

Harry Braverman's Hauntology of the Capitalist Mode of Production: An Autonomist Disability Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the relevance of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* for studying disability formation under contemporary capitalism and the contribution that a disability standpoint can make to anti-capitalist politics. Putting Braverman's discussion of the universalization of the capitalist mode of exploitation and the habituation this depends upon into conversation with disability studies illuminates how his analysis implicates a hauntological dimension. Braverman foregrounds both how capitalism envelops every social relation and the difficulty with which it reproduces its domination, derived from resistance to becoming habituated into capitalist exploitation. I develop an autonomist disability perspective on Braverman's hauntology by examining the resonance between his work and Ioana Cherasella Chis' analysis of 'disability composition' (2023). First, I probe how a political standpoint internal to disability reveals the othering of disabled people based on the intractability that bodymind non-normativity presents to capitalist exploitation. Second, I attend to the logic connecting this marginal situatedness to wider working-class resistance to habituation that Braverman theorizes. I conclude by speculating on modes and purposes of symbolically universalizing disability to deepen resistance to the universalization of, and habituation to, the capitalist mode of production.

Introduction

As Ioana Cherasella Chis has recently theorized (2023), the contemporary oppression of disabled people is produced by a 'disabling capitalism' within a framework in which disability and anti-capitalist emancipation are entangled. In my article I will not trace the socioeconomic phenomenon of disability in relation to Braverman's ontology of an evolving mode of production. I will instead engage Braverman's theory of universalization of, and habituation into, the capitalist mode of production as delineating a hauntology, rather than ontology, of capitalism.

I will trace this as unfolding in the Derridean double sense of an ontology riven by its contamination with otherness produced by the universalization of the capitalist mode of production, having as its telos the envelopment of what is outside it; and by its definition in relation to the anticipation of future events pregnant with the possibility for the habituation into the mode of production not to be renewed generationally.

For Derrida, 'hauntology' is a category which is irreducible to the ontology that it makes possible. It contains within itself eschatological and teleological effects implicated in 'the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end' and, inevitably, the frustrating yearning to comprehend 'the extremity of the extreme' (Derrida 1994, 10).

Braverman's theories of a universalization of a capitalist mode of production propelled towards the continuous envelopment of new others, and of the enforcement of workers' habituation as in need of continual reproduction to ensure capital's domination, are infused with a logic of haunting that incorporates assumptions about the possible end, or final destiny, of capitalism as much as of the purpose which processes of universalization and habituation serve (as opposed to their cause). This combined eschatological and teleological frame is what transforms Braverman's ontology of the capitalist mode of production into a hauntology.

I propose that disability brings out the hauntological framing of Braverman's investigation based on the intractability of non-normative bodyminds to successful insertion within the capitalist mode of production, in ways that thwart its universalization and forceful habituation of the working class into its structures.

Studies of disability as a socioeconomic and political phenomenon help foreground the hauntological dimension of Braverman's theory of capitalism in proportion as they are attuned to the challenges that attend the inclusion of non-normative bodyminds within the standardized relations of production that define capitalism.

The first part of my analysis will probe the ways in which a political standpoint internal to disability reveals how the othering of disabled people based on the intractability that bodymind non-normativity presents to capitalist exploitation, as well as outright discrimination, generates subject positions situated outside of, or marginally vis-à-vis, universalized relations of capitalist production, thus debunking the naturalness of these relations.

The second part of my investigation attends to the logic that rivet this marginal situatedness to the space of a wider tendency within the working class to resist habituation into the capitalist mode of production, which Braverman theorized. In this section I will seek to develop an autonomist disability perspective capable of valorizing Braverman's insights into the possibility for anti-capitalist resistance, besides his analysis of the evolving structure of the capital-labor polarity.

In conclusion I will speculate as to modes and purposes of symbolically universalizing disability to deepen the logics of resistance to the universalization of, and habituation to, the capitalist mode of production laid out by Braverman. I propose that by appreciating how disability already belongs within the working class, it becomes possible to re-vision disability resistance to capitalist accommodation by indicating a route potentially available for the whole of the working class to follow.

In the spirit of Nivedita Majumdar's 'radical universalisms,' the refusal of workers' habituation afforded by lived experience of disability encapsulates

the possibility for resistance to habituation that all working-class subjects possess, if differentially.

Disability And/Outside the Universalization of the Capitalist Mode of Exploitation

Braverman's discussion of the universalization of the capitalist mode of exploitation in conversation with recent studies of the political economy of disability sharpens the lens they provide to glean the grounds of disabled people's oppression and marginalization in capitalist societies as much as the ways in which a focus on disability marks the unfolding of Braverman's ontology of the capitalist mode of production in a hauntological register.

For Martin Hägglund, Derrida's theory of hauntology foregrounds how 'spectrality is at work in everything that happens' and how an 'identity or community can never escape the machinery of exclusion, can never fail to engender ghosts, since it must demarcate itself against a past that cannot be encompassed and a future that cannot be anticipated. Inversely, it will always be threatened by what it cannot integrate in itself—haunted by the negated, the neglected, and the unforeseeable' (Hägglund 2018, 83).

It is on this basis that for Derrida 'hauntology' is a category which is irreducible to "everything it makes possible: ontology, theology, positive or negative onto-theology" (Derrida 1994, 83) and rather than belong to ontology, it operates by introducing a logic of haunting into "the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time" (Derrida 1994, 202).

Braverman's theory of universalization of the capitalist mode of production yields up a hauntology because this universalization continually reaches out to envelop what lies beyond the boundaries of what it has already included, without ever achieving closure. Disability is the remnant that is produced, and left behind, by processes of failed universalization.

As suggested in my introduction, for Chis the oppression of disabled people is produced by a 'disabling capitalism' within a framework in which disability and anti-capitalist emancipation are entangled. Chis proposes a materialist approach and the concept 'subjects of disablement' to pinpoint

“the historically contingent nature of disablement and directs focus to materially rooted experiences, social positionality and social relations more generally” (Chis 2023, 10).

Building on, and modifying, the UPIAS-inspired (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation) social model of disability, which discerns between impairments that people have and the social oppression which they encounter, envisioning disability as socially produced by the latter, Chis probes the ways in which “capitalist social relations subject people (with impairments, who are D/deaf, chronically ill, neurodivergent or experience mental distress) to disablement oppression and exploitation” (Chis 2023, 10).

Intent on signaling towards a combined and coalitional analysis of disablement and class, Chis studies disability and class as relational and non-categorical social formations as they form within capitalism. This socio-political and historical rather than biological-ontological understanding of disability is what provides in Chis’ account an ontology of disability “oppression and exploitation under capitalism” (Chis 2023, 11). It is also what connects with Braverman’s ontology of a universalizing mode of production, which I will discuss as constantly folding over into hauntology.

Braverman theorizes the ways in which capitalism comes to envelop every social relation. In this way he provides key insights into the processes which, at the sociopolitical and historical rather than the biological level, determine the emergence of disability as a capitalist social and relational formation. For Braverman the violence and reach of capitalism became universal with the onset of monopoly capitalism, proceeding geographically and expanding into different forms of human activity.

In his discussion of the development of ‘Service Occupations and Retail Trade,’ Braverman unpacks how the violence and reach of the capitalist mode of production becomes universal in proportion as the expansion of capital continues geographically and into different forms of human activity. It was the advent of the era of monopoly capitalism which created a ‘universal marketplace’ and “transformed into a commodity every form of the activity of humankind

including what had heretofore been the many things that people did for themselves or for each other” (Braverman 1998, 250).

The grounds on which the incompatibility between the universalization of the capitalist mode of production and disability resides derives from the imbrication between universalization and ‘normalcy’, which disability theorist Lennard Davis describes as “the political-juridical-institutional state that relies on the control and normalization of bodies” (Davis 2002, 107). Normalcy is constructed to create the “problem” of the disabled person’ (Davis 1995, 24) through the separation of able-bodied (or temporarily able-bodied) people from the severely disabled “so that they cannot be seen as part of a continuum of physical differences” (Davis 1995, 7).

Davis traces how the development of the concept of norm on which normalcy relies is inseparable from the rise of industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, and was not challenged by Marx. Marx, in fact, merely registers its functioning through the theorization of the totality of productive labor-power as a ‘homogeneous mass of human labour’ composed of individual units of labor-power each of which is ‘the same as any other, to the extent that it has the character of a socially average unit of labour-power’: this is what allows the possibility to calculate ‘the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in [a given] society’ and organise for the extraction of surplus-value (Marx 1976, 129).

In proportion as it reproduces Marx’s reliance on the “notion of the average man in a discussion of the labor theory of value,” which “is based on the idea of the worker constructed as an average worker,” Marxist critique too fails to challenge the fiction out of which capitalist normalcy emerges (Davis 1995, 28).

Ella Bee Glendining’s documentary *Is There Anybody Out There?* (2023) dramatizes the encounter between non-normative embodiments and the capitalist normalcy that sustains the capitalist mode of production. It explicitly addresses the marginalization of disabled people both within the occupational structure, and outside of it, in a conversation between the protagonist Ella, born with a rare condition called proximal femoral focal deficiency, and her autistic friend Naomi.

Even though Ella can either walk or use a wheelchair, discriminatory attitudes prevent her from finding employment. Reflecting on possible answers she could offer to the question “What do you do?,” Ella ponders “Can I say what I think about this question. I have applied for ten gazillion jobs in my adult ... I was desperate”, and even more so after having been offered a night shift at the Asda supermarket store and having had the offer withdrawn shortly after.

Ella bitterly recalls, “They changed their mind and they said that they didn’t want me anymore, and they never really explained why, but I think we know.” Naomi shares her memories of Ella’s job-seeking endeavors, and expresses amusement at her inability to secure low-paid occupations due to invisible barriers: Naomi reminisces “I was with you when you had applied for every fucking job ... You got that job at Asda and you were so thrilled about it you posted a Facebook status and then ... (laughs) It was a night shift at Asda and you were like “I am Asda lady of the night” (laughs).”

Ella’s marginalization and exclusion from the occupational structure which would have seen her having a chance of getting the night shift at Asda evokes circumstances that have traditionally led the disabled people’s movement to demand the right of access to work and accommodation in the workplace. These demands are grounded in the social model of disability, in turn rooted in historical materialism, which works from the awareness that “capital accumulation [is] organised in such a way that it [disables] people by excluding them from the activity—wage labour—through which people [are] expected to secure their income” (Hall and Wilton 2015, 241).

When the imbrication between disability, work and neoliberalism is specifically considered, Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom and Katherine Runswick-Cole have theorized as ‘neoliberal-ableism’ our contemporary context of austerity as one in which we are all “subjected to slow death, increased precarity and growing debility” (2014, 980), as well as “expected to overcome economic downturn and respond to austerity” through hard work, self-identification as workers and a resilient attitude (2014, 981).

Crucially, however, disabled people are uniquely positioned to be resistant to the forceful insertion

from the sphere of welfare into that of waged work. The uneasy fit between non-normative embodiments and minds and the standardized, growth-oriented organization of work under capitalism has been examined from multiple angles in disability studies since the development of the field in the 1980s.

As Paul Abberley noted long ago, “the abolition of an individual’s disablement is ultimately dependent upon and subordinate to the logic of productivity” (1987, 92). More recently, Mitchell and Snyder have stressed the linkage between disability and the onset of capitalism by noting how “disability was first coined in the mid-1800s to designate those incapable of work due to injury” (2015, 211).

In a similar spirit, Robert McRuer has connected capitalism to disability by arguing that ‘the compulsory nature of able-bodiedness’ that underpins the symbolical and material marginalization of disabled people is rooted in the industrial capitalist system: for McRuer, being “free to sell one’s labor but not free to do anything else” equals being “free to have an able body but not particularly free to have anything else,” so that “compulsory able-bodiedness functions by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice” (2006, 9).

If complicated by the additional pressure exerted by discriminatory logics specific to the regime of capitalist normalcy, Ella’s experience speaks to the compulsions that dominate society under capitalism, which Braverman traces back to the determination of capitalist social relations by the polarity between labor and capital. For Braverman, “Labor and capital are the opposite poles of capitalist society. This polarity begins in each enterprise and is realized on a national and even international scale as a giant duality of classes which dominates the social structure” (Braverman 1998, 261).

This duality leaves no room for an outside refused by, or refusing, incorporation into the capitalist mode of production. For Braverman ‘a necessary identity’ between labor and capital obtains because on the one hand,

capital is labor: it is labor that has been performed in the past, the objectified product of preceding phases of the cycle of production which becomes capital only through appropriation by

the capitalist and its use in the accumulation of more capital'; on the other hand, 'as living labor which is purchased by the capitalist to set the production process into motion, labor is capital (Braverman 1998, 261).

On this account, the working class is "the animate part of capital, the part which will set in motion the process that yields to the total capital its increment of surplus value" (Braverman 1998, 261). Braverman concludes that, on this basis, "the working class is first of all raw material for exploitation" (Braverman 1998, 261).

Ella's exclusion from the 'animate part of capital' and the 'raw material' of capital's exploitation introduces the socioeconomic and political phenomenon of disability as different from that which defines the temporarily able-bodied working class. If for Braverman capital uses the working class as raw material for exploitation and constrains its social and political existence, Robert McRuer's concept of compulsory able-bodiedness, which under capitalism covers over "with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice" (2006, 9), foregrounds a set of exclusionary logics not accounted for by the universalizing movement of the capitalist mode of production.

Together, Braverman's analysis of the necessary identity between capital and labor and McRuer's of the operation of compulsory able-bodiedness under capitalism delineate a system of differential incorporation into the system of domination that is the hallmark of the capitalist mode of production. Ella's failure to find employment due to discriminatory attitudes materializes incompleteness as intrinsic to the duality between capital and labor that Braverman posits.

It validates the scenario drawn by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder in discussing a regime of 'neoliberal inclusivism' which ensures that only 'the abled-disabled' manage to gain "by paradoxical means... entrance into late capitalist cultures," leaving behind the "nonlaboring populations" who are "not merely excluded from, but also resistant to, standardized labor demands of productivity particular to neoliberalism" (Mitchell and Snyder 2015, 211-212).

The difference that marks disability within the working class can be further appreciated in relation to

Braverman's definition of the working class based on the dependence by labor on capital for its own subsistence. The "formal definition of the working class" is that of a "class which, possessing nothing but its power to labor, sells that power to capital in return for its subsistence" and this, despite having shortcomings as a "static definition," constitutes "the only adequate starting point for any attempt to visualize the working class in modern society" (Braverman 1998, 261).

By this definition Ella does belong within the working class, as her excitement at the prospect of finding waged employment intimates her need to find a job in the first place, matching Braverman's definition of 'working class' as a class dependent on capital for its own subsistence. At the same time, Ella is set apart from the working class thus defined because the stakes are set against her engaging in waged work.

Braverman's formal definition of the working class is what for him provides the only adequate starting point for studying the working class with a specific focus on "the mass occupational categories which embrace, with a few anomalies and exceptions, the unmistakably working-class population" (Braverman 1998, 262). In proportion as disability emerges on the margins of the polarity that connects capital and labor, it also migrates to the periphery of the occupational structure of society that is bound by said polarity.

At the same time, Ella's experience presents a slippage within Braverman's ontology of the capitalist mode of production, which presupposes a drive for universalization through envelopment of every social relation. For Braverman "We may gain a rough first approximation of the working class in this century by considering at the outset the mass occupational categories which embrace, with a few anomalies and exceptions, the unmistakably working-class population" (Braverman 1998, 262).

Ella's exclusion from the workforce through disability discrimination haunts Braverman's account of the evolution of occupational structure under capitalism as a difference resistant to incorporation which occludes the possibility for any universalization of the capitalist mode of production to achieve fulfillment. The shifting occupational structure traced by

Braverman on the one hand remains accompanied by the exclusion of disability in ways that show the universalization of the capitalist mode of exploitation to be faltering.

On the other hand, it reveals the persistently decentered position that disabled people occupy with respect to temporarily able-bodied workers under capitalism, and the social marginalization this marginality warrants.

Despite being rooted in the logic of compulsory able-bodiedness specific to capitalist normalcy, the marginalization of disabled people by the mode of production on which their subsistence depends, but which is placed beyond their reach, warrants Braverman's assessment of the balance in the power relations between capital and labor.

For Braverman, despite the identity between the two, it is capital which retains the upper hand. While the working class 'lives a social and political existence of its own, outside the direct grip of capital. It protests and submits, rebels or is integrated into bourgeois society, sees itself as a class or loses sight of its own existence', it does so 'in accordance with the forces that act upon it and the moods, conjunctures, and conflicts of social and political life'; of these forces primary is the set of those that derive from the 'permanent existence' of the working class as 'the living part of capital' which ensures that 'its occupational structure, modes of work, and distribution through the industries of society are determined by the ongoing processes of the accumulation of capital' (Braverman 1998, 261).

Braverman conceptualizes the 'direct grip of capital' on the working class in ways that resonate with Søren Mau's idea of 'economic power.' For Mau 'economic power' indicates "logics, structures and dynamics that constitute the essence of capitalism across its historical and geographical variations" in ways that sustain the ability of capital to "shape social life" and "re-organise the material conditions of social reproduction," namely "the processes and activities involved in securing the continuous existence of a given society" (Mau 2019, 12).

Braverman's interest lies in singling out the grounds on which the working class is "seized, released, flung into various parts of the social machin-

ery and expelled by others, not in accord with its own will or self-activity, but in accord with the movement of capital" (Braverman 1998, 261) as a prelude to a discussion of surplus populations. Braverman quotes Marx's "description of the movement of capital and labor" (Braverman 1998, 265) to identify the ways in which a surplus laboring population is both a product and a lever of capitalist accumulation, as well as a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production.

In the context of the structural production of surplus population, a disability perspective grasps its impact as violence on the non-employable surplus population. Most importantly for the purposes of my analysis, because the reproduction of capitalism is inseparable from the reproduction of the class relation itself, of which capital and wage labor are the constitutive factors, and because disability occupies a marginal position with respect to the latter, the welfare state cannot be expected to have the survival of non-productive disabled people as its goal, as social democratic theory which sees the welfare state as a benign apparatus would have it.

As disability historian Dorothy Porter notes, from its inception social security was "distributed as a social right to those who obtained it through participation in the labour process" while "it continued to be doled out on a means-tested basis as handouts to those unable to work," and these "remained perceived as public burdens" (Porter, 1999, 234). Social citizenship always embodied "the citizenship of earners"—able-bodied men (Porter, 1999, 234).

Disability theorists have examined how exclusion from wage labor "lies at the core of disabled people's oppression in every aspect of modern life" (Russell and Malhotra 2019, 6). Being denied the opportunity to work and make a material contribution to society's wellbeing is the root cause of disabled people being labeled as "other" or "useless" (Oliver 1999).

This is rendered in Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016), whose protagonist finds himself having to claim social welfare following a heart attack. We learn that the options for claimants of social welfare are "On the one hand, Jobseeker's Allowance, only for those able and ready to work. But if you're ill, you have to apply for Employment and Support, get

an assessment carried out.” Dan responds “Well, I’ve done that but they’ve knocked us back,” at which Dan’s work coach at the jobcentre explains “Right, well if you’ve been deemed fit for work, your only option is Jobseeker’s Allowance. Or proceed with the appeal on Employment and Support.”

Although initially Dan declares his intention to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance and then appeal the ESA decision, he is gradually worn down by the process, which he defines as a “monumental farce.” He is also struck down by ill health. He is “a sick man looking for nonexistent jobs,” that he could not “take anyway.” To the work coach in the jobcentre Dan complains, “Wasting my time, employers’ time, your time. And all it does is humiliate me, grind me down.”

Dan ultimately comes off JSA without any other income to support himself and dies before attending his appeal for ESA. The film ends with the speech he would have read at the appeal, but could not as the “State drove him to an early grave,” in the words of his friend Katie.

Dan’s speech: “I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user. I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar, nor a thief. I’m not a National Insurance Number or blip on a screen. I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so...I demand you treat me with respect. I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen, “nothing more and nothing less,” captures the impossibility for disabled people to fit Marxist concepts that are limited by the conceptual framework of capitalist normalcy and able-bodiedness.

The marginalization and exclusion of disabled people within the capital-labor totality and the occupational structure of capitalist society obliges critique of the historical universalization of the capitalist mode of production and the constructedness of its categories. It also signals towards the incapability of this mode of production to include non-normative embodiments and minds, despite the efforts of disabled people to accommodate themselves to its inaccessible structures.

The symbolic marginalization and demonization of disabled people reliant on welfare and the negation of the barriers to employment that they encounter, in turn, index the uneven processes of universal inclusion within the capitalist mode of production.

Appreciation of this reveals how disabled forms of non-productivity can contribute to effecting a “revolution within the conception of worker subjectivity,” if they are not conceived of as merely attached to individuals “incapable of working within the narrow standardization efforts of capitalism” (Mitchell and Snyder 2015, 221).

Disability And/In Resistance To Workers’ Habituation

As I have suggested in the previous section, Braverman theorizes the “direct grip of capital” on the working class as constituting the framework which sets constraints on the political and social life of labor. In this second section I will explore how Labor and Monopoly Capital provides a key concept for studying the possibilities of anti-capitalist politics despite and against these constraints, and for identifying the contribution that a standpoint of struggle internal to disability can make to this politics: namely, Braverman’s theory of workers’ habituation to waged work, which the capitalist mode of exploitation depends upon and which Braverman presents as a fraught and lengthy process.

Building on Braverman’s insights into workers’ habituation from a disability perspective valorizes the capability of disabled people for anti-capitalist politicization but also the ways in which Braverman’s analysis of capitalism unfolds in a hauntological rather than ontological register, on which the capitalist mode of production is defined by lack because of its failure to transform disabled people into workers.

For Mark Fisher (2014) temporality is key for Derrida’s hauntology, as hauntology feeds a sense of what is haunting us under contemporary capitalism is not the specter of a past golden age but the ‘not yet’ of futures expected. Translating Fisher’s insight into a dimension where it is capital that is subjected to haunting, Braverman’s theory of habituation makes visible the logics whereby, for the capitalist mode of production, the hauntological ‘opposition between “to be” and “not to be”’ operates in both a teleological and eschatological sense (Derrida 1994, 10).

It is capital’s need for the constant renewal of workers’ habituation to manage the inevitable recurrence of workers’ resistance, the possibility for

workers' habituation to lapse at some point in the future, and the location of the need for its entrenchment as a presupposition of the capitalist mode of production that powers the logic of haunting that prevents Braverman's theory from producing an ontology of the capitalist mode of production.

Braverman foregrounds both the ways in which capitalism moves to envelop every social relation, and the difficulty with which it reproduces its domination. Such difficulty resides in the resistance of individuals to becoming habituated into the capitalist mode of exploitation. If for Braverman the violence and reach of the capitalist process of habituation becomes universal in proportion as the expansion of capital proceeds geographically and reaches into different forms of human activity, capital needs to enforce subordination to the process whereby humans are transformed into workers: this enforcement is a process that requires constant and generational renewal, and that will never deliver complete compliance.

In Chapter 6 of *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, fittingly titled 'The Habituation of the Worker to the Capitalist Mode of Production,' Braverman theorizes the need for capital to enforce subordination to the process whereby humans are transformed into workers as a process that needs to be renewed constantly and generationally, and as a process that constantly, and generationally, will never be able to achieve complete compliance.

He remarks, "the habituation of workers to the capitalist mode of production must be renewed with each generation, all the more so as the generations which grow up under capitalism are not formed within the matrix of work life, but are plunged into work from the outside" (Braverman 1998, 261). Moreover, Braverman identifies a connection between habituation and the possibility to refuse it based on how habituation functions to enforce a state of subjection that is not natural and as such refusable. For Braverman, "The condition is repugnant to the victims, whether their pay is high or low, because it violates human conditions of work" (Braverman 1998, 261).

The possibility for resistance to habituation that Braverman indicates resonates with that made necessary by disability's location on the margins of the

occupational structure under capitalism and, consequently, of capitalist society. Is There Anybody Out There? entangles the abandonment of ableist frameworks of cure with the rejection of a work-oriented life in Ella and Naomi's conversation about ways to answer the question "What do you do?"

After relating her job-seeking efforts and conflict with discriminatory employers, Ella asks Naomi, "Why can't you do that stuff? And it's okay if you don't wanna answer, if you think that question's worded wrongly." Naomi replies, "Because I can't do the thing. Like, the thing people put on ... I don't have it." She crucially situates her response in relation to the combined overcoming of the desire for a cure, and the denunciation of the demonization of disabled people on benefits as ableist. Naomi recounts,

"I've lived with this thing my entire life and it's, like, it's such a journey. I used to imagine myself in the future and I imagined myself as "better", you know. And at some point you just realize it's not gonna happen and this is it. But that's incredibly freeing at the same time. That's so freeing, because it's like, this is it, like, it, and it's fine, it's wonderful."

Naomi follows this up with the reflection, "I feel like the entire sort of hatred towards people on benefits is, like, ableism, largely. I am on disability, you know. I'm disabled. I have a carer. My carer is my mum."

Naomi's reflections express critique of the ways in which, within capitalist societies, human worth cannot but be "measured by one's capacity to contribute to society productively" (Aho 2017, 321), disabled people cannot but be "at the lower end of an ableist cascade of worthiness" (Blattner 2020, 11) and "the abolition of an individual's disablement" cannot but be "ultimately dependent upon and subordinate to the logic of productivity" (Abberley 1987, 92).

How disability generates subject positions conducive to the refusal of habituation, like Naomi's, is grasped by disability theory intent on grasping the threat that intractable non-normativity presents to the fetishization of waged work as the route to societal recognition.

According to Ellen Clifford, disability "has the potential to cause unrest" (2020, 39) because "dis-

abled people's position in society is tied to what we represent within capitalism: an "unproductive" element that cannot earn our own living or, if in work, is unable to produce the same levels of profit for employers as non-disabled workers" (Clifford 2020, 40). The stigma, immiseration and vulnerableization to which disabled people are subjected under capitalism are precisely intended to "discipline the workforce, encouraging workers to maximize productivity in their jobs, regardless of workplace conditions or income, lest they face the same fate" (Clifford 2020, 41).

Despite the specificity of disability as a socio-economic and political phenomenon under capitalism, Naomi's refusal belongs within a large pool of resistances traced by Braverman in ways that intimate the need for a perspective that maps the changing structures of the capitalist mode of production but also the possibilities of resistance to it. For Braverman,

beneath ... apparent habituation, the hostility of workers to the degenerated forms of work which are forced upon them continues as a subterranean stream that makes its way to the surface when employment conditions permit, or when the capitalist drive for a greater intensity of labor oversteps the bounds of physical and mental capacity. It renews itself in new generations, expresses itself in the unbounded cynicism and revulsion which large numbers of workers feel about their work, and comes to the fore repeatedly as a social issue demanding solution (Braverman 1998, 104).

With these words not only does Braverman capture the vulnerability of the workings of capital to multiple forms and possibilities of resistance. They also call for a diversity of situated angles from which to connect perceptual reframings of the realities of resistance to the symbolic grip of capital on our bodies and minds. It is here that the contribution of disability as a vehicle for exploring the possibilities of refusing habituation, and thus functioning as a *memento mori* for capitalism, most powerfully fits within Braverman's theory of habituation.

A shift in perception that could facilitate this exploration is described by Rod Michalko in his discussion of "ways, some similar to one another

and some entirely different, of perceiving disability, of feeling it, and of understanding and experiencing (living) it" (Michalko 2022, xxviii). For Michalko this is "what brings disability into appearance; this is what materializes it; this is what attributes meaning to disability" (Michalko 2022, xxviii).

The stakes in this perceptual shift are enormous for both disabled people and for society, as the ways in which the "materialization and appearance of disability is fashioned" influence how "disability is acted upon, treated, and experienced" in society (Michalko 2022, xxviii).

When the possibility for the working class to resist, sabotage or refuse habituation is concerned, the recognition of a shared investment between disabled and temporarily able-bodied members of the working class in organizing against worker habituation is what is afforded by a prior realization that "the more disability can be, the more society can be" (and this realization is considered by Michalko to be "the radical gift of disability studies") (Michalko 2022, xxix).

Michalko's contribution belongs within a wider framework delineated by Tanya Titchkosky, Elaine Cagulada, Madeleine DeWelles, Efrat Gold, which employs a "relational orientation to disability" to trace the ways in which "disability appears and disappears" (2022, 4) and "how disappearances of disability are intimately tied to the contexts of their appearances" (2022, 8).

A similar relational framework can be gleaned from the attention that Braverman devotes to the possibility and reality of resistance to habituation as an "incessant and unending process" of "transformation of working humanity into a "labor force," a "factor of production," an instrument of capital" as an 'incessant and unending process' (Braverman 1998, 96). The need for the continuous reproduction of habituation exposes the capitalist mode of production to vulnerability both due to the impossibility to transform disabled people into productive labor and because of the possibility to generalize their failed habituation politically.

Braverman's theory of habituation interrogates how the capitalist mode of production 'appears' from a perspective of struggle that resonates with

that called for by autonomist analyses of the evolving capital–labor relation (which, similarly to Braverman, combine this perspective of struggle with a focus on the theorization of the forms that the capital–labor polarity assumes at different stages of the development of the capitalist mode of production).

As Braverman explains, “classes, the class structure, the social structure as a whole, are not fixed entities but rather ongoing processes, rich in change, transition, variation, and incapable of being encapsulated in formulas, no matter how analytically proper such formulas may be” (Braverman 1998, 289).

Bearing this mutability in mind, the mapping out of the formation of subjects of disablement alongside their resistance to habituation into the capitalist mode of production should be the starting point of analysis for developing what Chis proposes as a “coalitional politics that places disablement at its centre, together with other processes of exploitation and oppression” by building on “a cultural-materialist understanding of identity and the Autonomist Marxist class composition thesis to propose a distinction between the ‘technical’ and ‘political’ compositions of disability” (Chis 2023, 9).

Putting Chis’ insight into conversation with Braverman’s work exemplifies how an autonomist political standpoint internal to disability illuminates ways in which the othering of disabled people based on the intractability that their bodymind non-normativity presents to capitalist exploitation generates subject positions well-placed to resist habituation.

Chis proposes a Marxist Autonomist-adapted ‘disability composition’ approach to examine the “technical composition of disability (that is, everyone who is subjected to disablement, regardless of whether or not they acknowledge the subjectivation)” alongside the “political composition of disability” that emerges when “the subjects of disablement organise themselves for collective struggle via politically collective identities” (2020, 13).

For Chis these technical and political compositions are “internally co-constitutive and their iteration within a particular socio-historical context can be established through empirical enquiry” (Chis 2020, 13).

Chis’ combination of her concept of “subjects of disablement” to theorize “the capitalist-specific collective experience of living in a disabling society”

(Chis 2023, 14) with the analysis of how “some subjects of disablement establish the political composition of disability through the socio-political identity” (Chis 2023, 9) exemplifies how an autonomist disability perspective provides a useful starting point to refuse the disappearance of disability from Braverman’s subterranean stream of resistance to habituation, as part of a wider refusal to reproduce at the theoretical level the relegation of “disabled people ... on every margin of every group, political or otherwise” (Titchkosky et al 2022, 2).

An autonomist disability perspective draws attention to the existence of this subterranean stream of resistance as the motive force constitutive of Braverman’s hauntological conception of the capitalist mode of production, and pinpoints its relevance for a wider exploration of the possible relationship between the autonomist reversal of the antagonistic poles of class struggle and the reversal of the perspective from which to approach the relationship between normalcy and disability.

This critical move overturns the vulnerability the latter is seen to experience with respect to the former by drawing attention to how ‘everyone is virtually disabled, both in the sense that able-bodied norms are “intrinsically impossible to embody” fully and in the sense that able-bodied status is always temporary’ (McRuer 2006, 31).

In this scenario, for Lennard Davis disability is ‘always an actively repressed memento mori of the fate of the normal body’ (1995, 1) and Michalko, echoing Davis, argues that disability as memento mori “becomes a reminder both of the fragility of the human body and of how fortunate or graced are those who are not disabled” (Michalko 2002, 100).

Dislocating the balance of power in which normalcy is entrenched as the powerful and regulating pole is accompanied by the shift of perspectives of analysis from one internal to normalcy to one internal to disability as a category of struggle. For Tanya Titchkosky, this shift generates a politics of wonder(ing) about “that which organizes bodies and social spaces and their worlds of meaning” which allows us to “remake our lives together” (2011, 16).

In a similar spirit, McRuer introduces ‘crip theory’ to describe a form of theorizing that wields

analytical and political power by voicing what he calls a ‘severely disabled perspective’ on the basis of the severity of the critique this grounds; ‘severely disabled bodies’ here are not “the most marginalized” but those “best positioned to... call out the inadequacies of compulsory able-bodiedness” (McRuer 2006, 31).

On a later formulation, for McRuer the critical act of crippling consists in exposing how “able-bodiedness and able-mindedness get naturalized” and how the non-normative bodies and minds that “should be at the absolute center of a space or issue or discussion get purged from that space or issue or discussion” (McRuer 2018, 24).

In the spirit of ‘cripping’ operations and reframing, an autonomist disability perspective re-centers disabled people as anti-capitalist subjects of struggle against which to test the validity of theoretical concepts and categories, as well as of the activist practices to which Marxist theory aims to respond and contribute.

Universalizing Disability Within Braverman’s Subterranean Stream of Resistance to Habituation

To conclude, an autonomist disability perspective on Braverman’s work grasps the relevance of his double critique of the universalization of, and enforced habituation to, the capitalist mode of production to envisage the role that disability can play in anti-capitalist struggle. I have suggested that disability’s anti-capitalist power resides in the difference it marks within a universalized mode of production and in the refusal of habituation into it, in which non-normative bodyminds—Chis’ subjects of disablement—can participate.

Thus, while Braverman does not explicitly engage with the appearance of disability as a socioeconomic and political phenomenon, his theorization of the universalization of the capitalist mode of production and its reliance on the continuous habituation of the working class offer fundamental tools for politically locating disability within the subterranean stream of resistance to habituation from a position only available to subjects excluded or marginalized from the capitalist mode of production.

An autonomist disability perspective valorizes Braverman’s appreciation of the relationship between

capital’s need for a continual enforcement of habituation and the potential for it to be interrupted. In so doing, it also revises Braverman’s theory of habituation as a theory of the haunting of the capitalist mode of production by the possibility for it to be undone through collective refusal of habituation.

If for Derrida ‘hauntology’ is a category which is irreducible to “everything it makes possible: ontology, theology, positive or negative onto-theology” (Derrida 1994, 83), an autonomist disability perspective accentuates Braverman’s foregrounding of what an ontology of the capitalist mode of production presupposes and conceals; namely, its incomplete universalization and habituation of the working class into subservience.

What incomplete universalization and habituation share is their being haunted by disability as what remains intractable to incorporation or accommodation. Symbolically universalizing disability by appreciating how it already belongs within the working class and the subterranean stream of resistance to habituation revisions disability’s exclusion from capitalist universalization and its resistance to capitalist habituation as indicating political subject positions available for the whole working class to assume.

Arguing that normalcy functions by constraining the material and symbolic range of the possible under capitalist relations of production, what we need are visions that challenge the logic of capitalist normalcy while making visible the possibility to imagine, and create, modes of organizing life alternative to those enjoined by the capitalist mode of production.

If, as Vlad P. Glăveanu contends, “The possible re-emerges as an organizing category in our lives and our thinking not despite but because of living through the seemingly impossible and unimaginable” (2023, 3), a conversation between Braverman’s theory of habituation and autonomist disability perspectives such as Chis’ points to the unravelling of any semblance of permanence and naturalness that the capitalist mode of production, and the regime of normalcy which supports it, strive to maintain.

It also calls for a critique of deterministic spaces and frameworks that deny the possibility of remaking the world beyond the successful universalization and

habituation that the capitalist mode of production depends upon. This perspective enables a further interrogation of the mechanisms whereby normative and non-normative modes of thinking alternatively curtail or facilitate possibilities for imagining resistance to the universalizing telos of the capitalist mode of production and habituation into it.

This understanding of universalization expands the conception of disability beyond a focus on the individual or the biological body in isolation to make visible its social relevance and presence. Universalizing disability undoes the dichotomy between the particular and the universal in the spirit of Nivedita Majumdar's 'radical universalisms,' or universalisms that are "deeply anchored in lived experience" of the particular in a way that "encapsulates the universal" (Majumdar 2021).

The possibility of this undoing is grounded in the acknowledgement that the resistance to habituation afforded by lived experience of disability encapsulates the possibility for resistance to habituation that all working-class subjects possess, if differentially.

Symbolically universalizing disability by appreciating its presence and belonging within the subterranean stream of resistance to capitalist habituation, conceptually dismantles the barriers that capitalist normalcy manufactures between disabled and temporarily able-bodied members of the working class, and overturns the marginalization of disabled people to the margins of spaces and theories of class struggle to which they could make a fundamental contribution.

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