

Chapter 11

Desire's Tyranny

Deleuze and Guattari on Desire, Capitalism, and Authoritarianism in the Contemporary Moment

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As Wendy Brown, Peter Gordon, and Max Pensky have recently argued, we need a new—or at least renewed—critical theory that can help provide theoretical resources in making sense of this moment in which we are watching a reemergence of authoritarian politics and authoritarian impulses around the globe.¹ These impulses have expressed themselves in a variety of ways from Trump's United States, in which long-standing—but sometimes submerged—racism, xenophobia, and general hostility toward difference (and the social whole as such) have been unleashed and allowed to flourish in the open in new ways, to Bolsonaro's Brazil, Orbán's Hungary, and other places where we are watching similar trends take shape.

Though it is the case that Trump was defeated in the 2020 presidential election, the attempted right-wing putsch during the certification of the election results on January 6, 2021 at the U.S. capitol building and the ongoing campaign to “decertify” those election results by the right both inside and outside the mainstream of the republican party, along with a renewed interest in passing laws that restrict the voting rights of the working poor, and BIPOC voters (who tend not to vote with conservatives in large numbers) should tell us that this movement is far from over, that it is now firmly entrenched in U.S. politics as it is in many places around the world.² As further evidence for this in the United States, we only have to look at the 2020 election results themselves where almost half the record number of voters came out and voted for Trump's chaotic authoritarianism despite his severe mishandling of the pandemic and his administration's many failures over the three-and-a-half years leading up to the election.³ And even now, support for the ex-president

remains extremely high among the right in this country.⁴ What accounts for this? How can we understand its emergence on the political scene now? I hope here to offer a small contribution to the larger and ongoing project of building a critical theory to help our understanding this authoritarian turn. I want to do this here by looking to Deleuze and Guattari's work on the role that desire plays in the production and reproduction of social relations and also the ways in which, as they argue, desire is produced and channeled by capitalist social relations. Specifically, this chapter will, after offering a more general accounting of Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of desire's capture, look at the role that desire's production plays in this moment, in ushering in and sustaining the renovation of right-wing authoritarianism that we are currently living through.

DESIRE'S PRODUCTION, OR, DESIRE AS SOCIAL PRODUCT

*There are no internal drives in desire, only assemblages. Desire is always assembled; it is what the assemblage determines it to be.*⁵

*Desire works in the infrastructure, invests it, belongs to it. . . . Desire thereby organizes power: it organizes the system of repression.*⁶

It is nothing new to say that for Deleuze and Guattari desire is political. As they see it, our individual desires and their structures are first found outside of us, in the larger social world, and they are (re)produced and channeled in us, by that larger social whole that we are born into and exist as a part of such that the structure of desire in the individual comes to mirror that of the larger social whole. This also means that the structure of one's desire comes to serve the continuity and reproduction of a given set of social relations that exist at a given time and in a given place.

As Jason Read has shown us, Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the origins of affects like desire and others is grounded in the thought of both Spinoza and Simondon.⁷ From Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari take the idea that our affective life, that is, our capacities to affect and be affected, are part and parcel of our social relations, the encounters we have with others, the structures we participate in and come to inhabit, and the collectives we are a part of. As Read writes here for Spinoza,

Political collectives are defined more by common structures of feeling than common notions or ideas. . . . Affects are thus necessarily both anti-humanist,

defining all of existence in various ways, and transindividual, passing in and through relations with others.⁸

For Spinoza (and for Deleuze and Guattari), the social is, in this way, the condition upon which the individual and her affects are premised. From Simondon then, Deleuze and Guattari take and build on the idea that individuation and individual subjective awareness is, as Read also states, “a process, not a default state of being. This process moves from a milieu that is considered pre-individual, made up of tensions and relations, to a process of individuation that increasingly encompasses different levels and aspects, biological, psychic, an social.”⁹ This is what, in a condensed form, is expressed between the two quotations that make up the epigraph for this section of the chapter: that desire is “assembled” in particular ways as a part of—and by—a larger social assemblage and it is so also as a result of its being part of the Marxist “infrastructure” or “base” rather than, as it is often thought in Marxist discourse, as a part of the ideologically mystified superstructure. This is why, as we will see later, in order to properly make sense of Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of desire in this way, it is my contention that we must read it in light of their reading of Marx in addition to what they import from Spinoza and Simondon.

To briefly recall the classic Marxist theory of base and superstructure, the material base is comprised of both the “forces of production,” described by Marx as the technologies, tools, land, and so on, and labor power that exist in a particular amalgamation at a given time and also the “relations of production,” or those relationships individuals are required to enter into in order to produce and reproduce their means of existence—also at a given time—so relationships of wage labor in various forms are the primary example here, but also other relations that surround wage labor such a contractual relations and the like are also a part of the relations of production.¹⁰ In the classical story told by Marxist thinkers, the material base gives rise to superstructural relations which serve to justify and bring stability to that base—the kinds of things that exist as a part of the superstructure are (again, classically) things like legal codes, familial structures—think here about the Fordist family structure during the heyday of that mode of production wherein the raced, gendered, and heteronormative division of labor was constructed in such a way as to allow one adult member of the household (mostly white men) to work outside the house and earn enough money for the other adult member (mostly white women) to stay home and do the work of childcare and other forms of domestic labor—educational institutions, religious institutions, political structures, and also beliefs about what is natural and necessary, and so forth.

This latter category, ideas about what is natural and necessary, is what is classically captured by the term “ideology”—it is in ideology that we exist,

for instance, when we think that capitalism is a natural fit for humanity, as we believe that it mirrors some foundational competitive “human nature.” For the classical Marxist, this ideology is mistaken in its identification of a competitive human nature as existing in the ways that we experience it prior to capitalist economies and in a way that is fundamental to humanity. Rather, Marxist critique shows that we come to view ourselves as (fundamentally) competitive in the ways that we do as a result of the material and social relations put into place and reinforced by capitalism. This ideology, however, has a purpose—it serves to prop up and justify capitalist social relations (and thus to help reproduce them). In this traditional model then, subjective desires are a part of the superstructure insofar as they are conditioned by activity in the base to be as they are such that they support and reproduce an existing set of forces and relations of production. Critical here is that, to the classical theory, ideology is a *mistaken* relation to the real conditions of our existence and can be set right with the proper form of critique. As many recent Marxist thinkers have argued, however, there is not such a neat separation between the base and superstructure as what I am calling here the classical or simplified theory would have it. Further, for many, the idea that ideology is a matter of a mistaken relation is an inaccurate way to think it—rather it just is the way our relation to the world is constructed by capital. So there is no mistaken relation here—we just are constructed in the ways that we are.¹¹

Returning to the complex relations and lack of separation between base and superstructure with this in mind then, feminist theorists of the concept of social reproduction (also known as Social Reproduction Theory or SRT), for instance, have argued that this is the case for care work, which includes everything from education, to health care, to the housework and child-rearing found in traditional family life—all of which had been seen in the more traditional model as part of the superstructure and hence less part of the economic base and more relegated to the sphere of the noneconomic and nonmaterial superstructure.¹² This is a problematic view of care work for many reasons. One of which is, as Melinda Cooper has recently pointed out, that it “serves to obscure and sentimentalize the existence of women’s unpaid labor in the home at precisely the moment when the boundaries between the labor market and the private family were being established.”¹³ Furthermore, care work, wherein there is often still a gendered and raced division of labor, is itself productive—and so always properly located in the base—insofar as socially reproductive work is sometimes waged and is itself a regime of labor that combines both labor power and the technologies of the forces of production in its activities. Care work also, moreover, participates in the relations of production in that such socially reproductive work is a relation that many individuals (again—often in gendered and raced ways) must participate in as it is sometimes the only labor relation available to them and it creates

the conditions of the economic labor outside of the house for others, in the proverbial factories. So here in socially reproductive care work, we see the blurring of the lines between the base and the superstructure.

For Deleuze and Guattari, desire, much like socially reproductive care work for many Marxist feminists, also straddles this divide. It is produced by a given set of social relations as we saw earlier in their extension of Spinoza and Simondon, in a particular way, but it is also critically (re)productive of those relations such that it acts to reproduce and sustain that given set of social relations and forces of production that instantiate it in a given moment. The experience of desire under capitalism is also not, as with the theory of ideology, a mistaken experience—it is real, and it is what it is as a result of its entanglement in capitalist social relations. The process of this double move—the real production and subsequent reproduction of desire by capital—arises in relation to what Deleuze and Guattari term the “inscribing socius.”¹⁴ The socius—or the social machine—is the agglomeration of all of the various sets of practices—both economic and thus those that exist in the base, and also superstructural—that preexist (and exist external to) the life of individuals in the socius. These form the backdrop of a given society into which such individuals are inserted and through which desire is formed. To say more about this here, we can see that Deleuze and Guattari describe this as the process of the coding of the “flows of desire” and thus, they describe the work of the social machine in this way:

The social machine is literally a machine, irrespective of any metaphor, inasmuch as it exhibits an immobile motor and undertakes a variety of interventions: flows are set apart, elements are detached from a chain, and portions of tasks to be performed are distributed. Coding the flows implies all of these operations. This is the social machine's supreme task inasmuch as the apportioning of production corresponds to the extractions from the chain resulting in a residual share for each member, in a global system of desire and destiny that organizes the production of productions.¹⁵

Following Daniel Smith, we should see the concept of “flow” as at the foundation of Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy in a way that also helps us understand the production of desire in the infrastructure.¹⁶ As Smith argues, the concept of “flow” is central for Deleuze and Guattari much like the concept of the “social contract” is the foundation of the political philosophy of Hobbes and other contract theorists, or the “hegemony” is for Gramsci, and so forth. It is the coding of all kinds of flows that is at the heart of social and political relations and at the center of the political philosophy offered in *Anti-Oedipus* and, as Smith shows us, is key for making sense of how Deleuze and Guattari understand the relation between the individual and

the social machine. It is also key for understanding the processes by which social relations that exist as a part of a given social machine produce individual awareness and affect such that these fit with, and work to reproduce, those larger social relations.

In this way, the inscribing *socius* then, as described in the quote earlier, “codes” these various flows in particular ways so as to both make them legible to individuals as a part of their social milieu and channel and direct those flows toward particular ends that extend and reproduce the conditions of production that exist in a given social structure. So in making sense of, or offering an account of, a given set of social relations, Deleuze and Guattari look to the ways in which flows are coded by the *socius*. This tells us about how the social machine functions and the ways that it produces and reproduces itself (and in so doing, the ways it produces and reproduces individuals and individual awareness as a part of this). In making certain flows legible in certain ways, the inscribing *socius* sets the rules and boundaries for what counts as proper modes of production, distribution of social and commercial goods, practices, and traditions.¹⁷ It is then, the coded flows that set the terms of the social within which individuals become subjects—my coming to understand myself in the myriad ways that I do; for instance, as gendered in particular ways, raced, classed, as having a particular religion (or not), as having the ability to enter into certain professions (or not), as wanting certain things, fearing others, in short, my own social positioning and subjective awareness along with all its attendant abilities and limitations both social and individual is a result of my entering into a social world with certain sets of flows coded in certain ways so as to both position me in particular ways in relation to a given set of social conditions, practices, and traditions, and to make that positioning legible to me (and to others) in ways that help me understand myself and my social world (and help others understand me also).

This also connects me with history and tradition. These codes are also akin to a larger social memory that help me make sense of my place within them and connects me to the larger social whole in ways that both allows its reproduction in and through me via the social position that I inhabit, and also the habits, traditions, and practices that come to shape who I am and how I understand myself. It also enables, as mentioned earlier, my seeing of myself as part of that social whole. And when societies transition from one set of codes to another, as in say, when there is a move from feudal society to capitalist society, this involves the decoding of certain sets of flows to make those available to capital and their recoding in different ways that reinforce and facilitate capitalist social relations at the level of political economy. As Deleuze and Guattari show us in their most Marxist moments when they talk of the ways in which labor is decoded under capitalism so as to become available for sale in ways it was not in feudal society and so forth.¹⁸ This is

the result of the process of the decoding of the ways flows of labor existed in the precapitalist world and their recoding in ways that enable capitalist labor relations.

Returning then to the discussion of desire, it too is coded, decoded, and recoded in various ways at various times as a part of this process such that it comes to mirror the larger social and machinic practices and traditions such that it reproduces those in the individual who, as a result, comes to desire in ways that are legible in a given social machine. This is Deleuze and Guattari's addition, then, to Marx's analysis: they help us see that, as they argue, the libidinal economy is the same as the political economy.¹⁹ Smith puts this point nicely (and in reference to the first epigraph in this section of the chapter earlier):

Put differently, "desire is part of the infrastructure" (104; cf. 63): our impulses and affects, and even our unconscious drives, what seems to be the most individual and personal part of ourselves (libidinal economy), are themselves immediately part of what Marx called the economic infrastructure, that is, the material base of every social formation (political economy). In other words, it is impossible to posit a mental or psychic reality to desire that is different from the material reality of social production.²⁰

If there is no psychic reality without social production, and if social production is material and external to the individual in the ways described above, then psychic reality is nothing more than the internalization of the preexisting social—we are truly social products even in our psychic and affective life and this most intimate part of ourselves serves the reproduction of a given social machine.

This brings us then also to the second part of the second epigraph given earlier: Desire organizes power—the power of individuals, the power of the market, and the power of politics. And none of these are neatly separable. Desire is bound up with those other forces and relations of production such that it is produced, or "assembled"—to return again to the first epigraph—in the particular ways it is by those existing social relations in the base that individuals must enter into in order to live (the relations of production) and, at the same time, it is reproductive of those relations such that desire expresses them in individuals and their actions, in economies in their relations, in social practices and traditions, and in politics.

Now, if we take Deleuze and Guattari's picture of desire's central role in both organizing the power of individuals and the social, and its role as being organized by those things in the mode of the external-to-the-subject social machine or the inscribing *socius*, we can begin to build a critical theoretical accounting of the ways in which such desire is implicated in this

new authoritarian politics and one that also helps us see the mechanisms through which authoritarian desire is produced in us and put in the service of the reproduction of authoritarian social relations. In order to do this, I want to think briefly first about what other kinds of social and political economic relations exist in the present such that desire is organized in the particular ways that it is.

NEOLIBERAL CAPITAL, NEOLIBERAL DESIRES

For decades now we have seen the emergence and deepening of what many call neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism's foundations are in the creation of what Quinn Slobodian (with reference to Hayek and Mises) has recently described as a kind of dual governmentalism wherein the realm of the economy and capitalist markets are governed in ways that protect them from the "problems" of democratic rule—neoliberalism seeks to, as Slobodian says, "encase" the market in ways that free it from this mass democratic rule.²¹ And so neoliberal governments work to take economic activity out of the hands of the demos by working (paradoxically) to "free" it from democratic governance—to privatize institutions such that they are not, or at least they are less, subject to democratic control. Under neoliberalism, modern, democratic states cannot be trusted with economic activity because they are subject to the whims of democracy and so the economy must be divorced from the democratically controlled aspects of the state.

William Davies has offered a nice periodization of neoliberalism that I think helps in understanding both its current manifestations and its roots in what neoliberal thinkers saw as the threat posed by the rise of socialism and socialist policy making.²² Davies divides neoliberal thought and policy into three distinct periods. Two of which are positioned prior to the 2008 financial crisis and the third which exists in that crisis's wake. The first period, what Davies calls "combative neoliberalism," runs roughly between 1979 and 1989 and emerges out of, as just mentioned, the critique of socialist and Keynesian economic programs offered (beginning much earlier) by Ludwig von Mises. Davies points out here that Mises offered a thoroughgoing criticism of socialist rationality and Keynesian economics in large part by lumping these distinct traditions together and setting up "seemingly obvious binary choices between liberal market capitalism and everything else."²³

Davies argues, with reference to Mirowski, that this binary choice—which lays at the heart of early and later neoliberal thinking—sets up a kind of Schmittian friend/enemy distinction and is primarily concerned with, as we also saw in Slobodian's description, insulating executive decision-making about the market and economies from the whims of the democratic populous.²⁴

This leads to the belief that what is needed is a technocratic elite who can maintain the “rationalism” of the market and is insulated in these ways. This project required an ideological and political war on the many forms of democratic collectivism that neoliberals saw as impeding the project of safeguarding the autonomy and supposed rationality of liberal capitalist market relations. So in this period we see then not just neoliberal ideas and policy as moving in the direction of combating socialism as it existed in places like Russia and China but also, and more importantly for us, what it deemed as collectivist and socialist challenges to markets in the core capitalist democracies of Europe and the United States and the budding social democracies in other places around the world. So the war on trade unions and other forms of nonmarket, democratic, and rights-based collectivism become a mainstay of neoliberal programs in this period as they are seen as a part of this ideological project of the Schmittian enemy-making of all things that challenge or impede the market logic of liberal capitalism. As Wendy Brown notes here, for neoliberal thinkers of this period like Hayek, market rationalism and freedom prevail only “when there is no intentional human coercion” and such liberty must be enforced by rules, laws, and dictates against human intervention (Brown, 2016; Hayek 1960—constitution of liberty).²⁵ Hayek argues that the more markets can be “set free” from human intervention, the more we can discern their “truth.”²⁶ It is this concern for and attempted prevention of human and democratic intervention—seen as the socialist enemy—in the independent “rationality” of markets, as Davies shows us here, that provided both the uniting force of various strands of neoliberal ideologies and also neoliberalism’s “animating telos” in this period.

The second period identified by Davies is that which comes into existence at the end of the Cold War and runs roughly to the 2008 financial crash. He labels this the period of “normative neoliberalism.” With the defeat of socialism at the end of Cold War, the animating telos of neoliberalism shifts toward the desire to push market rationalism into all corners of human existence. This is because market rationality is seen by the neoliberals as virtuous insofar as it

provided a normative procedure through which value and knowledge could be ascertained. According to this logic, all spheres of human activity should therefore be reconstructed around the standards of competition so as to ensure that valuable products, services, artefacts, ideas, and people were discoverable.²⁷

It is market rationality and market competition that provides a procedure of discovery for neoliberalism in which we become able to discern the good in all things and so such logics become a way of organizing the totality of society. Attempts to disrupt or regulate such market logics (both at the scale of the

larger economy and at the scale of other types of social relations) are seen as suspect as such regulation interferes with the “scientific” process of discernment of the good. It is in this that the kind of entrepreneurial self of neoliberalism discussed by Foucault, and later Darot and Laval, becomes popularized and firmly entrenched in Western democracies.²⁸ As Davies points out here, under this form of neoliberal governance, the goal is to “ensure that ‘winners’ are clearly distinguishable from ‘losers’ and the contest is perceived as fair.”²⁹

The final phase of neoliberal governance that Davies outlines in his periodization is what he describes as “punitive neoliberalism.” This is also sometimes referred to by others for good reason as “authoritarian neoliberalism.”³⁰ This form of neoliberalism takes shape in the period after the financial crash of 2008 in which it becomes clear that debts (both individual and business/corporate) have been one of the defining features of the prior period and that what is needed is austerity to control this debt buildup. So this period is characterized by both the institution of austerity measures for individuals and public sector spending on what little social safety measures remains and the transfer of banking debt to governments so as to keep markets afloat. Here Davies notes that this period is accompanied by a general feeling that such debts are immoral and the fault of individuals and so the proper remedy is punishment (especially for those who have little political power in society):

Under punitive neoliberalism, economic dependency and moral failure become entangled in the form of debt, producing a melancholic condition in which governments and societies unleash hatred and violence upon members of their own populations. . . . Studies of those living in poverty with problem debts found a prevalent psychology of melancholia, whereby debt exacerbates a sense of self re-crimination and the expectation of further punishment. Research on public attitudes to austerity confirms a similar internalization of financial morality, which produces the sense that we “deserve” to suffer for credit fueled financial growth.³¹

Davies is not the only one to recognize the growth of debt and financial moralization as a core feature of contemporary neoliberal governance and subjection. Maurizio Lazzarato has also made these connections in important ways.³² Lazzarato, drawing on Foucault’s analysis of neoliberal governmentality and biopolitical control and Deleuze’s analysis of the former’s transformation into control societies³³ partially via the expansion of debts, points out here that, in this subjective and social transformation, the debtor

is not expected to reimburse in actual money but rather in conduct, attitudes, ways of behaving, plans, subjective commitments, the time devoted to finding a job, the time used for conforming oneself to the criteria dictated by the market

and business, etc. Debt directly entails life discipline and a way of life that requires “work on the self,” a permanent negotiation with oneself, as specific form of subjectivity: that of indebted man.³⁴

To return to Davies—and to neoliberalism’s Schmittian moment—here, we can see echoes of Lazzarato’s claims about the need for self-recreation and discipline under punitive neoliberalism, but in the register of the social and political policy:

The Schmittian worldview of the neoliberal pioneers, which pitted free-market capitalism against all varieties of non-capitalist system, has mutated into something equally paranoid and simplistic, but now apparently self-destructive. In contrast to the offensive against socialism, the “enemies” targeted now are largely disempowered and internal to the neoliberal system itself. In some instances, such as those crippled by poverty, debt, and collapsing social safety nets, they have already largely been destroyed as an autonomous political force. Yet somehow this increases the urge to punish them further.³⁵

To add a further layer of analysis to help us understand the punitive or authoritarian shift in neoliberalism we should note also that others have pointed to the fact that this particular regime of neoliberal governance has also begun to make increased use of penal, policing, and criminal justice policy to enforce and extend its reach.³⁶ Here, Davies and others show us how, in this phase, neoliberalism produces the kinds of internal dynamics that we see animating our new authoritarian moment—the “socialist” enemy is within, and it is those who would continue to mistakenly desire a social safety net, who think that there exist structural injustices for which the government should enforce redress, and who generally think that governance is there to help make people’s lives better rather than simply set the conditions for more and more competitive market relations in more and more corners of existence. In responding to these challenges, it resorts more and more to punitive means and, in doing so, as we can begin to see now, it reconstructs our affective life and desires to align with and reproduce this structure in ways that display the organizing force or particularities of the kinds of coding of flows that we see in the neoliberal inscribing *socius* and that include the coding of the flows of individual desire.

DESIRE’S AUTHORITARIAN TYRANNY

As we have seen, the three periods of neoliberal capital and their attendant ideological and policy commitments have included, among other things, a

deepening suspicion of democratic and popular governance, first around economic activity as neoliberal policy and programs seek to wall off economies from democracy in ways that make such activity increasingly autonomous and controlled not by the democratic populous or moderated by unions and social safety nets but by technocrats and elites who work more and more to free markets from such controls and whose expertise is less and less questioned. Such policy, as it is extended in subsequent periods to areas beyond the economy, produces this disdain for democratic and community-controlled processes in other corners of social life as well—think here about the war on public education and other social services—and in ways that privilege individualized competition (and continued, competitive self-improvement). This form of social organization sees the production of winners and losers as an inevitable and a natural cost of the “proper” social structure and any attempts to control for this as a nonnatural and problematic intervention. Further, as Davies notes, in its most recent iteration, punitive neoliberalism teaches that debt is incurred by individualized, poor decision-making at the same time that it extends more and more credit to individuals whose wages have not increased as the cost of living increases or who do not have the financial means to pay for increasingly expensive postsecondary educations at the same time that they are told that such education is the sole means to increasing class status.

Punitive neoliberalism also, as Davies argues, without an external enemy like socialism or communism, increasingly sees as the enemy an internal demos who is indebted and oppressed and seeking redress for these structural inequalities. This of course, in the context of continued neoliberal hollowing out of social safety nets, the existence of fewer and fewer stable well-paying jobs (even for those who are able to finance a university education), and the rise of part-time and contract work, sets the stage for an invigorated scapegoating of immigrants and others by those who have traditionally been in positions of relative power and security and who are now losing that as a part of the larger neoliberal economy. Jennifer Silva, speaking of this process in relation to her ethnographic studies of young working-class Americans, points out that all of this is the way in which individuals become “acquiescing neoliberal subjects, rejecting all kinds of government intervention, and affirmative action in particular, as antithetical, and thereby offensive, to their lived experiences.”³⁷ As a result, she continues,

In this way, potential communities of solidarity are broken apart by the strain of insecurity and risk, Men hold fast to the few remaining public sector jobs by vigilantly policing their boundaries against women and gay people. White people draw moral boundaries against blacks for taking government money and wasting their tax dollars . . . ultimately young working-class men and women

believe that if they have to battle through life alone then everyone else should too.³⁸

In the context of the present chapter, I should be clear to point out that the creation of such a neoliberalized subjectivity that Silva discusses here does not necessarily lead directly to support for the kinds of authoritarian politics we see emerging today. Nor do I mean to suggest that it is only young working-class folks that might support such a politics. In fact, as we know well, the amount of actual support for new authoritarian politicians like Trump among young voters is relatively small and that in 2016 he gained the majority of support from older more economically well off white voters (a majority of whom do, however, fall into the category of working class in the sociological literature insofar as they are noncollege educated).³⁹ But I do use this example to point out that neoliberal economic and political structures produce subjectivity and subjective affect and desires in particular ways such that what individuals desire comes to mirror the broader social and political structures and practices that are put in place by neoliberalism. And we can certainly see in Silva's example, the role this plays in provoking some right-wing authoritarian sentiments in some members of the working class and also further entrenching those same desires in others across the economic spectrum.

To return to the place we started, we can see clearly that in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election and the sentiments that underlie the attack on the capital building in the United States, by more right-wing and authoritarian elements in this country, there is a deep suspicion of the electoral and democratic process: a desire to believe that the election was stolen and that it should be—or, in fact, for some, will, as some believe be—overturned at some later date and Trump will be reinstated as president. Further, as mentioned earlier, we see an ongoing attempt, by members of the legislative branch, to wall off the process of selecting political officials from the larger democratic public that mirror the ways in which neoliberal politics seek to wall off the economy. All of these, along with the other moralizing sentiments Silva, Davies, and others describe around debt burdens and the need for government assistance by those who are structurally left out of economic and other forms of access to a flourishing life, as well as the growth in and support for punitive measures taken against those who seek redress for such structural inequities are perfectly in keeping with what we have seen in thinking through the ways neoliberalism props up and further entrenches capitalist social relations. And it does this not just by enacting social and economic policy but by worming into our very desires and subjectivity: producing along the way, antidemocratic sentiments across the body politic in ways that ground and reproduce such things at a structural level. While some analysts of authoritarian and punitive neoliberalism argue that, in the authoritarian

turn, neoliberalism moves further away from seeking consent for its policies by the governed⁴⁰ and toward coercion, we should also recognize, as I have tried to lay out here, the ways in which such coercion itself produces affective consent by and through the coding of social flows in ways that also come to be mirrored in the very affective desires on individuals that are a part of the social machine itself.

Finally, there is an ongoing debate in the empirical political science and sociological literature about whether support for Trump's chaotic neoliberal authoritarianism is most caused by sentiments of economic anxiety in that the neoliberal economy has made it harder and harder to make ends meet or by sentiments attached to changing demographics in the United States, what this literature often refers to as "status threat"—that folks who have been on top in this country are increasingly faced with loss of place.⁴¹ Both of these ways of understanding the authoritarian turn are on display in the quote from Silva's work above even though it predates and in many ways prefigures the rise of Trump and what we now call Trumpism in the United States. While I think, and have argued elsewhere, that it is not easily one of these or the other, but perhaps both of these things working in tandem, this analysis is not enough to explain it—we must see this as a result of the ways in which neoliberalism entrenches authoritarian sentiments at the level of our very desires.⁴² Deleuze and Guattari can, as I hope I have begun to show here, help us with this. And it is this that can also help further build both a reckoning with the moment in which we find ourselves and avenues for working our way out of it even if the latter is still unclear.

NOTES

1. Wendy Brown, Max Pensky, and Peter Gordon, *Authoritarianism: Three Inquiries in Critical Theory* (Chicago: Trios, 2018), 4–5.

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