

Parasite and the Parallax of Social Relations Under Capitalism

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Abstract: This paper offers a psychoanalytic film analysis of director Bong Joon-ho's 2019 film *Parasite*, which engages Slavoj Žižek's concept of a "political parallax." The analysis reveals how social (class) relations under Capitalism are anamorphically distorted and structured by way of an unsymbolizable gap. Ultimately, achieving a parallax view allows us to see that it's not capitalism that breeds parasites; rather parasitism is already there, inherently built into capitalism in the form of an internal excess. Thus, capitalism itself becomes the parasitic system that perpetuates both the fantasy of freedom and the fetishization of class difference, which, paradoxically obfuscates class struggle itself.

Keywords: Psychoanalytic film analysis, Parallax, Class Relations, Capitalism

One of the most difficult concepts for students of psychoanalytic film theory to grasp is that of the subject. When students are unable to discern the complexity of the paradoxes through which the subject emerges, they usually default to the notion of a person, which allows them ready references to the symbolic meanings and imaginary identities they see on the screen. That is, they take representation as unproblematic and immediate, and as such they are ready to apply the various sociological categories of race, class, sex, and gender; to evaluate how a film does or does not portray reality accurately and decide whether it esteems or denigrates the under-represented of identity politics. Analyzing films in this way and according to these categories reveals the way ideology works; it holds out the idea that we are free to determine our identities and that film as a representation of life requires our vigilant critique,

Yet, what psychoanalytic film theory asks students to do is to begin to detect not what is represented on screen in a positivized way, but how what we see on the screen is configured paradoxically by way of what is not there and simultaneously, by what is "too much" there. We are concerned in psychoanalytic film theory to discern how failure, lack, excess, distortions, and impasse, reveal a reality that is itself ontologically incomplete. The subject, "far from totalizing reality," according to Slavoj Žižek, "can occur only when there is a radical rip in the texture of reality, when reality is not a 'flat' collection of objects but implies a radical crack" so that ultimately, "the subject itself is the rip in reality, what tears its seamless texture apart."¹ The subject is not an empirical entity, but rather, like the *object a*, a purely formal category; the lack of the subject correlates to the *object a* as that which remains of the Real after it goes through symbolization.²

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¹ Žižek, 2017, p. 43

² Or yet another way to convey the category of the subject comes from Alenka Zupančič: "reality as it

With Lacanian psychoanalysis we can trace the lack that launches desire and frames our fantasies, the hole around which drive repeats its circuit, and the enjoyment elicited through these movements. We see, for example, the excess enjoyment of racial hatreds in Spike Lee's montages; the excess and impasse of Quentin Tarantino's revenge fantasies; the way the love relation confronts an obstacle in the romantic couple film; or the more subtle yet striking way fantasies are decentered in director Ernst Lubitsch's masterful use of comedy. Film fantasies work to fill in the gaps that ideology attempts to cover over, and simultaneously offer us ways to envision the possibility of an object that would fulfill our desire. But psychoanalytic film theory asks us to see the way these fantasies and representations on screen are only possible by screening off the constitutive nothing, the cracks in the symbolic, the obstacle of the sexual relation, or the impasses of desire. When films present spectators a traumatic encounter with the Real, it offers them a way to see themselves (as subjects) and the symbolic order "from the perspective of a void."³

As such, the radicality of psychoanalytic film theory lies in its potential, according to Todd McGowan, to counter the way film fantasies perpetuate a "docile subject," one who "pays the price for meaning with its freedom."⁴ Further, as he writes, "Our ability to contest an ideological structure depends on our ability to recognize the real point at which it breaks down, the point at which the void that ideology conceals manifests itself."⁵ Psychoanalytic film theorists are concerned with discerning the way the *object a*, as gaze or voice, is deployed in film to elicit our (often traumatic) enjoyment, and there are a myriad of ways films can do this, including, anamorphic distortions of form and content, the use of mixed genres, uncanny juxtapositions, spectral voices and ambient sound, the expected surprise of comedy, disruptions of linear causality and temporality, or the unexpected film ending, just to name a few. As Žižek maintains, cinema is at its best when "through subtleties of *mise-en-scene*, it makes the spectator experience reality itself as something fantasmatic."⁶

The wager of psychoanalytic film theory, then, is that it offers us a unique opportunity to discern how our world, our reality is framed through something fantasmatic, how it has no ontologically complete status on its own; how we, as subjects are singular beings posited only

is independently of ourselves appears (comes into view) only 'dependently on us' as subjects – not in the sense of being caused or constituted by us, but in the sense that reality's own inherent negativity/contradiction appears as part of this reality precisely in the form of the subject." Zupančič, 2017, p. 121.

3 McGowan, 2007, p. 20

4 McGowan, 2007, pp. 16 -17

5 McGowan, 2007, p. 17

6 Žižek, 2012, p. 317

retroactively; and how our enjoyment is, as *jouissance*, always excessive. If we can detect the way ideology works according to the positivized nothing around which desire, fantasy, and enjoyment all circulate, and the impasses we confront in our symbolic and imaginary identities, then we'll begin to see that freedom is not simply something "out there" but inheres in the very way we experience our predicament and realize the contours of our world. Psychoanalytic film theory and its unique way of analyzing films promises a way to re-politicize "the political"; not through resisting the dominant ideology, but in its ability to help us fathom and give form to its cracks and fissures, and the way this orients us (as subjects) to authority.⁷

It's important here not to conflate McGowan's "docile subject," with a "neutral subject," and Alenka Zupančič's thinking helps us understand the difference. Turning Althusser's formulation of the subject's interpellation around, she writes that while ideology interpellates subjects into different identities, by answering authority's call of "Hey, you!" this is not the complete story: "not only is the subject in this sense a condition of ideology, it also constitutes its inner limit, its possible breaking point, its ceasing to function and losing its grip on us." And further, "we are, or become, emancipatory subjects by a second identification which is only made possible within the ideological parallax....The subject is both the problem and the possible (emancipatory) solution," and this is so "because the subject is not a neutral substrate to be molded into this or that ideological figure or shape, but a negativity, a crack," which is "not simply eliminated when an ideological identification/recognition takes place, but becomes part of it."⁸ The subject's freedom is connected not to the idea that it can create its own identity, but to the realization that identity is grounded in an ontology that can never be complete. And this logic is mirrored in the way political movement do or do not work towards emancipation. If oppositional groups like American feminism or the LGBTQ+ movement become caught up in endless resistance, the political struggle is limited to a struggle for recognition, but if movements work for complete social transformation, they can redefine the coordinates of authority itself.

It is this idea of "ideological parallax" and taking a "parallax view," in Žižek's meaning, that becomes an important analytical concept for psychoanalytic film theory. The parallax Real is, as Žižek writes: "that which accounts for the very multiplicity of appearances of the same underlying Real...it is not the hard core which persists as the Same, but the hard bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness into the

7 For example, in his *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and 'The Rules of the Game'*, Todd McGowan's analysis of Jean Renoir's 1939 classic film "disturbs spectators by revealing to them the extent of their fealty to the authority that they believe themselves to have escaped." McGowan, 2015, p. 13.

8 Hamza, 2019, p. 447

multitude of appearances.”⁹ And the “political parallax” allows us to realize that “the social antagonism which allows for no common ground between the conflicting agents” also known as ‘class struggle’ requires us to “think the gap in a materialist way”: not only do we have to see the “reality” of objective socioeconomic forces, but also the real (parallax real) of class differences, or social relations under capitalism. “In other words, the gap between the individual and the ‘impersonal’ social dimension is to be inscribed back within the individual himself: this ‘objective’ order of the social Substance exists only insofar as individuals treat it as such, relate to it as such.”¹⁰

Director Bong Joon-ho’s 2019 film *Parasite* offers us the rare opportunity, not only to discern how the lack circulates in terms of fantasy and desire, but also to see how class relations under capitalism are sustained and perpetuated by an unsymbolizable gap. The film offers us another way to see how capitalism veils its continual generation and re-appropriation of an excess, one that paradoxically both connects and dismantles the link between surplus value and surplus enjoyment. We realize that it’s not an objective reality that sustains this system, but rather the antagonism of a real, the impossible hard core which we cannot confront directly and which cannot be apprehended through symbolic fictions or virtual formations.¹¹ Through a psychoanalytic film analysis we are given the means to “look awry” at our world, to see by way of a parallax view; to discern the structure of an antagonism that was heretofore concealed. And a psychoanalysis of the film *Parasite* offers us a parallax view of the way social relations under capitalism are anamorphically distorted. Ultimately, we come to see that it’s not capitalism that breeds parasites, rather parasitism is already there, inherently built into it in the form of an internal excess. From a parallax view, capitalism becomes the parasitic system that perpetuates both the fantasy of freedom (neoliberalist ideology), and the fetishization of class difference, which obfuscates class struggle itself.

In various of his works Žižek considers the importance of Levi-Strauss’s famous account in *Structural Anthropology* of the ways that two group within the native American tribe, the Winnebago, perceived the spatial coordinates of their village. The first more powerful group conceived of the village as a circle within a circle, while the second group, which Žižek labels “revolutionary-antagonistic” conceived the cottages of their village separated by an invisible frontier.¹² The crucial point here, as Žižek relates, is not that the two groups have their own misperception

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9 Žižek, 2006, p. 26

10 Žižek, 2006, p. 6.

11 Žižek, 2006, p 26

12 Žižek, 2006, p. 25; and Žižek, 2017, p. 113

of the same objective reality, but that each group’s perception is formulated through a traumatic kernel, a “fundamental antagonism that the inhabitants of the village were unable to symbolize,” thus revealing “an imbalance in social relations that prevented the community from stabilizing itself into a harmonious whole...it is here that one can see in what precise sense the Real intervenes through anamorphosis.”¹³

In the film *Parasite* we detect the same phenomenon between the world of the abjectly poor Kim family and the wealthy Park family living in Seoul, South Korea. The way the two families live is distilled in the *mise-en-scene* of their very different living spaces. The Kims live in the bug-infested squalor of a *banjiha*, a semi-basement apartment, where the primary view from their window looks out onto a dirty alleyway. From the darkly comedic opening of the film it is clear that the Kims are the excess cast-offs of society; living like vermin, subject to fumigations, urinations, and the smells, sights, and sounds of the dirty city streets. In contrast, the wealthy Parks live in an elegant, spacious, architecturally designed home, and from the intimacy of their living room, they look out through floor-to-ceiling windows onto a green, lush and private yard.

Briefly, the relationship between these two families follows that of a deceptive parasite to its host. Each member of the Kim family cunningly finds ways to oust the servants of the Park family and insert themselves into their positions. The father (Kang-ho Song) becomes the family’s driver, the mother (Jeong-eun Lee) takes over as housekeeper, the daughter (So-dam Park) is hired as an art therapist to the Park’s young son, and the son (Woo-sik Choi) becomes an English tutor to the Parks’ teenage daughter. All goes well until a third family (a couple) surfaces, the previously employed housekeeper (Hye-jin Jang) and her husband (Myeon-hoon Park), who has secretly been living in the bomb shelter deep beneath the basement for over 4 years in order to escape unemployment, homelessness and threats from creditors. He was kept alive by his wife who had been stealing the Park family’s food. Appearances on the surface hid the obscenity of poverty existing in the inner depths of the affluent home.

In the first half of the film Bong deceptively lures us, the spectators, into thinking the Kim family has out-smarted the Parks through its own craft and subterfuge, and that the two families are existing in some sense as a “harmonious whole.” So, we are caught off-guard when in the second half of the film, things seem to spiral out of control and end in tragedy for all three families. Yet the signs of a disturbance are already found in the first half of the film, where here and there we get the sense of something not quite right, the feeling that at any moment something might shatter the delicate parasitic balance. An anamorphic distortion where a parallax shift begins is detected in the way the two families are presented

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13 Žižek, 2006, pp. 26-27

vis-à-vis each other. The mother (Yeo-jeong Jo) and father (Sun-kyun Lee) of the Park family are barely seen in the same room together; their affluence, however, allows them to buy everything their children might desire, including tents and toys from the U.S., walkie-talkies, tutors, and art therapists. The Parks maintain the fantasy of a bright future to ensure their children's happiness and success in the capitalist system. The Kim family, in contrast, have no sense of this future; they are not interested in finding gainful employment, or putting money away for a future health crisis or ensuring college tuition for their children; instead they use their wits to secure positions within the Parks' household, which gives them a chance to survive in the moment. In contrast to the Parks, the four members of the Kim family are often in the same room, huddled together; they share a closeness and camaraderie, but they appear more like rats that travel in a pack. In a haunting scene where the father, daughter, and son have just barely escaped detection by the Parks, they are seen running through a heavy rainstorm in the middle of the night like rats looking for shelter. When they arrive back at their own semi-basement apartment, they find it and the streets flooded with sewage water and are forced to sleep in a public shelter alongside hundreds of other refugees.

Other clues of the Kim family's status as outcasts comes through in the dialogue, for example, when the son, looking out of the Park's window at the very wealthy seemingly happy people gathered in the private yard below, asks their teenage daughter: "Do you think I fit in here?" And previously, the night before, when he saw his sister luxuriating in the bathtub of the Parks while they were away, he tells her that she looks good as a rich girl, and that she "fit well" in that scene. His quest to find a place to "fit in" is matched by the father's philosophy of life (told to his son and daughter) while in the public shelter. When they ask him what to do next, what his plan is, he replies that the plan is not to have a plan, because that way you can never fail. This is in stark contrast to the positivization of a "no," for example that we find in Žižek's account of Melville's *Bartleby* – instead of "I would prefer not to," the father remains in the place of the docile subject, living a life of contingent survival.¹⁴

The Kims and their class function both as *object a* (as object lacking its place) and as the excess Thing that threatens to overflow and "cross a line." In a memorable scene of the film, while the Kims are silently hiding under a coffee table just feet away from Mr. and Mrs. Kim lying on the couch nearby, they are forced to listen to the latter's fantasy of using an imagined "heroin-addict whore's" panties to elicit sexual passion. The panties were actually left by the Kims' daughter in the Parks' car to implicate the driver in debauched acts and ensure his firing. Later, however, it is the stain of their status that marks the Kims when the Parks locate in them something in them more than themselves, their odor. It is

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 14 Žižek, 2006, pp. 381-382

something the Kim family themselves are only made aware of when the Parks' young son announces that each one of them "smells the same." Mr. Park tells his wife that Mr. Kim's odor reminds him of "the smells on the subway," or the smell of "old radishes"; it is this excess odor that threatens to "cross the line," according to Mr. Park.¹⁵

The anamorphic object that functions like the skull in Holbein's famous painting *The Ambassadors* is located in the doorway that marks the unsymbolizable divide between the above-ground affluence and the below-ground basement-dwellers, a place the former architect-owner was too ashamed to reveal to the Parks, a place hidden out of sight. The doorway, framed on either side by dimly lit showcases of expensive figurines, often appears as a depthless void without contour. When figures walk into the doorway they visually disappear from view, and we find them in the next scene already in the basement below. With the discovery of the bunker deep below the basement, the long winding staircase functions in the same way as the basement doorway, as the disorienting pathway leading down into a deeper abyss.¹⁶

Throughout the film Bong's formal film elements often work like punctuation marks, unexpectedly alerting us, the spectators, to something being truncated, while simultaneously announcing another anamorphic displacement. This occurs, for example when the Parks go on a camping trip and the Kim family parties in their living room, drinking their hosts' alcohol, celebrating their good fortune late at night, when the doorbell abruptly rings. It is the former housekeeper who with a nervous laugh tells them she has left something behind in the basement when she was so unexpectedly fired. It also occurs when soon after this, while the Kim family is attempting to subdue the former housekeeper and her husband, the phone suddenly rings; it is the Parks announcing that they have abandoned their camping trip and will be arriving home in 8 minutes. Bong's use of a long series of cross-cutting scenes between the two underground spaces of the bunker and the semi-basement of the Kim family, depicts scenes of utter desperation and dejection. We watch while the former housekeeper who has sustained a serious concussion and is slowly dying, tries to free her bound husband by pulling off the duct tape with her teeth; we also watch as the Kims scramble to seek refuge in their semi-basement apartment, now flooded by sewage water, rendering

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 15 It is this logic of the "other" depicted as both object of fantasy and as abject Thing that we find also in director Jordan Peele's 2018 film *Get Out*, not in terms of class, but in terms of race, where black bodies are both the source of fantasy and the Thing that is appropriated as Real by white liberals. As Sheldon George writes in his study of the trauma of African-Americans, "...the other's jouissance, bound to fantasy, actively oscillates between subjective imaginings that designate it alternately as alien and as excessive" George, 2016, p. 9,

16 In Bong's 2013 film *Snowpiercer* the constant fast-paced circuit of the train containing the wealthy and abject poor in different compartments might be said to play a similar role, denoting the unsymbolizable real (the incessant race) underneath the never-ending capitalist mode of production and consumption.

them homeless and destitute. It's as if the two parasitic families struggle to survive against each other in order to retain hooks in their wealthy hosts. Yet this misery is displaced by the end of the film with a tragedy of even greater magnitude.

In a rapid series of events filmed in slow motion, we witness the violent rage of parasites against each other and then against their hosts. In the setting of an elegant party on the lush green lawn of the Parks, a series of stabbings ensues leaving the Kims' daughter, the former housekeeper's husband, and Mr. Park all dead. The latter is stabbed by Mr. Kim after he sees Mr. Park grimace at the bad odor of a dead body, which instantly registers as a moment of rage against the stain attached to his own being, the thing in him more than himself. The act of violence against Mr. Park is also directed inward because the stabbing becomes also a suicidal gesture for Mr. Kim, a *passage à l'acte*, which in a moment of impotence is a strike against his own miserable fate. Later, when Mr. Kim takes refuge in the bunker, we see him apologizing to Mr. Park's picture, as he held no ill will against him.

The antagonism exposed in the film *Parasite* reveals that there is no "harmonious whole" possible under Capitalism, yet what's also revealed is that all deceptions are not the same. As an example and in comparison, we find deceptions of a different kind among citizens of the former Soviet Union who during the Cold War were fond of the saying: "We pretend to work, and they [the government] pretend to pay us." Their parasitic underground existed in the vast "second economy" of illicit trades, bargains, and private production, which secretly sustained the stultifying surface economy of the centralized plans. In *Parasite*, however, the deceptions (the performances) of the Kim family, which secured their employment in the Park's household, did not sustain the economic activity "on the surface." That is, while the Kims were well aware of their deceptions, the Park family held the illusion that their status was merited, that their wealth was earned, and that they had a special entitlement to it, which is the founding lie of the Other under Capitalism. As servants who worked under willful false pretense, the Kims' deceptions veiled not pride or commitment of service, as we find, for example, in the servants of the PBS television series *Downton Abbey*, but the reality that capitalism is possible only by way of the ultimate masquerade of entitlement.

By the end of the film, the deceptions of the Kim family are traded in for the founding deception and fantasy of capitalism, but with a twist. Realizing that his father, now a wanted killer, has taken refuge in the bunker of the house that his family once worked for, the Kim's son fantasizes that he will one day become wealthy enough to buy the house and free his father. The fantasy of capitalist wealth is restored and symbolized in the son's act of placing the large rock given to him by a friend to secure his luck and good fortune, back in a river where it becomes indistinguishable among other rocks; it is now back "in its place." Yet even in the last part of the film Bong continues to let us

know that something remains out of joint, anamorphically distorted and unsymbolizable, and he does this by inserting an "out of place" humor in the tragic aftermath of the killings. After the son who sustained a serious brain injury awakes from surgery, he appears with a bemused smile and an uncontrollable laugh, even while looking at the picture of his now-dead sister. The son's happy countenance is juxtaposed to his sorrow at the discovery that his father has taken refuge in the bomb shelter and is tapping out a letter to him in Morse code via a porch light.

The portrayals of class difference belie the anamorphic distortions, antagonisms, and gaps which prop up and make possible the identities of wealth and class privilege on the surface. Each wealthy family in their succession will live above ground and hire servants from the lower class to care for their needs, while the lowest of classes, the parasites, will continue to live out of sight, like ghosts.¹⁷ They have no way to resist and no way to go back to the usual deceptions of life under capitalism on the surface. The only place for the parasite is among the living dead, unseen, reduced to sending out signals to an Other that may or may not exist. The Kim family, themselves, ultimately stand for the excess, and as such they are symptomatic of the antagonism of social relations under capitalism. The parasites who dwell as invisibles in the core of capitalist wealth are akin to "the wandering excess" in Žižek's words, Ranciere's "part-of-no-part," Hegel's rabble, or Badiou's *sans-papiers*. They are paradoxically at once both excluded from and immanent to capitalism; since they have no recognition on the surface, their symbolic status is foreclosed and threatens to return in the form of a real, such as in inexplicable acts of rage and violence.

A parallax shift allows us to see what's on the other side of the proverbial coin, or where the turn in the Mobius strip is occurring; it is a perspective from the place of a void, an impossible place. Such a view allows us to see that the wealthiest class is also subject to the parasitic structure, as they are bound to the belief of capitalism's ultimate promises. As McGowan writes: "The capitalist regime produces subjects who cling feverishly to the image of their own dissatisfaction and thus to the promise, constantly made explicit in capitalist society, of a way to escape this dissatisfaction through either the accumulation of capitalism or the acquisition of the commodity."¹⁸ Capitalism generates its own internal excess, what it both excludes and depends on, but the enjoyment once realized as surplus enjoyment and attached to surplus-value becomes displaced. As the son takes over the father's contingent existence, he trades in the enjoyment of dissatisfaction generated by capitalism's demand of accumulation and acquisition, for an existence

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¹⁷ Today in Seoul, hundreds of thousands of poor live in semi-basement apartments or worse, in "goswan" or "Jokbang" flop houses with daily or weekly rents, where they often wait for a lonely death. Choe and Lam, 2020, p. 5

¹⁸ McGowan, 2016, p. 11

tied to compulsory freedom, that is, of acquiring wealth to extricate another parasitic ghost. As Žižek writes, the move from contingency to necessity entails “the suspension of all strategic considerations based upon hope for a better future,” and it is this very move that is foreclosed to the son and indeed to all parasites who live under capitalism, as they are forced to live by hope alone.¹⁹

Returning to the consideration of the “harmonious whole” in Levi-Strauss’s meaning, we find that achieving a parallax shift reorients reality in a radical way. That is, instead of seeking to find ways to distribute the wealth or ensure access to the riches of capitalism in a more just way, we look for what can “cut across” both groups’ (both classes’) perception of their village, unveiling an antagonism that was heretofore concealed. Or, as Žižek puts it, “the tension between the hegemonic order and its symptoms (parts of no-part, wandering excesses) cannot be properly understood without locating it with regard to the basic antagonism that cuts across the social Whole and makes it non-All (‘class struggle’).”²⁰ The paradox that emerges here is a Hegelian one, for as Žižek further writes: “In Hegelese, class struggle necessarily encounters itself in its oppositional determination....class difference can serve as its own best mask.”²¹ The calls for equal wealth, or social balance are abstractions that obfuscate the gap that keeps the dynamic of class relations firmly in place.

The end of Bong Joon-ho’s film brings to mind one of economist Thomas Picketty’s major findings in his work, *Capital in the 21st Century*, which reveals that capitalism will never be able to offer anything close to equal wealth and power (in our words “a harmonious whole”). Picketty discovered a sort of “proof” or metric that measured the exponential growth of dynastic and inherited wealth, which continues and will, in the future, far outpace the growth of the economy at large, that is the majority of people’s (workers’) efforts to earn a livable wage.²² If psychoanalysis allows us a similar “proof” about the situation of social relations under capitalism, it might be the following, which is found in Samo Tomič’s *The Capitalist Unconscious*. Referring to Marx’s analysis of the extraction of surplus-value from the consumption of labor-power, Tomič writes: “The same asymmetry is reflected in the broader social context: the accumulation of wealth accompanied by the accumulation of misery, the

19 Žižek, 2017, p. 249

20 Žižek, 2017, p. 24. The notion of class antagonism, as such, “is thus not the ultimate referent-signified, the hidden meaning, of all other struggles but a measure of the ‘(non-)authenticity’ of all other struggles...” (Žižek, 2017, p. 235).

21 Žižek 2017, p. 245.

22. Picketty believes that we will look back with nostalgia at the day when we could still detect where the wealth was located in an era of “self-made men”; that wealth in our day is so concentrated that a large segment of society is virtually unaware of its existence.

revolution of the means of production combined with the production of surplus population. The capitalist social link is structured like entropy.”²³

Taking a parallax view of social relations under Capitalism allows us to see both the curse and the opportunity at hand. A simple definition of “entropy” refers to two elements: “The entropy of an object is a measure of the amount of energy which is unavailable to do work. Entropy is also a measure of the number of possible arrangements the atoms in a system can have. In this sense, entropy is a measure of uncertainty of randomness.”²⁴ If we combine these two elements of the phenomenon of entropy, we can see how capitalism might either continue to generate its own excess (under a masculine logic of exclusion), or how new social arrangements might lead to the system’s complete collapse and replacement (Lacan’s feminine logic of the non-All). A parallax shift would open the space for a radical (internal) shift in the very structure of our reality under capitalism. According to McGowan, “the measuring stick for critique is not the promise of a better future but capitalism’s underlying structure....Capitalism’s hold over us depends on our failure to recognize the nature of its power.”²⁵ And Žižek writes something similar when he makes the case that when we push certain categories of people to the bottom of the class structure and blame it on the “natural outcome of (free) markets,” we encounter: “Class difference itself as a fetish which obfuscates class struggle.”²⁶ The film *Parasite* allows us to see this contradictory logic at work in capitalist social relations, and provokes us into realizing that it’s the Real of our antagonisms, the stain of our status, the deceptions we are called to enact, that all work to service and perpetuate the parasitic demands of Capitalism itself.

23 Tomič, 2015, p. 70.

24 Simple English Wikipedia. Available online at: <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entropy>

25 McGowan, 2016, p. 14. In *Emancipation after Hegel*, he writes: “For Hegel, not only are entities unable to coexist peacefully with each other, but they cannot coexist peacefully with themselves,” a failure that “animates them at the same time as it ultimately destroys them” (McGowan, 2019, p. 125).

26 Žižek, 2017, p. 247.

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