dasein* as *being-in-the-world* and allowing existence to manifest itself authentically. Simply put, “Frank’s Place” is a “Temporary Autonomous Zone” (Bey), which provides ongoing sojourns from the coordinates of *Das Man*. At “Frank’s Place,” there is almost always a “happening” occurring.

If the drudgeries of my job and its attendant neoliberalized panoptic surveillance apparatus had forced me into an increasingly subjectivized workplace state via which I had internalized the “inspecting gaze” to the point that I had become my own “overseer” (Foucault, “Eye” 155), my semi-regular post-work visits to “Frank’s Place” introduced me to a cast or, perhaps more accurately, *crew* of racially and ethnically diverse regulars drawn from virtually all walks of social life. To this end, it is surely appropriate that these experiences or sojourns from the *Gestell-ized* world of technocratic neoliberalism occurred in an establishment owned by a Canadian citizen from Trinidad. It was, after all, this island nation that produced the great Trinidadian intellectual James, author of the magnificent book *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (1953). A historically groundbreaking literary–cultural–critical revisionist reading of Herman Melville’s novel *Moby-Dick* (1851), James’s *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* proposes that the readers of Melville’s novel view its whaling ship the Pequod as an allegorical representation of America. Arguing that the ship’s ethnically and racially diverse polyglot crew collectively constitute the novel’s true heroes, James departs from readings that emphasize subjectivity by emphasizing how the crew’s collective cultural interweaving and agonistic exchange stand in opposition to Ahab’s monomania and Ishmael’s detached intellectualism.

In his 2002 introduction to *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, American Studies scholar Pease discusses how James's interpretation of *Moby Dick* differs from the readings of leading American scholars of the 1940s such as F.O. Matthiessen and Richard Case. According to Pease,

Both Chase and Matthiessen fostered an allegorical understanding of *Moby Dick* that posited Ahab's monomania as the symbol of the totalitarian Other in opposition to which Ishmael's Americanness was defined, elaborated, and defended. While subsequent interpreters of the novel would introduce at times ingenious variations upon this theme, the essentialized opposition between Ishmael and Ahab would dominate readings of the novel in the field of American Studies for the next fifty years [in the wake of the publication of James's *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*]. (xiii)

As Pease eloquently puts it, "By reinterpreting this American masterpiece from the standpoint of the [culturally pluralistic polyglot] crew, James had extended into the largest metropolitan nation of the mid-twentieth century a practice of [culturally subversive] social resistance that he had learned on the colonial critic field" (xv).¹⁶

Similar to how James historically performed this unique culturally appropriative reading of *Moby Dick*, I am here generating my own appropriative take on Heidegger in an effort to mobilize the hermeneutic phenomenological energies embedded throughout his work so that I might make sense of my "Frank's Place" experiences, which have afforded me psychogeographic sojourns from the "discipline and punish" circuitry of neoliberalism. Others, too, have seen how Heidegger, problematic though his life may have been, bequeathed a body of thought that can be put towards progressive analysis and critique of technocratic neoliberal capitalism and its assimilatory ethos. For such insightful critiques, one need only turn to the great American Studies scholar Spanos and his books *America's Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire* (1999) and *American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization: The Specter of Vietnam* (2008).

With this in mind, another core Heidegger text that helped me process my "Frank's Place" sojourns was Heidegger's essay "Letter on Humanism" (1947), in which he writes, "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells" (217). In other words, language defines our conceptions of social reality, as language is the matrix via which we construct meaning. Accordingly, to pursue a sojourn at "Frank's Place," however briefly, is to inhabit a temporary home where language is perpetually played with in *Carnavalesque* fashion that marvels in playful creolization and patois. Much of Heidegger's thought pertains to etymological and linguistic play that seeks to liberate us from the essential **Gestell-ization** of language so that we might begin to envision the world differently and appreciate the possibilities that inhere in an awareness of our **Being**. In this respect, one can obviously draw correlations between Heidegger's philosophy and the views of the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky, who coined the term **defamiliarization** to refer to "[t]he process by which literary language renders the everyday unfamiliar to the reader," thereby "'making strange' the aspects of our world" and compelling us "to notice that what we normally take for granted" (Sim and Van Loon 168).

I experienced a revelatory **defamiliarization** experience upon first attending "Frank's Place" via Frank himself, who playfully mobilized his Trinidadian creolization of standard English in an exchange that made me fundamentally question what, exactly, I had been studying throughout my course of PhD study in Social and Political Thought. Upon hearing from my co-workers that I possessed a PhD, Frank politely asked me what I had studied and, upon learning of my chosen field, jovially replied, "You study *poli-tricks*, boy! You go to school for that? We study *poli-tricks* every day and night here for free!" (Frank) Frank's response, so unexpected, clever, and delivered with such effortless humour, truly compelled me to meditate on the profound insights embedded in what he had said.

Politics in the age of Trump and the perpetual global neoliberal media spectacle was indeed a matter of "*poli-tricks*." This was clearly not the late Václav Havel's notion of politics, which upheld political practice "not as the technology of power and manipulation of cybernetic rule over humans, or as the art of the useful, but [rather] politics as practical morality, as service to the truth, as essentially human and humanly measured care for our fellow humans" (qtd. in Hughes 29). As Frank had essentially correctly called it, we were now living in an age of "*poli-tricks*," and much of what I had studied in graduate school came down to such "*poli-trickery*" as

¹⁶ See James's 1963 book on cricket, *Beyond a Boundary*.

strategies, media campaigns, branding, rhetorical–ideological sophistry, and on-campus sectarian rivalries. With one smooth Trinidadian poetic-creolized move, Frank made me stop and think about politics in a fundamentally different light. Ironically enough, this incident complemented my subsequent Heideggerian-inflected meditations on my experiences at Frank’s establishment, for Heidegger himself acknowledged that his cardinal mistake, or “error” to borrow the phrase invoked by his intellectual confrere and lover Hannah Arendt (see Arendt), had been that he had “renounced the actual vocation of thinking in favour of being effective in an official [political] capacity” by accepting the rectorship of the University of Freiberg in 1933 when Germany was under Nazi rule (Heidegger, “The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts,” 29).¹⁷

In drawing attention to how “Frank’s Place” constitutes an enchanted omnicultural aporia within our neoliberalized era, I naturally run the risk of upholding the very recipe for the *Bobo* commodification of this subcultural environ, which is the essential fate of many if not most subcultures. As the scholars Heath and Potter note in their book *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be Jammed* (2004), the fetishization of subcultures has historically been the very energy that all too easily becomes the engine of neoliberal capitalism:

Hippie ideology and yuppie ideology are one and the same. There simply never was any tension between the countercultural ideas that informed the ’60s rebellion and the ideological requirements of the capitalist system. While there is no doubt that a cultural conflict developed between the members of the counterculture and the defenders of the older American Protestant establishment, there never was any tension between the *values* of the counterculture and the functional requirements of the capitalist economic system. The counterculture was, from its very inception, intensely entrepreneurial. It reflected... the most authentic spirit of capitalism. (3)

Fortunately, Frank is a veteran entrepreneur of pre-neoliberal times who recognizes the magic that he has created with his anti-establishment. His goal is not to take his business recipe “mainstream” by promoting it as a franchise model like Brian Flannagan (Tom Cruise), the bartender–entrepreneur protagonist of director Roger Donaldson’s Reaganite-inflected neo-Horatio-Alger-style film *Cocktail* (1988), a Hollywoodized adaptation of Gould’s far darker 1984 novel of the same title, which constitutes a sardonic indictment of the then burgeoning Reaganite era. Nor is Frank’s desire to turn his bar into a *Bobo* mecca and put it “on the grid,” so to speak, thereby attracting an instant flow of nosy, prying, conspicuous consumption-style patrons, who would inevitably drive away his eclectic clientele and, in particular, the occasional celebrities who have happened upon the enchanted happening of his anti-establishment. In this regard, Frank is neither a “businessman” in the conventional sense of the term nor a neoliberal-minded capitalist, but rather an artist, craftsman, and bartender–poet who embodies the spirit of *poiesis* given his status as a gifted “maker” who has crafted the agonistic omnicultural environment that defines his anti-establishment.¹⁸

Concluding Ruminations

In closing, I feel the need to once again turn to Heidegger’s *Sojourns*, which has substantially inspired this experimental article. In his travel journal, Heidegger poses the lofty question of whether a sojourn within the elements of Greece’s originary cultural *Dasein* is still possible in the mid-late twentieth century. He finds such sojourns, most notably at the island of Delos, the fabled birthplace of the Greek god Apollo and his twin sister, the goddess Artemis: “Only through the experience of Delos did the journey to Greece become a sojourn[...].” (34). Ruminating on Delos, Heidegger posits that it is essentially concealed in plain view by the neighbouring island of Mykonos, a “fashionable spot of international tourism” (36): “Perhaps it is good that, because of Mykonos, an oblivion cloaks the lonely Delos, for in this way it remains protected” (36).

¹⁷ Heidegger resigned the rectorship in 1934, though he remained a member of Freiberg’s faculty and of the Nazi Party until the end of World War II.

¹⁸ As Heidegger writes in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” “The essence of art is poetry. The essence of poetry, in turn, is the founding of truth [or *aletheia*].

One might say that “Frank’s Place” exists as an enchanted island in a sea of stultification and neoliberal conformity, though it is far from lonely. Its beauty shines for all those who happen upon it, and once they discover it they guard it with a loyal protectiveness. As Heidegger’s favourite poet, the German Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), writes in his poem “Bread and Wine” (1801), which prefaces the opening to *Sojourns*,

But the thrones, where are they? Where are the temples, the vessels, Where to delight the gods, brim-full with nectar, the songs? Where, then, where do they shine, the oracles winged for far targets? Delphi’s asleep, and where now is great fate to be heard? (qtd. in Heidegger *Sojourns* 1)

At “Frank’s Place,” there are routinely songs voiced by a culturally pluralistic coalition of worker–poets who discuss and debate in agonistic jazz-like discordance, and these worker–poets are the people whom Frank has awoken from the drudgeries of their daily routines and travails. Long live “Frank’s Place,” where the people come to sing.

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