REACTIVATING THE PRAGUE SPRING: MINOR LITERATURES
AND THE RHETORIC OF INTELLECTUALS

by

Benjamin Clancy, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of Texas State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
With a Major in Communication Studies
May 2016

Committee Members:

Rebekah Fox, Chair

Roseann Mandziuk

Ann Burnette

DEDICATION

To those who believe that all will be well, and currently fight to ensure it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

I.   INTRODUCTION

"The only thing that goes against my pessimism is the fact the we still go on thinking today. All hope lies in thought. But it is easy to believe that it could all come to an end."
                    --Max Horkheimer, *Towards A New Manifesto.*

Focus/Significance

The Prague Spring

During the waning days of June, 1967, the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress convened in Prague. In a series of speeches delivered by some of the most influential intellectuals active in the nation, the congress defiantly addressed issues dealing with political suppression, artistic censorship, and the broader social and economic dissatisfactions that had begun to take hold during the period. Among the speakers present were Milan Kundera and Ludvík Vaculík. The former had recently published his novel *The Joke*, an eviscerating treatment of the party's relationship to individuality, creativity, and artistic production, while the latter would, in the coming months, bring into formation the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto—a document largely understood as being the catalyst for the Soviet Bloc aggressions that ended the Prague Spring (Williams, 1995).

Much like the Prague Spring itself, the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress constituted a rupture. The rhetoric of the Congress was unprecedented, both in its public contestation of the policies of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (henceforth referred to as the CPCz), and insofar as it broke from the materialistic assumptions that dominated both Soviet political theory and its accompanying discourses[1] (Kramer, 2010; Mouffe &

---

[1] I will elaborate on this claim later on. For now, it is worth noting that this defiance of Czechoslovakia's historical fidelity to scientific materialism (specifically, the notion of a dialectical, process history) is well represented in Vaculík's comment on

Laclau, 1985; Williams, 1995). In kind, the social and economic reforms that characterized the Prague Spring had their closest antecedents in a Yugoslavian push for revolution, which had ended in bloody suppression (Williams, 1995). The Writers' Congress and the Spring therefore shared a spirit of iconoclasm and, likely by virtue of this, shared a fate as well. The CPCz disciplined the members of the congress for speaking out against communist principles, going so far as to expel three of them (Vaculík being one) from the party (Kramer, 2010). In the coming year, tanks from the Soviet Bloc would ensure a broader level of cultural discipline. In some ways, the Writers' Congress seems to represent in microcosm the failed promise of the Prague Spring. Just as the conference set forth a series of ideals and grievances that were perceived by governmental powers as threatening enough to warrant a public display of intervention and censure, so too were the reforms of 1968 allowed to develop by the Soviet Politsboro up into the point where they became perceived as a genuine menace to the authority of the party (Skilling, 1976). Once that threshold was crossed, Soviet Bloc occupation quickly followed. Yet, to be satisfied with this interpretation would diminish the salient impact the Writers' Congress had on the development of the Czechoslovak movement as a whole, as well as the ideological influence the Prague Spring exerted on the politics of its contemporary period and the politics of future generations. Though in some respects the hegemonic censure of the congress and 1968 reforms constituted

---

the economic status quo. He says, "when casting around for an explanation of why we have lost so much moral and material strength and why we have fallen behind economically, the ruling circles claim that this was a necessity" ("Excerpts from the," p. 10). The acid on his tongue antagonizes the old common-sense, which dictated that suffering must sometimes happen in course to class-unification, and as such was *necessary* for the eventual realization of utopia.

forceful discursive closures, attempting to cauterize the rhetorical production of dissident voices (Deetz, 1992; Ångman, 2003), such attempts at closure remained incomplete. The ideas forwarded in the Writers' conference set in place the ideological underpinnings and defiant spirit that would come to galvanize reform and mark the rhetoric that followed (Kramer, 2010; Bracke, 2008). Moreover, in re-conceptualizing socialism as a more human enterprise, Czechoslovakia became both a material exemplar of the compatibility of liberalism and socialism, and a symbol of the potential for reform to countries abroad. Accordingly, the effects of the Prague Spring were felt across nations and across time (Martos-Contreras, 2010; Bracke, 2008; Brown, 1979). It is perhaps more appropriate then to speak of the censure of these events as a sort of discursive grate, which stood in front of the flow of rhetorical production but, nevertheless, allowed discourses to pass through, not unaltered but not altogether diminished.

The Prague Spring therefore stands as a political moment whose discourses never saw real empirical testing (clarify) but still possessed a notable persuasive kernel; while the promise of the Spring was never allowed to manifest materially, the discourse that composed that promise was perceived across cultures as possessing immense potential energy. Yet, there remains critical concern that this cultural moment has become subject to the fog of memory (Havel, 1998; Kundera & La Traverse, 1980) and, moreover, Western interpretations have often understood the failure of the spring as emblematic of the failure of socialism as a whole (Bracke, 1998; Kundera, 1980; Suri, 2006). To allow a moment of such potential to slip into the chorus of voices that sing of neo-liberal capitalism's inevitability is to forget that things could have been otherwise, and in turn to forget the future still can be otherwise. That is, if we allow each event that preceded the

collapse of socialism to be taken as a credit to the failure of alternatives to capitalism, we concede to a certain sense of the march of history that greatly limits our perception of political possibilities. In this thesis, I launch a critical investigation into the role of the *intelligentsia* within the Prague Spring with a special focus on the two writers I have mentioned already: Milan Kundera and Ludvík Vaculick. I undertake this task, not necessarily with the agenda of setting straight the record in terms of the political potentiality or real agendas of the Prague Spring, but instead in order to excavate key discourses within the reform period and assess the rhetorical modes by which these discourses enacted influence on progressive policy development and subverted hegemonic political discourses during the 1968 reforms.

Moreover, the motivation behind this thesis extends beyond explicating the rhetorical import of intellectual actors within an artificially bounded historical context, taking on the additional task of analyzing the utility of the rhetorics produced within the period for contesting contemporary hegemonic structures. That is, I examine in what respects these discourses may illuminate the contemporary political order as a contingent state-of-affairs. As Adorno notes, "the idea that things might be otherwise is one that has occurred only to humans" (Adorno & Horkheimer,1989, p. 45). My analysis hinges on a critical praxis (McKerrow, 1989) that takes as its foundation the notion that things could have been otherwise, and invests in the concomitant proposition that working toward emancipatory politics requires investing in the notion that the course of history is contingent, and in articulating lines of flight away from the hegemonic boundaries of the status quo (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1989; Deleuze & Guattari , 1972; Mouffe and Laclau, 1985). One dimension of my analysis, then, consists of an exploration of the

4

rhetoric produced by historical members of the intelligentsia and an examination of the ideological and rhetorical import of their discursive participation within the Prague Spring. The second dimension consists of, to borrow a phrase from Mouffe and Laclau, a reactivation of rhetorical artifacts that have since gone dormant. As they explain:

> If, as shown in the work of Derrida, undecidables permeate the field which had previously been seen as governed by structural determination, one can see the hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain. Deeper levels of contingency require hegemonic—that is, contingent—articulations, which is another way of saying that the moment of reactivation means nothing other than retrieving an act of political institution that finds its source and motivation nowhere but in itself. (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985, p. 11)

Political possibilities, then, are never excluded through the unfolding of history but only through the process of persistent articulations, "politico-hegemonic" articulations, that "retroactively create the interests they represent" (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985, p. 12). In this thesis, then, I offer a reactivation (being a renewed critical inquiry aimed at articulating the present possibilities of these texts to contribute to political discourse) of rhetorical artifacts produced by Kundera and Vaculík in order to elucidate how contemporary perceptions of both the political viability of human socialism (as it was minted during the 1968 reforms) and the political role of the *intelligentsia* could be *otherwise*. In other words, I attempt to establish through my analysis a relationship between past and present, "a constellation based on the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous…in which what-has-been and the now come together in an instant" (Weigel, 2015). In doing so, I hope to illuminate both the historico-political role of intellectual rhetoric during the reform period

of 1968, as well as posit some ways in which these discourses may present challenges or disruptions to contemporary political trajectories.

Why Study Intellectuals?

The role of the intellectual in shaping public discourse has drawn attention from scholars and practitioners alike (Bractich, 2008; Hale, 2001; Giroux, 2004; Frye & Fox, 2010; McCormick, 2001). The impetus behind much of the scholarship stems from the fraught position that intellectuals occupy in contemporary culture, both as pedagogues and activists. In part, this position derives from an intrinsic tension in the identity of the intellectual figure. For the purposes of this thesis, I understand intellectuals as individuals who are perceived, or perceive themselves, as enjoying a rarefied vantage point on cultural, artistic, social or political affairs, usually by virtue of rigorous education or by experiences that tend to be institutional in nature. This definition is intentionally general; debates over the proper criterion for defining an intellectual fall outside the scope of this project. However, I believe this definition captures the crux of the unique rhetorical location that intellectuals find themselves in, being one in which their specialized discourses participate in a more abstract, theoretical paradigm that must be willfully connected to the realm of praxis. Foucault describes this relationship using the metaphor of a relay (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977). He argues that, "practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall" (p. 206). The intellectual maintains a unique relation to the social, in that theoretical validity relies on things as they are, but operates on a higher level that endeavors to see beyond what is visible in everyday life.

As such, intellectuals, when not disposed to act as organs of the hegemonic productions of the state, are disposed toward maintaining a privileged subjectivity as elevated thinkers, while, at the same time, identifying with popular causes: "it is relatively easy for intellectuals to identify themselves in a cerebral way with the cause of the people while keeping their feelings of superiority intact" (Steiner, Cruise, O'Brien, Kolakowski & Boyers, 1986, p. 165). This tension places the intellectual in an ambivalent position with respect to public discourse, insofar as the rhetoric of the intellectual class has historically worked to shape popular political thought, but also attracted criticism for approaching politics from a problematic distance that diminishes the practicality of their insights. Indeed, this has often been the criticism of proponents of Marxist political praxis, whose emphasis on class has often been construed as at odds with cultural and intersectional interests (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985).

The second problem, which arises from this distance between the intellectual and the population, is the diminished credibility of the *intelligentsia* within the political economy of the United States and political economies abroad. Tom Wolfe poses that "the intellectual always averts his eyes from the obvious when the subject is the United States" (Wolfe, 2000). To Wolfe, America's political accomplishments derive from pluralistic political perspectives, and as such demonstrate that intellectualist rhetoric is both warrantless and out-of-touch. Many studies of social movements tend to reflect this disposition, investing in democratic expression as an exemplary means for effecting social change while leaving little room for the contributions of intellectuals or coalitions of intellectuals in hegemonic struggles. The focus of early theorists on the opening and closing of democratic channels (e.g. Haiman, 1967) informs more contemporary

explorations of movement phenomenon and strategies, where alternative (if radical) means of democratic engagement are construed as the primary means of enacting change (e.g. Chavez, 2011; Enck-Wanzer, 2006). Even scholarship that studies movements in non-democratic political systems (Foss & Dominici, 2006; Halverson, Ruston & Tretheway, 2013) tends to figure rhetorical opposition to power as a democratic phenomenon—as the perseverance of the democratic spirit in spite of political obstacles. As such, movement theorists often lend their energy to articulating the role of the body politic, or explicating the relationship between more-or-less direct leadership and the body politic (Simons, 1970), and tend not to ruminate on the role of intellectual production in cultivating subversive discourses. While the theorizations and participatory action of intellectuals like Judith Butler have been well documented, the role of the intellectual writ large remains under theorized in movement studies (Duggan, 1998)

There are two capacities in which these problems present the rhetoric of intellectuals as a fruitful site for renewed critical inquiry. First, contemporary political events in the United States and abroad have brought the tension between intellectually and pluralistically motivated political thought to the forefront. Climate change denial, for instance, hinges on a rejection of the academically founded science motivating environmentalist movements in favor of populist opinion (Angman, 2003). On the other hand, recent anti-vaccination movements founded on the since refuted Wakefield (1998) study demonstrate the dubious power of intellectualist rhetoric to influence popular thought (Novella, 2013). Ironically, since the debunking of said study, anti-vaccination proponents have had much success generating a following on the *internet* and through social media through contestations of the veracity of current scientific claims—forums

that promoted the democratization of knowledge and expertise while undermining the influence of intellectual authority (Kata, 2011). Meanwhile, many former Soviet Bloc countries including Hungary have reverted to nationalistic and populist political dispositions in recent years in reaction to the empirical disappointments of neo-liberal democracy in revitalizing their economic and cultural welfare (Piet, 2015). For whatever tension exists between intellectualism and democratic ideals regarding consensus, the ideological production of the intelligentsia, if occasionally dogmatic, tends toward the condemnation of populism. Indeed, the discourse produced by the Prague spring was a direct reaction to Stalinism and, moreover, deemed fundamentally incompatible with fascisms abroad, e.g. Franco's regime (Martos-Contreras, 2010;).

Current events, then, complicate the idea that democratic pluralism has somehow advanced contemporary culture past the point where the discourse of intellectuals exerts influence over popular thought or requires consideration, and moreover that intellectual discourses no longer hold political importance in a world where neo-liberal democracy had brought us to the end of history (Fukayama, 2012). Contemporary cultural problems, then, call for critics to revisit the role of the intelligentsia in order to assess their potential contributions to formulating rhetorical strategies. Such an endeavor should not be considered important only as a supplement to democratic discourses, as ambivalence toward the significance of the *intelligentsia* is not limited to democratic contexts or our contemporary moment. As Ahmad Sadri (1992) notes, the role of the intellectual in enacting social change remains an under-theorized and divisive object within Marxist theorization as well. This is due in part to Marx's focus on the proletariat in enacting revolution and his opposition to the false consciousness of bourgeoisie thought, which

9

together imply that "contemplative intellectualization cannot by itself achieve the knowledge of the social totality, let alone constitute a basis for revolutionary practice in order to change it" (Sadri, 1992, p. 36). This produces a certain tension when one considers that Marx emblematizes the force an intellectual *can* exert on the political milieu, a consideration that led Goulde to assert that a Marxist standpoint toward the intellectual could not account for Marx himself (Sadri, 1992). Explicating the role of the intellectual, then, holds theoretical and political value for those whose politics dictate a revolution against the status quo rather than a gradualist modification of the status quo that leaves its basic structures intact.

Second, understanding the relationship between intellectual rhetoric and public discourse promises to be instructive in understanding how academics might be politically efficacious (McCormick, 2001). Scholarship and educational praxis have historically been concerned not only with producing knowledge but also with shaping values, to the point where adult education itself has been understood as a social movement (McCormick, 2001; Holford, 1995). At the same time, academia has been dogged by "ivory tower" accusations, reflecting the same problematic disjunction between populism and intellectuals that problematize the social role of the intelligentsia. This had led to a bourgeoning focus on increasing the interconnectedness between the intellectual and his/her community (Cooper, 2005; Eble & Gaillete, 2007). Calls for the communal engagement of intellectuals and for a commitment to praxis in scholarship has unquestionable merit. However, focusing on this aspect of the role of the intellectual can lead to critical neglect in assessing what political and rhetorical intellectuals have to offer. That is, a focus on engaged intellectualism may turn our attention toward the

virtues of civic engagement and co-creation of meaning, while forgetting what makes the intellectual a meaningful contributor to knowledge in the first place—they may forget about the value of the intellectual qua intellectual. Diagnosing the relationship between intellectualist rhetoric and social change, therefore, stands to aid contemporary educators, academics and activists in realizing their role as agents of social change, and in articulating their relation to civic engagement.

As McCormick (2001) suggests, certain unique rhetorical strategies emerge within the discourses of public intellectuals that tend not to appear in other types of discourse, whether for material reasons or reasons related to the unique qualities of the rhetor or his or her audience. While McCormick's focus tends toward those members of the *intelligentsia* who are distinguished primarily by philosophical pedigrees (e.g. Kant, Kierkegaard) or civic affiliations (e.g. Seneca), this thesis looks with purpose at the rhetorical contributions of political rhetors engaged in artistic production, specifically Kundera the activist/novelist and Vaculík the activist/playwright. This is not only because McCormick's work points in the direction of locating discrete rhetorical strategies produced by intellectual subjectivities, but also insofar as Deleuze and Guattari promote a consideration of the artist as a body capable of forwarding unique political energies: s/he may convert through expression social reality into a variety of machines related to desire, and in doing so strain, attenuate, and accelerate the breakdown of hegemonic social production within the status quo. As the authors write:

> The artist is the master of objects; [s]he puts before us shattered, burned, broken-
> down objects, converting them to the regime of desiring-machines, breaking down
> is part of the very function of desiring-machines; the artist presents paranoiac

11

machines, miraculating-machines, and celibate machines as so many technical

machines. Even more important, the work of art is itself a desiring-machine. The

artist stores up his treasures so as to create an immediate explosion, and this is

why, to his own way of thinking, destructions can never take place as rapidly as

they ought to. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, p. 32).

In this viewpoint, the artist acts as a machine[2] through which the other machines

that compose social reality are reproduced in their most extreme forms. The artist, then,

becomes prophetic, not in the sense of divining the future of politics, but in the sense of

anticipating (sensing, calling for, savoring) the breakdown of social structures before they

occur, by imagining the operation of the social at the logical extreme of its operation.

This gives the critic occasion to invest in the notion that intellectual rhetors, and

specifically those engaged in artistic production, may stand in a unique relation with the

---

[2] This talk of machines in Deleuze and Guattari reflects the particular ontology through which they understand human and social production. The social is composed of 'desiring-machines.' Desiring machines are, to borrow a term from contemporary metaphysics, 'simples': they cannot be reduced, but their energy adds together, is diverted, or splinters off as they come to interact. The essence of desiring machines is their drive to move outward: toward other objects, toward other possibilities. The mouth-machine of the child, for instance, desires the breast-machine of the mother, and the flows of energy that occur in the act of suckling compose a social relation. The social body is a composite of the movement of desiring-machines. Individual subjectivities are a residuum of the interactions of the desiring-machines that compose the body and the desiring machines that compose the social. As Mark seem notes in the introduction to the text, this conception of the social and of subjectivity, comes from a synthesis of Marx and Nietzsche. He poses that this tension [the tension between these two influences], "is quite novel, and leads to a combination of the artistic 'machine,' the revolutionary 'machine,' and the analytical 'machine;' a combination of three modes of knowledge, the *intuitive*, the *practical*, and the *reflective*, which all become joined as bits and pieces of one and the same strategically machine whose target is the ego and the fascist in each of us" (in Deleuze & Gutarri, 1982, p. xix). For a through overview of desiring-machines, see Buchanan (2008), p. 38 – 63.

operation of the social, and, moreover, produce types of rhetoric that exhibit unique political potentialities. In the method sections of this chapter, I elaborate on what these distinct rhetorical modes may be.

Texts and *Samizdat* Production

The following thesis reflects on the political potential of the discourse of produced by intellectuals during the Prague Spring, centering pieces of discourse produced by Milan Kundera and Ludvík Vaculík as textual entry points. Kundera and Vaculík were both centrally involved in the reform movements of 1968; responsible not only for the early discursive production of the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress, but engaged in the production of discourses that contributed substantial to the development of reformist rhetoric during the period. For instance, Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words" manifesto was the central rhetorical engagement between top-down reformers and the people, whereas Kundera's reflections on the Spring contextualized the meaning of the period for international audiences (Williams, 1997). For Kundera, I will analyze *The Joke* (1967), published immediately prior to the advent of the 1968 reforms. I employ this text as an entry point and heuristic for understanding the rhetorical strategies that appeared in the reformist rhetoric of the Prague Spring across the other artifacts I consider in this thesis. For Vaculík's discourse, I analyze the political rhetoric embodied in his "Two Thousand Words" manifesto, published at the height of the Prague Spring, as well as the circulation of his *samizdat* press during the period of censorship and normalization that followed the War Saw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia (Skilling, 1967). The former document has been considered the hallmark of dissident rhetoric during the period and, also, the artifact that brought Czechoslovak-USSR relations to

their breaking point, inciting the military invasion that ended the Prague Spring, whereas the latter, as I will demonstrate, illustrates the possibility for subversive texts to invoke an imagined culture parallel to that culture sustained by hegemonic forces (Williams, 1995; Pehe, 1998).

These texts are ideal for considering the aforementioned problems concerning the role of the intellectual because they reflect the tension between more "cerebral" rhetorical production and populist influence. Each rhetorical artifact works toward concertedly political ends, but they enact rhetorical production in diverse capacities. Kundera's novel engages in a complex and highly ambivalent mapping of the Czechoslovakian political terrain, while Vaculík's manifesto invokes a utopic conception of democratic possibility within an experimental, but still highly regimented, political space. Moreover, Vaculík's samizdat press served as an underground outlet for public expression during times of extreme censorship. Considering the rhetorical intersections between the literary and more traditionally rhetorical texts produced by these authors will facilitate an exploration of the problems and strategies available to intellectual rhetors as they produce discourse in hierarchically regulated forums.

Importantly, I will not employ separate methodologies to differently assess the artistic and properly political artifacts considered here. I treat Vaculík and Kundera's discrete texts as a single inter-textual assemblage, while bearing in mind contradictions and aporias may exist in the rhetorical and ideological topography of these artifacts (both within and between texts). Moreover, I read this inter-textual assemblage both in light of its historical location and the contemporary political status quo in hopes of illuminating meaningful discursive moments and tracing their historico-political promise. Analyzing

these texts against the hegemonic discursive articulations of the Spring period and our contemporary moment may illuminate the political potentialities of intellectual discourse as well as shed light on potentially unique rhetorical strategies adopted by public intellectuals. As such, these texts allow for a sophisticated consideration of a number of issues concerning the role of intellectuals in enacting social change. These issues include the question of how intellectuals employ rhetoric to influence social change, what unique rhetorical tactics might emerge from intellectual production, and in what ways historical discursive productions of intellectual figures may point toward future possibilities for emancipatory politics.

This analysis does not attempt to make overarching claims regarding the *genre* of intellectual rhetoric, or even produce comprehensive critical dissections of these texts. The point is to read these texts for what was and remains politically useful, not to interrogate them into minutia. For the moments of political and rhetorical possibility pointed to in the analysis that follows, other critics may point to alternative moments or, indeed, moments that reify the status quo or betray certain contemporary social goals (Kundera, for instance, has been understood to have a fraught relationship with feminist values) (O'Brian, 1995). In my analysis, I attempt to remain cognizant of these concerns and produce readings of Kundera and Vaculík's rhetoric faithful to the historico-political exigencies of their production. Still, there is an aspect in which my analysis consists in bricolage: the stitching together of rhetorical fragments in service of political production (Derrida, 1978). In the following section of this chapter, I will elaborate on this relationship between textual analysis and politically motivated critical praxis.

Critical Rhetoric

Many of the arguments in this thesis engage in what McKerrow (1989) termed a critical rhetoric. This theory takes as its standpoint a synthesis of Marxist and Foucaultian understandings of power; McKerrow acknowledges the debt that power relations owe to material structures, but at the same time invests in the notion that subjective relations to these structures are determined by discourse. More specifically, he adopts Mouffe and Laclau's (1985) reimagining of hegemony into a product of discourse, an alignment of antagonisms and commonplace truths that hold in place status quo power structures. To this he adds, from Foucault, the notion that truth and power reciprocally construct one another within social relations through persistent formations of discourse. From these formulations, McKerrow arrives at two main critiques, which compose the ethos of a critical rhetoric: the critique of domination (Marx) and the critique of freedom (Foucault). The critique of freedom is configured as a necessary supplement to the critique of domination, insofar as a dyadic understanding of power relations (base/superstructure; hegemony/subjectivity) has trouble accounting for the heterogeneity of power relations within the social (McKerrow, 1989). That McKerrow does not clearly articulate the interaction between the foundational assumptions of these two critiques, and later finds it satisfactory to label them as compatible (1991) attests to the author's claim that no single method (and, we might infer, epistemology of power) is prescribed by a critical rhetoric. Indeed, the author insists that a critical rhetoric is defined by its *orientation*. This is the first major inspiration my analysis takes from McKerrow: that the orientation of criticism ought to be an articulation of relations of power mobilized by discourse with the goal of

suggesting, when possible, avenues of social change or different political possibilities. Some of the arguments presented in the following thesis deviate both from McKerrow's understanding of hegemony and his view on what principles ought to guide critical praxis. Yet these deviations are not so great as to contradict the spirit of McKerrow's work, from which we learn the lesson that scholarly writing constitutes, in its own right, a political discourse.

To assert that scholarly work is intrinsically political, and indeed that it ought to augment its political dimensions, is at once to concede that critique is subjective. Such a concession implies that the findings of rhetorical analysis are *doxastic* and not *epistemic* in nature (McKerrow, 1989, p. 104). That is, the pursuit of critical praxis is not an objective knowledge of a particular rhetorical object, but rather an unearthing of what such an object may conceal, of what constructed truths the discourses ursive impact of such rhetorical artifacts may reflect (McKerrow, 1989, p. 105). *Doxastic* knowledge, moreover, is always formed in opposition to the status quo, and as such critical illumination of certain *doxa* tends to correspond to what the critic is opposing. These are the conditions that substantiate McKerrow's call for reflexivity within rhetoric praxis: that is, critics need pay attention to the fact that their knowledge constitutes a discursive production itself enmeshed within both materially and socially constructed relations of power. In light of this, I admit that my analysis, which evaluates political potentialities of intellectual discourses produced within the Prague Spring tends to select discourses which contest, or offer alternatives to, what I pose are two main and related failures in contemporary social politics: anti-intellectualism, and the perceived triumph of neo-liberalism (the supposed death of Marxist thought). While my consideration of the

relationship between intellectualist and hegemonic discourses in the 1968 reform period, and the relationship between these reform discourses and contemporary hegemonic structures, attempts to remain as objective as possible, the questions these considerations respond to are provoked by concerns relating to neo-liberalism and the status of the intellectual. As such, the conclusions of my analysis will remain a selection of the multiple meanings and conclusions that could come from a consideration of intellectual discourse within the period. The degree to which this deflects other readings will be considered throughout.

Social Movements as Sites of Meaning

In his study of Bergson, the once famous analytic philosopher who had fallen into disuse among contemporary intellectuals, Deleuze draws attention to the idea that the object of inquiry is not merely to deduce answers to questions that may be true or false, but more importantly lies in the location of true problems (Deleuze, 1991). Two types of "false problems" exist in Bergson's formulation: "'nonexistent problems,' defined as problems whose very terms contain a confusion of the 'more' and the 'less'; and 'badly stated' questions, so defined because their terms represent badly analyzed composites" (Deleuze, 1991, p. 17). Here, I pose that many approaches to social movement studies respond to questions that fit this former category of falsity. They mistake the "more" for the "less" by understanding social organization as an unnatural state, and conversely suppose that social disorder is foundational: that an organized discursive association between political subjects in opposition is an emergent rather than a natural phenomenon. To help clarify, questions that mistake the more for the less assume what is a greater

18

burden of proof to actually be a lesser burden or proof. Consider Deleuze's explication of

another such non-existent problem:

> When we ask "Why is there something rather than nothing?" or "Why is there
>
> order rather than disorder" or "Why is there this rather than that (when that was
>
> equally possible)?" we fall into the same error: We mistake the more for the less,
>
> we behave as though nonbeing existed before being, disorder before order and the
>
> possible before existence…. But the problem there is a fundamental illusion, "a
>
> retrograde movement of the true," according to which being, order and the
>
> existent are supposed to precede themselves...by projecting an image of
>
> themselves back into a possibility, a disorder, a nonbeing which are supposed to
>
> be primordial. (Deleuze, 1991, p. 18)

The mistake of assuming the more for the less in movement studies is posing that social

interaction is a more complex phenomenon than social isolation. Griffin's (1952)

foundational essay predicates movement research on the notion that a movement occurs

when "men" become dissatisfied with their lived conditions and attempt to enact change

(p. 184). This formulation, as well as the subsequent division of movements into stages of

conception, growth, and decay, supposes that the special social association that composes

a movement arrives from an extrinsic cause—a certain feature of society that drives

individuals from a natural state of disorganization into a political and discursive

assemblage. This problem proliferates throughout functionalist (e.g. Stewart, 1980)

understandings of movements, which suppose that certain rhetorical criteria must be met

for a discursive organization to sustain itself as a movement. Here we find the same

commitment to the view that the interests and voices of a socius are originally separate,

and a critical focus on explicating the conditions of political change as if change were an uncommon social phenomenon. Questions that consider social movements in regards to how social assemblages come to enact change, therefore, mistake the less for the more, in supposing discord as the original terrain of the social. That is, if social movements are thought to come to exist when individuals enter into discursive alliances oriented toward change, we mistake the less for more in supposing a Cartesian-style dualism between individual and social consciousness, in which the interest of the individual's political dispositions derive from him/her alone and are brought into the swim of the social only when an external pressure catalyzes such unification. It requires *less* to imagine a subject always already constituted within social discourses. That is to say that a more parsimonious understanding of social movements would not say that the relation between the individual and social discourses within social movements is different in *kind* from the ordinary association between individuals and social discourse. The individual is always already constituted within the movement of social discourses, and by producing discourse in response to this interpellation, contributes to the future discourse of the social. A social movement, as such, labels moments in which the discourses produced by individuals and groups within society operate out of synch with the discourses produced by hegemonic organs, by which I mean individuals, groups, organizations or state bodies that reify the operation of the status quo. The term social movements describes a difference in the *degree* to which the discourse of specific members of the social remain heterogeneous from the discourses that reify hegemonic paradigms.

Indeed, McKerrow's synthesis of Foucault and Marx confirms this understanding of the subject as always already constituted by social discourses. Not only does

understanding the relationship between the social as co-consisting do away with the problematic *more*, to use Deleuze's (1967) term, of social/individual dualisms, but understanding the individual as enmeshed within ongoing social discourses directs critical attention to a feature of movement development often ignored in theorizations of movements, if only because theorists must place boundaries on the scope of their research. Namely, social organizations and discursive alignments often must exist as a precondition to the formation of subsequent, more concise nodes of discourse that we often label as movements. For example, consider Marxist theorizations that pose that the struggle for class liberation first requires a unification of the working class, so as the reality of social relations under capitalism can become visible to the proletariat (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). In this formulation, an original social/rhetorical unification (the act of class designation, the act of articulating marginalized subjectivities, the act of naming the repressed group) must occur in order for a social movement to be able to articulate itself as a subversive group and, moreover, to present itself with a clear object of struggle. By this, I do not mean to argue that social movement scholars ought to shackle themselves to the infinitely regressive task tracing the genealogies of movements back to some mythic discursive source. Instead, I pose that movement theorists mistake what is a difference in *degree* (of discursive affiliation, degree of ideological consolidation, degree of social organization) for a difference in kind (see: Deleuze, 1991, pp. 20-21). The discourse of social movements is notable because of the degree to which it unifies subjects within the social, the degree to which it opposes hegemonic order, and the degree to which its rhetoric affects social discourse. The phenomena of unity and change movement theorists

take for the object of movement studies are actually intrinsic in the movement of the social.

This analysis implies that both unity and change are intrinsic features of the flow of the social. Is this a contradiction? No, not if we suppose that change itself has an order (though this order may be permeated with undecidabilities) (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). There is a difference in kind between *disorder* and *change*, because change is brought about either linearly or through an overdetermination of causes while disorder is defined by the absence, indeed the defiance, of principle. The analysis in this thesis poses that ruptures and gaps in ordering principles are possible, yet breakdowns of these hegemonic structures have their own ordered conditions of possibility; breakdowns of hegemonic structures, which often produce change, should not be mistaken for disorder (Phillips, 2002). Indeed, the idea rhetorical strategies may facilitate social change within some boundary of predictability is a base assumption of the majority of foundational social movement rhetoric (Griffin, 1952; Stewart 1980).

What is a social movement then? I invest in the general notion that movements are organizations of disparate bodies within the socius that enact, or move in the direction of enacting change. They are social assemblages that, through discourse, challenge the status quo. Movements affect the composition of the social by virtue of discursive production, whose vehicle is the social assemblage that constitutes the membership of the movement. Yet, because this description does not lead us to conclude that movements are different in kind from commonplace social phenomena that entail meaning and change, we are forced to look elsewhere for what distinguishes movements as a unique of critical study. Many different answers may be ventured in response to this question, but one

22

plausible answer seems to be that a movement is special because of the *degree* to which its discursive production possessed political affect, whether it actually expressed energetic force (e.g. success in changing the status quo) or in potential energetic force (e.g. recognition of the extent to which a certain discursive affiliation *could have* changed the status quo). In some ways, then, I agree with the type of meaning-centered approach to movement studies advocated by McGee (1980). McGee argues, as I do, that movements do not constitute distinct social phenomenon but do represent distinct sets of meaning. He draws the conclusion that theorization of movements is fruitful as a theorization of human consciousness:

> Both technical and practical perceptions of "movement" suggest that human
> beings *want* to see their environment described as an ordered progression of
> mutually salient episodes. The possibility that life is nothing more than a cosmic
> joke, a random and entropic set of essentially irreverent experiences, is so
> unflattering that we tend to dismiss it summarily . . . [M]ovement is our fondest
> wish, our wildest dream. (McGee, 1980, p. 242).

I agree that selecting social movements from other social phenomenon constitutes a perceptual act, in which certain discursive formations appear, from the vantage point of the critic, as possessing great potentiality: moments the intellect perceives as full of promise and possibility, moments that illustrate the contingency of the repressive hegemony operating within the status quo. Yet, the fact that some cultural moments impress themselves onto the human sensibility as revolutionary more readily than others cannot translate into a theorization of human consciousness as easily as McGee seems to suppose. As Biesecker-Mast poses:

By emphasizing that social movements were meanings rather than phenomena, McGee and Cathcart suggested that social movements were best treated as the historical products of human imagination and thus not subject to such generalizable laws as might be attributed to non-linguistic phenomena. Yet both theorists presumed a chasm between the meanings created in social movement discourse and the material historical realities the rhetoricians sought to represent…Consequently, neither McGee nor Cathcart was able to offer a compelling explanation of the relation between rhetorical meaning and real events (Biesecker-Mast, 1996, para 2)

One struggle of the meaning-centered approach, then, is to account for the relation between empirical reality and the *meaning* of movements as they are perceived within the social. To resolve this, I reiterate that there is in fact no real outside of discourse, both in respect to the constitution of the subject and the constitution of the social. Necessary laws do not unite the social: unity and fragmentation both derive out of a discursive process of articulation (Mouffe and Laclau, 1985). This collapses the distinction between meaning and the operation of the real, insofar as "both linguistic and non-linguistic events take place within the broader horizon of discourse: the system of signs that is the condition of possibility for making sense of the world" (Biesecker-Mast, 1996, para 4). As such, the meaning-centered approach to movement analysis will not do much to explicate the historical function of movement discourses for agents of change. However, in labelling that discourse as having a particular significance, or engaging in a specific mode of political expression, the critic can usefully proliferate the rhetoric constitutive of

historical moments of political change, and in doing so make valuable rhetorical contributions his or herself.

A second dilemma regarding understanding movements as meaning derives from the question, within *whose* consciousness do these meanings appear? Elaborating a generalizable theory of human consciousness, especially in respect to isolated historical events, takes on the auspicious burden of asserting certain universal conditions of the human intellect. The advent of post-modernity and cultural studies severely problematizes such a project (Biesecker-Mast, 1996). Moreover, what appears as a new road forward, a societal "wish" or "dream," under certain historical or hegemonic conditions may appear very differently under others. Mouffe and Laclau write:

> Outside of any discursive structure, it is obviously not possible to speak of fragmentation, nor even to specify elements [of the social]. Yet, a discursive structure is not a merely "cognitive" or "contemplative" entity; it is an *articulatory practice,* which constitutes and organizes social relations. We can thus talk of growing complexity and fragmentation of advanced industrial societies . . . in the sense that they are constituted around a fundamental asymmetry. This is the asymmetry existing between a growing proliferation of difference – a surplus of meaning of "the social" – and the difficulties encountered by any discourse attempting to fix those differences as moments of a stable articulatory structure. (Mouffe and Laclau, 1985, p. 128-129)

Apprehending the operation of social formations, then, depends on the discursive structures that articulate both the content of the social and the proliferations of its differences and contradictions. Dissident movements and scholarly criticism alike are

born out of the proliferation of difference described above: as their discourse proliferates, a schism forms between the operation of bodies within the social and those hegemonic articulations that attempt to fix heterogeneous subjectivities and discourses into stable relationships with the state.

The proliferation of both critical and dissident discourse works to form a surplus of social meanings which test the coherence of hegemonic articulations. From this propositions, I argue, it becomes possible to theorize social movements by synthesizing the concepts of movement-as-meaning and movement-as-critical-praxis. That is to say, movements come to exist both from the vantage points of their membership, and from the vantage point of the critic who may find new political resources in movements that no longer operate (before that critical reactivation) in our contemporary discursive. The constitutive feature of movement discourse is an act of articulation: the articulation of certain fragments of the social into a stable relationship aligned against the articulations of hegemonic discursive structures. These acts of articulation, however, have different meanings depending on the discursive structures from which the critic stages his or her evaluation. Take, for example, the popularity of Western understandings of the Prague Spring as the first note of socialism's swan song. When perceived from Western vantage points, the articulations of the 1968 reforms were mobilized effectively in service of hegemonic maintenance of capitalism (Bracke, 2002). As a result, an understanding of movements as counter-hegemonic articulations does not pick out an essential quality of movements, but a contingent quality possessed by movements when situated within a certain social discourses. In our example, then, the meaning of Prague Spring discourses were critically mobilized within their local context to reimagine the limits of socialist

praxis, and in Western interpretations understood as signaling Communism's failure. The movement critic, then, ought to consider the importance of counter-hegemonic articulations from both a synchronic and an a-synchronic perspective. By this I mean that the discourses of social movements ought to be considered both within the spacio-temporal dimensions of its original production (in this instance, within the Prague Spring period), as well as within other spacio-temporal contexts where that same discourse may operate differently in respect to hegemonic discursive formations. The merit of this approach is twofold. First, it allows for a critical comparison of the effects of movement discourse, which may draw attention to the value of certain counter-hegemonic rhetorical strategies by explicating the nature of their meanings across space and time. Second, it promises a reactivation of the political potential of the discourses of historical movements s by reevaluating counter-hegemonic discourses within respect to contemporary hegemonic structures. Engaging with movements critically recalls old discourses for contemporary use, and in doing so enacts a continuation and modification of the politics of that discourse.

Antagonisms and Minor Literatures

This thesis attempts to the discern the political potential of Kundera and Vaculík's articulations during the Prague Spring period. In doing so, I adopt two main practices of analysis: first, explication of certain *antagonisms* (Mouffe and Laclau, 1985) articulated by this discourse, both in respect to the hegemonic formations operating in 1968 Czechoslovakia and contemporary hegemonic structures operating within Western democracies, and, second, the exploration of the ways in which these texts fulfill the criteria of a minor (that is, subversive) literature (O'Sullivan, 2007). Together, these

heuristics form the methodology of my thesis. Because I understand the production of antagonisms as consistent with the function of a minor literature, I will explicate these concepts in tandem.

O'Sullivan (2006) describes "minor literatures," as revolutionary literatures, or texts that can produce "a break with habitual formations and dominant signifying regimes" (p. 69). The author identifies the operation of minor literature according to three separate criteria. First, a minor literature engages in a "deterritorialization of the major language" that works to counteract the transmission of "order words" which recapitulate the repressive structure of the socius (p. 70). This deterritorialization can be accomplished through the type of utterance brought forth by a text, the appropriation and attenuation of "master languages" that terminates in their subversion. In Kundera's *The Joke* for instance, the proliferation of sarcasm becomes textually juxtaposed to the *seriousness* (indeed, seriousness-as-ideology) of discourse within the Czechloslovak social (1967). I also pose that minor literatures can interrogate major languages through the generation of what Mouffe and Laclau (1985) term antagonisms. Antagonist rhetoric constitutes a deterritorialization of master languages in that it exposes the failure of social organization to become thoroughly objective and, in its articulations, exposes alternatives to the extant composition of the social. The authors explain that:

> The limit of the social must be given in the social itself as something subverting it, destroying its ambition to constitute a full presence. Society never manages to fully be society, because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevent it from constituting an objective reality. (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985, p. 166)

Antagonisms may operate both progressively or regressively; they may subvert the hegemonic order or reify its operation. Antagonistic constructions formed in opposition to hegemonic discourses elucidate political alternatives. An antagonism articulates discrete "moments" in the social by counter-posing them against what they are not. As Biesecker-Mast (2006) explains, "elements that might at one time have appeared as different moments are identified with one another at a later time on the basis of what they are against" (Biesecker-Mast, 2006, para 14).

The triumph of one antagonism over another in the sphere of the social is never necessary, but always contingent. Indeed, the political power of antagonism resides in its ability to reveal the contingency of things-as-they are. The deterritorializing operation of a minor literature exposes the contingent arrangement of the social, establishing new chains of association and difference that antagonize the status quo. To summarize, antagonisms constitute the main organizational principle of hegemonic articulations. Specifically, they order social discourse by forming chains of equivalence between certain values and practices, by opposing them against the values and practices that they are against. A minor literature deterritorializes the hegemonic territory, either by articulating a novel antagonism or by revealing the contingency or arbitrariness of an antagonism, by, for instance, articulating two terms opposed in an antagonistic structure as interdependent. The success of these formulations in re-orienting the composition of the social always remains provisional. Mouffe and Laclau (1985) note that hegemonic relations require that elements whose intrinsic properties do not predetermine them to enter into one type of arrangement instead of another become affiliated within social discourses. This implies that the antagonism produced by minor literatures will always,

too, be contingent. Indeed, the success of any re-ordering of the social depends on an installment of a new hegemony. The deterritorialization of major languages, then, may be accomplished either through the nature of the utterance, or through the antagonistic relation of the utterance to extant hegemonic discourses. In analyzing Kundera and Vaculík's rhetoric, then, I seek out those moments that defy the linguistic order of the social and generate alternative antagonistic structures. I assess the political dimension of these moments in respect to their relation to both historical and contemporary hegemonic structures. The precise nature of this assessment will be explained in the methods chapter to follow.

The second quality of a minor literature is that it is *always* political insofar as it generates a linkage between the social and the asocial—a relationship that "disrupts dominant systems of signification and representation" (O'Sullivan, 2007, p.70). That is, in its description of social life, a minor literature contests the boundaries of the social structure by re-conceptualizing social relations in other terms. As such, the dominant forms of signification lose their hold, if only temporarily. Indeed, as O'Sullivan (2006) notes, "this schema can only be provisional. The relationship between, and functions of, different languages will always vary depending on the specifics of space and time" (p. 71). This corroborates my claim that critics need to assess the political dimensions of texts across spacio-temporal boundaries. What is subversive in one epoch may be repressive in another, "a definition of the minor will depend on a definition of the major" (p. 71). The third chapter of this thesis engages in defining the major language of the Prague Spring era.

Third, a minor literature is "always collective," in that it discursively assumes a community of sympathizers whose views align with its visualization of the world. As such, "we can see the artistic production of statements as a kind of precursor of a community…still in formation" (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 71). I pose that this invocation go communities-to-come applies equally well to the political rhetorics produced by Vaculík and Kundera. A certain *utopian* element, then, operates within a minor literature; even if the task of a minor literature consists primarily in a negation or defamation of the status quo, its invocations imagine an audience united in opposition to the repressions within the status quo. O'Sullivan takes this constellation of features as a testament to the ability of artistic production to articulate new lines of flight toward "the collectivization of subjectivity and the calling forth of a new community that this implies" (p. 71).

I pose that these criteria, which define a minor literature, offer a methodological starting place for assessing the political potentialities of social movements across spacio-temporal boundaries. In employing this method, I perform three main maneuvers. First, I explicate the historico-hegemonic composition of the 1968 Czechoslovakian reform period. Second, I isolate moments within the discourses produced by Kundera and Vaculík that oppose these hegemonic articulations, either in generating antagonisms or enacting one of the other stylistic disruptions that comprise a minor literature. Third, I assess these contemporary political potential of these disruptions by exploring the way these ruptures might similarly contest, or instead reify, contemporary hegemonic structures. This method has the advantage of expanding the purview of antagonistic criticism to accommodate for the comparative political value of certain forms or strategies of contestation. That is, it views rhetorical production as potentially subversive

both in its stylistic and ideological aspects. Moreover, selecting for those rhetorical

elements within texts that exhibit political potentiality, and then testing those moments of

potential against historical and contemporary hegemonic structures, allows for the critic

to center the subversive potentiality of certain rhetorical strategies while placing

reasonable boundaries around the scope of his/her analysis. Because the emphasis of

movement studies, in the view argued above, consists in the isolation of sites of meaning

that exhibit great political potentiality, the critic need not be exhaustive. Subsequent

criticism may add to the list of political promises in these texts, or indict them for

reifying the status quo. A critical praxis cannot portend to be monolithic in its

conclusions. The intention is only to illuminate conditions under which greater social

emancipation may become possible.

The following chapter develops on the methodological concerns previewed above,

arguing that the construct of "minor literatures," offer an opportunity for conducting

rhetorical analysis that (a) is materialistic and (b) engages in critical praxis. I justify the

importance of a criticism founded in materialistic praxis, and articulate the way in which

I will employ the heuristic of minor literatures to isolate the rhetorical strategies in

Kunder and Vaculík's texts.

II.   METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The texts produced during the Prague Spring period remain highly relevant to contemporary rhetorical critics. This is the case, first, because the rhetorical movement was artificially cut short by the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968. Its discourses delimit political possibilities that never saw implementation in Czechoslovakia, and as such beg for re-activation and reevaluation. Moreover, the active contributions made by intellectuals during the period offer a window into the possibilities for intellectual engagement in politics. In this chapter, I provide the theoretical and methodological framework for assessing the rhetoric of Kundera's *The Joke* and Vaculík's "Two-Thousand Words" manifesto, as well as the *samizdat* (underground) circulation Vaculík's *Padlock Press*, in terms of their rhetorical and political strategis. First, I expound on McKerrow's theory of a "critical rhetoric," and the implications that idea has both for critics and for the actors within social movements. In doing so, I attempt to explicate the conditions under which political change becomes possible through the production of discourse, and pay special attention to the way in which such an approach to criticism lends itself to analyzing texts asychronically, particularly in relation to contemporary political discourse Second, having defined critical praxis, and clarified its function as a materialistic theory of rhetoric, I conclude by describing Deleuze and Guatarri's construction of minor literatures as an appropriate methodology for engaging in critical

praxis, and illustrate the theoretical congruity between minor literatures a materialist mode of critical praxis.

Theoretical Perspective: Critical Praxis and Asynchronicity

In this section, I argue that critical praxis involves in an experimental disposition to rhetorical analysis, in which the critic pulls together textual fragments in order to produce new political contributions from his or her assessment of the rhetorical production of a given text, or set of textual fragments. By adopting McKerrow's (1989) theoretical formulation of critical rhetoric, I offer that the critic intervenes into the operation of hegemonic discourse by drawing together rhetorical fragments. These rhetorical fragments, held in relation to one another, in relation to the discursive territory of the present, or some other point in the past, reveal a contradiction (*aporia*), gap, or stuttering in the formulation of the hegemonic code. The critic then *reacts* to this gap, and attempts to suture it, either by ameliorating its tension with the hegemonic order or by, in an act of invention, envisioning a new social reality in which this social contradiction might be assuaged. In order to justify this theoretical approach to textual analysis, I first provide a working definition of critical rhetoric. I then substantiate this position by isolating the specific theoretical problems it solves, being: (a) the problem where the critic privileges his or her own sensibility in referring to hidden meaning in texts that only the critic can access, (b) the problem of conceptualizing the possibility of dissidence underneath a framework that understands subjects are always already constituted by discourse and (c) the problem of arbitrariness or subjectivity within critical praxis.

First, in order to understand the importance of a critical rhetoric the political ethos of the theory requires unpacking. McKerrow (1989) stresses two major aspects of the

34

orientation of a critical rhetoric: first, it operates as a critique that "seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power," and, second, it is performative, in attempting to *enact*, to bring into being, a counter-hegemonic discourse by virtue of its analysis (p. 91). A metaphor employed by Walter Benjamin resonates with the articulation of the role of the critic provided by McKerrow. Benjamin (1978) represents the critic as the builder/operator of a power plant and, in turn, the director/disseminator of its energies. "Intellectual currents," he poses, "can generate a sufficient head of water for the critic to install his [or her] power station on them"; the vantage point of the critic allows him/her to take the diffuse, quarrelsome energies found in the operation of an intellectual current, as Benjamin terms them, and transform them into a singular "decision" (1978, para 1). That is, the critic may pull from the antagonistic energies of a social movement a particularly salient thought, or a particular distillation of spirit, or a particular strategy of antagonism, and make manifest its possible political meaning.

This is not to say that the critic ought to commit to a dualistic way of thinking, in which the critic gains privileged and objective access to the workings of certain hegemonic relations, or discourses of power, that parade in the guise of everyday discourses but somehow remain imperceptible to everyday individuals. This position describes Problem A, as previewed above. Contemporary critical research tends to recognize that the subject position of the critic inflects his or her viewpoint, and as such, McKerrow (1989) commits to reflexivity and permanent criticism as a means to avoid privileging the episteme of the critic. Reflecting further on the praxis of critical rhetoric, I argue that McKerrow's critical praxis escapes this problem precisely because it emboldens the critic to politically intervene. Thus, a critic can can only produce

35

provisional conclusions about the function of texts, within the bounds of their

critical/political aims. This undercuts the idea that the critic has access to an objective

knowledge or reality others do not.

To further illustrate how critical rhetoric resists endowing the critic with access to

an objective truth denied to other observes, I now consider the process of drawing

together textual fragments in more detail. As McKerrow's (1989) investigation of the

relationship between power and discourse reveals, the critic may draw together fragments

of discourse in order to make observations about the composition of the social order.

These contributions aim to contribute to the proliferation of new, counter-hegemonic

discourses. The critic, then, works with a vocabulary complicit in the ordinary discourse

of society, so the tools of his or her production are always subject to further critique.

However, in spite of this, the critic *aims* to observe or produce from these extant

discourses, which are always imbricated in relations of power, a tension, a rupture, or a

fissure, from which new understandings might emerge that escape the determination of

the social. In this way, the critic participates in what McKerrow (1989), Biesecker (1996)

and Philips (2001) call invention, a term they use to account for the possibility of

subjective intervention in the otherwise deterministic flow of discourse. Invention

involves the drawing together of textual fragments.

The critic, therefore, does not attempt to *uncover* any hidden truth about what the

fragments in the social *mean*. When engaged in a critical praxis, they may escape this

dualism between perceived meaning and true meaning by reconceiving criticism as a

process of distilling from certain rhetorical fragments in the fabric of the social certain

propositions about how the social order operates, and then re-imagining its operation in

opposition to these *meanings* of society, which the critic perceives. The critic *goes looking* for gaps and contradictions in the order of the social; it is the *effort* to expose the functions of power that enables the critic to see more than the pedestrian. One strategy for critical praxis, then, is to re-produce those contradictions or gaps *as such*, that is, to represent aporias in the hegemonic understanding of the social as being contradictory and therefore as openings for discursive invention. This also, crucially, defines the way in which I argue that intellectual rhetors and social dissidents may intervene against hegemonic social codes. As I will argue in the final section of this chapter, the contestation of antagonisms within the social, which I argue consists in a main strategy of intellectual dissidence, operates in very much the same way as critical praxis. Both critical praxis and dissident rhetoric employ discourse to expose aporias (or contradictions) within the discourses of power.

This similarity is no coincidence, given that both dissidence and critical rhetoric share the initiative of creating counter-hegemonic discourses. As such, they both possess a particular relationship with societal discourse in that, while enmeshed in the flow of that discourse, they at once try to alter it. This speaks to problem B, in that both critics and dissidents must account for the possibility of invention in an otherwise deterministic discursive context. As Phillips (2002) argues, the possibility of invention predicates on contradictions within the formulation of the social, which he calls antecedent gaps. These gaps invite rhetorical inventions precisely because they cannot offer a satisfactory explanation of social conditions. Phillips (2002) writes:

> Before attending to the resistant acts that emerge within relations of power, we
> should attend to the antecedent gaps from which they emerge…[T]he appearance

of a resistant act simultaneously reveals the existence of antecedent gaps within

existing relations of power and obscures the nature of these gaps. These gaps,

then, are not only the spaces from which resistances emerge, but also the spaces in

which resistances are created. In other words, the antecedent gaps within

networks of power (and knowledge and subjectivity) are not only spaces for

emergence, but must also be spaces of invention; spaces within which the

possibility of new actions (or utterances or selves) can be imagined. (p. 332)

An act of subversion or criticism, in Phillips' understanding, signals the existence of gaps

or contradictions in hegemonic articulations. The failure of nomenclatures of power, what

Deleuze and Guattari (1986) would call a major language, to describe social relations

creates the imperative for new rhetorical figurations, for invention. Critical praxis,

therefore, consists of rooting out antecedent gaps in power, thereby identifying aporias in

the hegemonic composition of the social. The identification of these gaps in the

discursive formations that perpetuate hegemonic structures allows for the critic to

identify (to encounter) lines-of-flight away from social norms that reify extant relations

of power; in calling out for resolution, antecedent gaps hail the critic to respond with

inventive discourses. In this way, the critic is always involved in an articulation of

contingencies, en route to invention.

In "drawing together" fragments in order to reveal an aporia in the composition of

the social (the first task of the critic), it becomes the critic's second task to close this gap

through the articulation of counter-hegemonic possibilities (McKerrow, 1989). Because

the discursive order of the social has been revealed as broken, this task can only be

accomplished through invention, through envisioning an alternative to the current

38

discourse and in this way finding new ways forward. The rhetoric of engaged political dissidents must follow a similar course; exposing contradictions or gaps in hegemonic discourses may, in part, unmask the operation of the social, but an articulation of political alternatives has a strategic value. This is the case because antecedent gaps, when exposed in the social, invite response not only from the inventors who identify those gaps, but also from power. Indeed as Murphy (1992) points out, some articulations may work to re-secure the old operations of the social discourse. He marks the emergence of "symbolic strategies" that "develop to accommodate dissent while making it compatible with 'dominant systems of meaning'"(Murphy, 1992, p. 65). In other cases, these aporias are closed when the hegemon reverts to more brutish exercises in power, a violent display of sovereignty that does not *erase* these contradictions in the social, but forces its populations to avert their gazes or whisper out of earshot.

Take, for instance, the forceful silencing of prominent intellectual rhetoric that accompanied the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia, which forced Vaculík's writing underground or, as Havel put it, "into the drawer" (Havel, qtd. in Vaculík, 1986, p. i). Philips (2002) describes such movements, in which power must forcibly demonstrate its authority in order to normalize the status quo, "spaces of dissension," insofar as they identify a moment in which "discourse produces contradictions that, in turn, require discourse to 'speak,' to give accounting of these new incompatible conditions, in order to cover the emergence of contingency and maintain the illusion of unity" (Philips, 2002, p. 333). Such is the case, in regard to the Soviet Bloc tanks that rolled across the Czechoslovak border in 1968. Indeed, the idea that ideological closures may come about through force, which artificially delimits future anti-rhetorical

production lends much to the exigency behind returning to the Prague Spring now: because the contradictions identified by critics in that time were never resolved, because the critics were revoked their right to speak, their rhetoric has a dormant energy, but perhaps an even more vital one. Whether the observations those intellectuals made on the composition of the social or the inventions they rendered in response to those observations remain relevant in our contemporary age is the subject of this inquiry.

That the potentials in these rhetorical artifacts may have been covered-over by a larger historical progression, in this case the fall of the Berlin wall and the perceived triumph of Neoliberalism as trumpeted in the work of Fukayama (1992), has much to do with the way in which history, and even criticism, often consigns itself to the reification of what *is* in spite of what could have been. This faith in the material unfolding of history divests in the notion of contingency, being that history could always have been otherwise (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). The goal of a critical praxis in rhetoric must be, in part to unfix moments from history where they have hitherto been undisturbed. To hold historical discourses in the light of the contemporary discourses performs the work of rescuing a political moment from the weight of the past that seeks to put it under erasure: the critic reactivates that moment, considers the paths it points down that were not taken in real historical time, and in doing so exposes both emancipatory potentialities that populate our political horizon and the contingency of history as it has been written. In this way, by unearthing rhetorical artifacts positioned in the past and exposing them in the light of contemporary empirical realities, as well as contemporary thought, we might allow the critic to operate a-synchronically, with the intent of slackening the hold of hegemonic discourses over status quo social reality.

The metaphor of the power plant then remains an apt one for envisioning the potentialities of a new critical praxis, if understood in a slightly different light. The power station of the critic may harness those energies found within historical discourse and divert that energy toward the illumination of political potentialities, or lines of flight. We may find such energy in the material circulation of discourse, or in the physical, technological, governmental and bodily networks that quicken or stagnate that circulation, or in any individual discursive fragment, whether manifest in present-time or rescued from the petrified sea of history. The possibilities for selecting a critical object are as unlimited as the insights we may glean from considering that object, and equally subjective. The critic not only draws power from historical pieces of discourse, but diverts that power toward the construction of new discourses, new energies. Such an understanding of critical praxis frees the critic from the shackles of a fraught, ratiocinative objectivity, and makes obvious that interpretation is always-already rhetorical.

The vantage point of critical rhetoric, then, leads away from the idea that critics can rationally gain access to the truth of a text, and prioritizes instead the creation of a political rhetoric through the act of criticism. However, liberating the critic from the burden of finding truth, in turn, provides the major substantiation to the third theoretical accusation against critical rhetoric specified above (problem C), being that critical praxis facilitates subjective or arbitrary modes of criticism. I argue that this criticism fails to cause real problems for a critical rhetoric, first because its subjectivity constitutes a unique heuristic strength, and second because the reflexive nature of critical rhetoric checks back against arbitrariness.

McKerrow's (1989) critical framework attempts to unstick the critical program from haggling over the *truth* of what a given textual fragment *means* and the dry, non-political gaze that the academe often casts on even the most political objects. Then, it becomes possible for critics to direct their respective power stations toward a (joyful, or sorrowful, or fierce) proliferation of interpretations that ruminate on the contingencies of our perceived past and potential reconfigurations of our shared future. The results will always be tinged with subjectivity, of course, but better for it. If a kinder, more verdant, more emancipatory future politics can be realized, it seems as if must come from articulation of the multiple possible, and revolutionary, ways that subjects might relate to other subjects. Such a politics does not come from minds preoccupied with setting-straight the record of truth. The very effort reverts back to seeking out something beyond the doxastic (McKerrow, 1989), searching for a coherence that (if found) would normalize the operations of the past. The goal is not to normalize, or create a monolithic explanatory principle, it is to divert: to expose the past in its contingency and thereby dream alternative social relations to the ones that we have realized. It is through this process that we may articulate new political horizons.

Applying a stringent standard of logical coherence to theory building is of undisputed value, but this rigor need not necessitate objectivity. Theory requires further testing, specifically in regards to the utility it has to describe social relations and contribute to future political articulations. "As soon as you set cognition down in writing, it ceases to be true," Vaculík (1986) poses, "There is thus no idealism, no materialism, because there is no reason for them in the phenomena which they attempt to explain. But there are butterflies pinned down in a poisonous box" (Vaculík, p. 8). Social reality

overloads the definitions of monolithic theoretic structures, and these structures in turn become unable to pin it down without killing it. Materialism, for instance, could not account for the heterogeneity of workers' interests, the close association between capitalism and individualism rearing its head at an early date as labor began to sectionalize (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). Benjamin (1978), Mouffe and Laclau (1985) and McKerrow (1989) all dismiss monolithic truths because they have found such truths to be myths of Barbarism, the imminent but temporary posturing of hegemonic formations. As such, the critic should no longer dissect a thing to see how it *worked*, but to see how it *can* work. This is why McKerrow (1989) explicitly refrains from prescribing a single method on which critical praxis ought to be based; it seems he fears rightfully that attempts at methodological coherence underneath the theory would quickly revert to attempts to universalize the conditions for achieving utopia. In the following sections of this chapter, I do sketch out something of a method, but this method intends to develop a few conditions under which an artifact may challenge hegemonic formations. I do not suggest these are the only conditions.

To summarize, then, the theoretical framework of thesis argues for engaging in McKerrow's (1989) praxis of critical rhetoric. In this capacity, the critic intervenes into the operation of hegemonic discourse by "drawing together" rhetorical fragments. (b) These rhetorical fragments, held in tension with synchronic or asynchronic discourses, reveal a contradiction (*aporia*), gap, or stuttering in the formulation of the hegemonic code. (c) The critic then *reacts* to this gap, and attempts to suture it, either by ameliorating its tension with the hegemonic order or by, in an act of *invention*, envisioning a new social reality in which this social contradiction would be assuaged,

would no longer present a problem. The critical praxis identified here describes a process

of dissident rhetorical production available to dissident rhetors at large. The contact

points between critical rhetoric and the de-territorializing function of minor literatures

will become clear in chapter four of this thesis. Additionally, the theoretical orientation of

this thesis frames the analysis that follows as one of many possible understandings of

history. The method proposed in the following sections of this chapter competes with

other methods only by standards of coherence and consistency with the foundational

understandings of critical praxis. I do not present the identification of minor literatures as

the only possible method for engaging in critical rhetorical praxis.

Method: Toward a Minor Rhetoric

"Only expression gives us the method," write Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 17).

The notion that interpretation should, at its most critical juncture, consist of expression (a

textual experimentation, not a reading in accordance to established codes) constitutes the

critical intent behind identifying the workings of a minor literature; or, more true to the

process of expression, *making a minor literature work*. Brinkley (1985), in preface to

Deleuze and Guattari's famous work on minor literatures, suggests:

> …there is always a desire *not* to be interpreted, not to be produced and expressed
>
> in the terms that an interpretation employs. Typically the interpreter is an agent of
>
> a dominant social code; the interpretation reproduces the material it considers as
>
> instances of the code. The desire to escape such codification—for codification
>
> Deleuze and Guattari employ the word "territorialization"–the desire to de-code
>
> or to deterrirtorialize seems particularly crucial for minorities who want to remain
>
> minorities and affirm perspectives that are not those of the culture they inhabit. At

the same time, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, the problem of minorities is one which we all share. All of us suffer from interpretation; each of us—even the interpreter—suffers what Guattari calls the "powerful signs, which massacre desire." (Deleuze, Guattari & Brinkely, 1985, p. 13)

The trappings of the situated position of the critic, typically subservient to the reification of hegemonic codes, become clear in Brinkley's articulation. He conceives of the standard critical agenda as an attempts to classify textual meanings as belonging to a code (even if this code is understood as negative, as Marxist critics identify texts as expressive of the codes of false conscious) and as such, in the process of such identification, inevitably reifying the operation of that code. The objective of deterritorialization, for the critic or the dissident, is to take texts *out of* the flow of the codes of the social, to turn them against the major language with which they signify. In doing so, Deleuze and Guattari offer the notion of expression and experimentation as a critical alternative to classification and codification. "The desire to evade interpretation is not a desire to be *against* interpretation, to negate it," Brinkley writes (Deleuze, Guattari & Brinkley, 1985 p. 13). Instead, "the desire is rather to affirm an alternative which is simultaneously uninterpretable. Experimentation, Deleuze and Guattari suggest is an alternative to interpretation" (Deleuze, Guattari & Brinkely, p. 14). By uninterpretable the authors do not mean the pursuit of incoherence, but instead producing an end result that resists monolithic interpretive strategies. A critical rhetoric, as such, engages in experimentation not by attempting to excavate a singular meaning within a rhetorical artifact, but by examining the ways in which texts, as discrete pieces of discourse, resist interpretations that would schematize them in accord with hegemonic classificatory systems, and

examining the political potentials pointed to by the strategies through which texts enact

this resistance. In taking an asynchronous approach to criticism, juxtaposing past and

present moments in order to produce political illuminations, I offer that the method of

examination taken up in this thesis does not attempt to create any "catalogues" or

"codings" as such. Instead, I attempt to arrange productive or subversive associations (or

dissociations) between texts and other texts, texts and hegemonic structures, texts and

lived political reality. Indeed, the task of this thesis is to demonstrate the capacities in

which Vaculick and Kundera's texts produce rhetoric which operates according to tenents

of minor literatures, which retain their subversive potential in the territory of

contemporary politics.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the subversive modalities of minor literatures

as being, first, their deterritorializing operation in respect to social codes, their integration

of the political and the quotidian, and their invocation of an imagined utopia. Within the

text of this thesis, I will speak of minor literatures and minor rhetorics interchangeably.

This is the case precisely because I pose that, insofar as they perform a uniquely

subversive function, minor literatures *are* rhetorical. I do not endeavor to explicate the

possibility that rhetorics might fall into the class of minor literatures; rather, I pose that

when literature becomes minor it becomes rhetorical. The three criteria that define a

minor literature, offer a methodological starting place for assessing the political

potentialities of social movements across spacio-temporal boundaries. In employing this

method, I perform three main maneuvers. First, I explicate the historico-hegemonic

composition of the 1968 Czechoslovakian reform period. Second, I isolate moments

within the discourses produced by Kundera and Vaculík that oppose these hegemonic

articulations, either in generating antagonisms or enacting one of the other stylistic disruptions that comprise a minor literature. Third, I assess these contemporary political potential of these disruptions by exploring the way these ruptures might similarly contest, or instead reify, contemporary hegemonic structures. This method has the advantage of expanding the purview of antagonistic criticism so as to accommodate for the comparative political value of certain forms or strategies of contestation. That is, it views rhetorical production as potentially subversive both in its stylistic and ideological aspects. Moreover, selecting for those rhetorical elements within texts that exhibit political potentiality, and then testing those moments of potential against historical and contemporary hegemonic structures, allows the critic to triangulate the subversive potentiality of certain rhetorical tactics while placing reasonable boundaries around the scope of his/her analysis. Because the emphasis of movement studies, in the view argued above, consists in the isolation of cites of meaning that exhibit great political potentiality, the critic need not be exhaustive. Subsequent criticism may add to the list of political promises in these texts, or indict them for reifying the status quo. A critical praxis cannot portend to be monolithic in its conclusions. The intention is only to illuminate conditions under which greater social emancipation may become possible.

III. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

  This thesis reads the discourse of certain prominent political intellectuals in the Prague Spring period in order to isolate the ways in which the rhetoric of these figures, namely Milan Kundera and Ludivik Vaculík, may be re-activated as oppositional political discourses both in respect to the historico-hegemonic locations in which they were produced and in respect to the political reality of our contemporary moment. This approach is consistent with what McKerrow (1989) termed a "critical rhetoric" and, moreover, allows for a "materialist" ideological critique, in which the critic does not attempt to unearth the ideological underbelly of particular pieces of discourse, but instead attempts to align the energies of political fragments with other political energies, those of history and those of the present. In keeping with this formulation, I have defined ideology as the conceptual residuum of the movement and interaction of discourses, the idea of a material phenomenon. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) state this case in stronger language when they pose that "literature," and for our purposes rhetoric, too, "is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been…Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come" (p. 5). That is, the project of a minor literature is to exceed ideology, to map possible realities outside of material overdetermination. The venture of this thesis is to examine the mappings of the Prague Spring always with an eye toward what is to come. For this undertaking, I evaluate Kundera and Vaculík's discourse in respect to its

operations as what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) refer to as a "minor literature," meaning a subversive discourse that a "minority constructs within a major language" (p. 16). I have outlined the method as aimed at exploring the way that rhetorical assemblages may (a) engage in a deterritorialization of major languages (b) operate as assemblages that are intrinsically political, whose "cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" and (c) whose contents forward an expression of collective value (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 17).

In this chapter, I attempt to explicate a historical framework to aid in considering whether Vaculík and Kundera produce a discourse that performs a deterritorializing function within the major language of Czechoslovakian political discourse. In order to understand the operation of a deterritorializing discourse, first we must understand the territoriality toward which that discourse opposes itself. For the purposes of this inquiry, in seeking to re-activate the potential energy of a discourse in both its past and present location, the territory—the major language—of Communist-era Czechoslovakia and the contemporary United States require attention. This project undertakes to use a moment of Eastern European history to re-imagine possibility in Western politics. In this chapter, I will produce a mapping of the political territory of Czechoslovakia from the period between the World Wars to the normalization period that began in 1968 with the Warsaw Pact occupation of Prague. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I emphasize the rhetorical strategies employed by Kundera and Vaculík a heuristic for reimagining the possibilities for intellectual contributions to contemporary politics, and for their utility in making sense of contemporary political discourses on capitalism. These contact points should make clear that analyzing these two moments together has a certain strategic value

49

and should not be mistaken for an arbitrary selection of historical fragments. However, I do not portend that the interests expressed here should compete with other political re-activations of the same period. As Deleuze and Guattari articulate as preface to their analysis of Kafka's works:

> We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems an impasse, a tight passage, siphon. We will be trying only to discover what other points our entrance connects to what crossroads and galleries one passes through to link two points, what the map of the rhizome is and how the map is modified if one enters by another point. Only the principle of multiple entrances prevents the introduction of the enemy, the signifier and those attempts to interpret a work that is actually only open to experimentation (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1986, p. 3).

The principle of multiple entrances, as articulated here, dictates both that the critic not slay a text by saying it has one meaning, and that one should not attempt to understand text by accessing through one privileged site of meaning, for instance through a genealogy or a central interpretive theme. The idea of a texts which signifies reifies a fixed relationship wherein texts must act in conjunction with a specific meaning; the principle of multiple entrances assents to the critic's interpretation as being one of many meanings produced by considering a text. In constructing a historico-rhetorical context from which analyze the Prague Spring, then, I do not attempt to offer a complete recreations of the active politics of the period. Instead, I select as "points of entry" the historical and social assemblage of Communist-era Czechoslovakia during the period in which *The Joke*, the "Two Thousand Words Manifesto," and Vaculík's *samizdat* essays

were produced. The first section of this chapter examines the rupture between pre-Communist Czechoslovakia political and intellectual structures and those structures that came to dominate the operation of the social from the time the CPCz seized power into the late fifties. The following two sections of this chapter offer a more specific exegesis of the context surrounding the production of the artifacts that will be analyzed in the following chapter: Kundera's *The Joke*, and his remarks on the 4th Annual Czechoslovak Writers' Congress, and Vaculík's "'Two Thousand Words" manifesto, as well as the *samizdat* essays he wrote for Padlock Press, collected in *A Cup of Coffee With My Interrogator*. These selections come from different crucial points in the chronology of the Prague Spring period. *The Joke* was published in 1967, only months before the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress. The second section of the chapter constructs the context in which these texts were published. In the third section, I examine the circumstances surrounding the publication of the "Two Thousand Words' Manifesto," which partly incited the collapse of cooperation between Alexander Dubcek's administration and the Soviet Union that preceded the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechlolovakia (Navråtril, 1998), and was disseminated in June of 1968. Vaculík's collected essays were penned during the period of "normalization" that accompanied the repeal of the 1968 reforms, when renewed censorship forced his writing underground. By describing the territory of hegemonic discursive structures, and the material restrictions placed upon intellectual production within these periods, I foreshadow the ways in which textual analysis of artifacts of this period operated in relation to the political discourses of the Prague Spring period. The final section offers meaningful contact points between the flow of the social during the Prague Spring era and our contemporary political moment.

Re-constructing the discursive territory of the Prague Spring period in order to understand the deterritorializing function of its rhetoric requires diagnosing the workings of the dominant discursive assemblages of the time. The problematic of this venture is twofold. First, interpreting the hegemonic discourse during the period as being of a certain ideology, and classifying texts as subversive because they defy the trappings of that ideology, participates in the logic that ideologies exert force independent from their manifestation in the material circulation of discourse. As a foil to this problem, I argue that in constructing a historical context through which to understand the operation of a text, the most important information should come not from a diagnostic of the ideological character of discourses circulating at that time, but from the understanding of those discourses as constituted from the perspective of the text. That is, I offer that the construction of a historical context for a piece of rhetoric must also voice the way in which that rhetoric rises up to meet that context; the way it appears to succumb to the interpellation, or resist the influence of, hegemonic codes. This solves the problem wherein I might venture a monolithic interpretation of history in advancing an experimental understanding of texts. Foregrounding the way in which texts configure and express their own understanding of what an interpretive analysis might find to be the ideological trappings of their time ensures the critic remains at the level of discourse and do not assume the presence of a nebulous ideological force that does not actually influence the operation of the text the critic wishes to analyze. Moreover, foregrounding the perception of ideological influence generated by the text itself makes sure we are looking at the political articulation produced by a given textual assemblage from the same perspective as that from which that text enacts its subversion. For instance, Jiri Pehe

(1988) articulates that "socialism with a human face," as advocated by reformists from the period, came in at least two hues: that which authentically advocated that the integration of communist and democratic systems would be ideal, and those who believed "a more humane and democratic version of communism is the best they can hope for, especially because the Soviet Union would never allow a return of real democracy" (p. 3). One should not assume outright that all minor literatures of the time aimed past the democratization of communist systems toward the dissolution of communism for good, or its reverse. This assumption makes ideology the sole determiner of the character of oppositional discourse and erases the expressive agency that a text (and its rhetor) brings to bear in imposing its own desire on the body of the social, in shaping not only *response* but its *recognition* of that which it opposed. That is, the effects of ideology manifest with a difference every time they are instantiated into speech or act. This is the case precisely because ideology, as I argue in chapter two, comes to exist as a residuum of the interaction between desire and the discourse that composes a given social assemblage. As ideology has no overarching characteristics, save for the patterns of its operation within social discourses. As such, tracing the flows of ideological lines requires accounting for how their circulation manifests within the text itself. Otherwise the critic could suppose interaction with a locus of power that did not take place, or took place in different terms than expected.

That is to say, I will *prioritize* the territory of a given historical moment as it is presented within the text itself. The production of a text may be brought about in explicit and socially recognized contradiction to the will of a hegemonic body, and enforced through material edicts like censorship and suppression. Understanding, broadly, the map

of social discourses to which a given text responds, moreover, offers a helpful starting place in understanding the way in which a given text recognizes and orients itself around dominant codes. Certainly these codes may look different as they are re-produced or subverted within a text, but this difference will itself be telling of the operation of a minor rhetoric in deterritorializing major codes. As such, I endeavor to map the political terrain of Spring-era Czechoslovakia broadly here; in the following chapter I will highlight the way in which Kundera and Vaculík re-construct and subvert this mapping. This coheres with the venture in critical praxis I described in the previous chapter. My analysis in this instance articulates the dominant antagonisms that organized the hegemonic reality of Czechoslovakia in the era leading up to the Prague Spring. In the next chapter, I will express how these same antagonisms reiterate, with a difference, in the social reality articulated within Kundera and Vaculík's texts. Each of these perspectives will provide generative heuristics in determining the way rhetorical strategies deployed within these same texts operated subversively in their historical contexts. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will analyze these subversive strategies in respect to their contemporary potentiality, reading them in contact with contemporary discourses.

Point of Entry #1

I have noted before that historical interpretations of the Prague Spring often configure the events of the period as representative of the triumph of a liberal capitalist democracy over alternative political structures (Bracke, 2001, Pele, 1988).In the following chapter of this thesis, I will challenge this notion through a close examination of prominent intellectual discourses of the period. However, it is worth noting that the political history of the Czechoslovakian state further undermines the simplicity of such an

interpretation. Skilling (1976) offers that the legacy of the Prague Spring consists, in part, of democratic and liberal traditions within the country that preceded its capitulation to Communist-rule following World War II. He writes:

> The strongest traditions which the Czechoslovak communists had to grapple were those that had evolved during the twenty years of the First Republic between the two World Wars. Created largely as a result of the victory of the Entente and the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference, Czechoslovakia emerged as an independent state after three centuries of subservience and brought Czechs and Slovaks together in a single political entity for the first time in history. Modeled politically in the image of the Western democracies…the new state, lone in Eastern Europe, maintained a democratic system during the two decades between the wars. (Skilling, 1976, pp. 3-4)

The importance of these institutions, though they "broke with the historical experience of the Czechs and Slovaks within the Austo-Hungarian Monarchy," quickly gained a foothold within the intellectual consciousness of the period; there was enough continuity in institutional development that "the republic could be regarded as a logical culmination for the national awakening and of decades of striving for a democratic life, social advance and self-government" (Skilling, 1976, p. 4). The idea that the democratic impulses codified in the 1968 reforms belong to a teleological inevitability of the triumph of Western thought ignores two important parts of the reality of the Spring period, then: first, that there was already a strong inclination within Czech culture toward democratic institutions, and second that these democratic institutions worked, during the post-War period, toward the instatement of socialism within the country. Prior to the coup whereby

Gottwald seized full power for the Czechoslovak Communist party (the CPCz), the relationship between democracy and socialism was viewed as mutually reinforcing; socialism was understood as a "socially just form of democracy" (Kusin, 1971, p. 1).

Communist hardliners, however, opposed the gradualism of employing democratic means to instill socialist reform. Traditional institutions had to be explicitly opposed by Communist Party members, on both practical and political levels. Democratic traditions were construed by new Party members as a veil that blinded the proletariat from the truth of Capitalist exploitation: "The 'Castle' (*Hrad*), i.e., the President's office, was considered the pinnacle of power of the ruling classes…and the personification of Capitalist rule" (Skilling, 1976, p. 5). At the same time, democratic structures were exploited to empower the Communist party; the CPCz existed during the period between World Wars as a legitimate party within Czechoslovakia's larger political structure. When Gottwald (Prime minister and fully subservient to Stalin) began to transition the democratic support of Communist politician into an autocratic consolidation of the political authority under the CPCz, he used the favor won for Communism through democratic means to dissolve democracy from the inside. That is to say, while at first the notion prevailed that the CPCz was internalizing democratic values in a reciprocal exchange with the socialist views it imparted, Gottwald's "seizure of power in 1948 indicated, however, that the conversion of the communists, if there had been one, was superficial and that their repudiation of the nation's democratic past was total and permanent" (Skilling, 1976, p. 8). As Kusin poses:

> To say these voters and supporters of the Czechoslovak road to socialism were
> privy to Gottwald's and Stalin's long-term plans is ridiculous. After all they voted

56

in 1946 to make the Communist party the strongest in the country but not to

endorse its monopoly of power for all times to come…The Communist voters

were victims just as much as the more provident, who saw the danger

clearly…Gottwald very cleverly formulated his policy as a pursuance of national

and democratic revolution and its gradual transformation into the socialist

revolution. (Kusin, 1971, p. 7)

In effect, once dominant political and cultural traditions (in the form of democratic and

folkloric traditions) were pushed underground. The indoctrination of Stalinist paradigms

of history required the erasure of Czech historical experience, which "has always

represented a mingling of East and West," and a codification of Socialistic material

teleology over and against "liberalism, social democracy, nationalism, and religion"

(Skilling, 1976, p. 13). This necessitated an aggressive stance toward elements of cultural

and intellectual production in the form of a "full-scale effort to mold education,

scholarship, and the creative arts according to the Soviet concepts of socialist realism and

historical materialism" (p. 13).

We witness in these moments a profound re-territorialization of the discourses of the

period, both in the full-scale critique and dismantling of democratic insinuations, and also

in the peeling away of dominant forms of cultural expression and the corresponding

substitution of Leninist and Stalinist modes of thought and artistic production into social

discourses. The status quo ideology of the party operated on a Leninist paradigm that, in

Mouffe and Laclau's terminology, worked to assuage a disjunction between "Marxist

theory and the practice of Social Democracy" by hybridizing a Darwinian perspective on

natural evolution with a Hegelian trust in the teleological progression of history (Mouffe

57

and Laclau, 2001, p. 19). This view frames social change and progress as guarantees of the material unfolding of history, which was thought to operate according to strict scientific principles that promised the eventual victory of Communism.

The above analysis constitutes an initial mapping of a political rupture that, although it took place two decades prior, helped define the discursive production of the *socious* at the moment of the Prague Spring. The lead-up to the Prague Spring found the CPCz struggling to enact a re-territorialization of the structures of economic production and discursive circulations within the state. After his death in 1953, Gottwald's administration began to set into place a "New Course" in Czechoslovak politics, which consisted in a relaxation of the policies of industrialization and collectivization that had hitherto been the hallmark of Communist-era policy (Skilling, 1976, p 31). However, the party quickly reverted to motivating collectivization the following year. Moreover, under the leadership of new First Secretary Antonin Novotny, the party resisted any pressure to implement political changes; despite the government's shift to a new central figure, the leadership of "changes in leadership were minimal…The structure of Government, inherited from Gottwald, remained unaltered" (p.31). In the meeting of the 10th CPCz congress, the government organ reasserted its cultural role as a leader in the production of "scholarship and the creative arts" (p. 32).

What becomes visible in this historical shift is appearance of a new set of antagonisms in the Czechloslovak political structure. In Mouffe and Laclau's (1985) terms, we can read in this historical moment the contingent operation of an antagonism, meaning an oppositional alignment of key discursive elements that characterizes the organization and orientation of social discourses at a given historical moment. In this

instance, an alliance emerges between materialistic teleology and the autocratic regulation of both real and discursive channels within the state, posed antagonistically against the old political territoriality of the Czech state: religion and folk traditions, a sense of nationalism (in contention with party allegiance, or a fidelity to the idea of a revolutionary workers class that transcended national fervor), and the idea that liberal and democratic structures could be realized through democratic gradualism, as opposed to revolutionary, structures. These antagonistic structures provide one schematic from which we will interpret the rhetorical production of intellectual rhetors during the period. However, I have noted, in the analysis section of this thesis I will explicate the ways in which intellectuals during the period internalized, grappled with, and found lines-of-flight away from the restrictions of this same antagonistic relations. In the final analysis, then, priority will be given to the treatments of these antagonistic elements as they appear in the texts of Vaculík and Kundera.

Point of Entry #2

Intellectual rhetorical production during the 1950s and early 1960s responded to this re-orientation of the composition of the social away from old Czechoslovak political and cultural institutions and toward the hardline of Communist centralism. As the 1950s drew to a close "the Czechoslovak Party had overcome the difficulties created by the deaths of Stalin and Gottwald, the Pilsen riots and the New Course, and was committed to a relatively hardline even in the economic field" (Skilling, 1976, p. 32). However, for the first time since its inception, the CPCz became responsive to the popular condemnation of abuses of power by previous party officials. Skilling (1976) notes, "the immediate reaction of Czechoslovak party hierarchy was to join cautiously in the chorus

59

of denunciation of the cult of personality but to exempt Gottwald from personal responsibility" (p. 32). The bulk of responsibility was doled out onto less powerful members of the party such that the "modest and ambiguous" natures of the concessions were "insufficient to allay the unrest of the youth generally and of students and writers" (Skilling, 1976, p. 33). Here we witness a split between the intellectual and party consciousness of the period that would have conspicuous influence over the trajectory of the Prague Spring; in this moment, voices from writers and students alike begin to call into question the sufficiency of the leading role of the Party.

In this moment, though, we witness a new antagonism, however embryonic, beginning to take shape; the concept of the leading role of the Communist Party became wedded to revolutionary communism and, in turn, the Party defamed writers and students, who sought a relaxation in censorship and the abolition of the state controlled press, as pursuant of bourgeois notions of freedom that were in themselves anti-Communist. The intellectuals during the period operated under the weight of active censorship and indoctrination. Party leaders exerted significant influence over the scholarly production of academics, as well as the production of the artistic intellectuals. This antagonism fomented along the countervailing development of party and intellectual reactions to the political situation in Czechoslovakia. While the Party maintained its hardline allegiance to Orthodox Marxism, the more relaxed restrictions on travel following Stalin's death allowed the integration of Western and non-Orthodox Marxist thought into the Czechoslovak political field. This integration "in turn tipped the balance away from the previous dependence on Soviet scholarship and the rigidly enforced acceptance of established Soviet interpretations" (Skilling p. 91). In reaction against this

broadening of thought, which, on the one hand defied the foundational precepts of Party doctrine, and on the other bucked against the Party's leading role in intellectual production, the party re-doubled its influence in cultural and academic production, committing scholarly organs to support the views of the party, and vastly diminishing the influence of scholars on state policy.

Yet, despite these measures taken by the Party to maintain a leading role in cultural and artistic production, fragments of pre-Communist discourses surfaced in the period, bubbling up within the major artistic discourse sanctioned by the state. As the Novotny administration entered into the 1960s, the writers active during the period had begun to find strength in organization. In the Stalin era, cultural production during the period largely took place under the close supervision of the Ideological Department, and through a combination of "administrative coercion," and the benefits of membership, including favor in publishing house and compensation, the state exerted a measure of control over writers, influencing them to toe the ideological line of the party (p. 64). The effectiveness of these controls weakened over time; "in the early sixties, however, the union, its congresses and its journals began to resist complete party control n to achieve greater leeway for free discussion, thus becoming, in the words of a Czech historian, 'an oasis' of democracy" (Skilling, p. 64)*.* The magazines *Kulturny zivot* and *Literarni noviny* became widely circulated texts, which to a great extent defied the controls of the censorship bureau and, as such, acted as an outlet for discourses produced by the intelligentsia. The congresses of the Czech and Slovak writers in 1963 demonstrated the state's flagging control over its intellectual organs. The dissident tone of these proceedings foreshadows the events of the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress in 1967.

The congresses offered a firm and fiery rebuke of the Czechoslovakian status quo; the attendant writers' criticisms ranged from specifically literary interests to more sweeping cultural injuries, like the failure of the new administration to commit to the rehabilitation of those sanctioned or exiled by Stalin. These events are worth noting not only because they set rhetorical precedent for the Writers' Congress in 1967. They also contextualize the convening of the congress as an intrinsically subversive act; it elicited a strong rebuke from the Party and openly defied its attempts to exert ideological control, and, moreover, operated against the party's determination of who ought to have a role in cultural production. When Novotny authorized, in 1963, an aggressive campaign against the dissident writers that resulted in the active interference, censorship and closing of literary institutions, the intention was to assert the role of the party in cultural production. In turn, the discourses of these magazines obtained a symbolic dimension in which their very circulation constituted a threat to the leading role of the party. Novotny decreed his intention to "sharply repudiate every attempt at criticism which wished to weaken the leading role of our party in the state and which impaired the unity of the socialist party," while the writers' attempt to assert their political influence through cultural production seemed to undermine that role precisely as Novotny articulated it (qtd in Skilling, 1976, p. 66). The antagonistic hegemonic structure established here, in which intellectual production was held in opposition to the leading role of the party in matters of culture, terminates in an aporia; the party still required the participation of intellectuals because those writers and critics and scholars were precisely the agency through which the party was supposed to exert its leading role in culture. However, the intellectual voice, if it was not in concert with the voice of the party, became intrinsically dissident.

This was the historical context in which *The Joke* was first published in Czechoslovakia. Despite the intensifying opposition from Novotny's administration, intellectuals and writers in that time were working with increasing success to defy the explicit ideological restrictions of the period. The effect was both the mobilization of discourses that could be more critical (or were more critical, only later to be rebuked or redacted) of state institutions, as well as a resurgent display of pre-Communist and more cosmopolitan cultural influence. The rhetorical production of this period, then, overflowed the restrictive boundaries delimited by Party apparatuses. As such, reformist voices began to articulate lines of defiance or escape from the prevailing hegemonic order. It was not for lack of trying that the party failed to maintain its leading role in intellectual production, and the voices of intellectuals in in the period exceeded their role as supportive components of Party culture.

Therefore, *The Joke* debuted in the midst of a historical period defined by three different modes of territorialization. As I have argued, the first two modes consist in antagonisms whereby the state figured pre-Communist Czechoslovak political traditions, in which democracy played an important role, as bourgeois conventions that defied the revolutionary role of the party and, secondly, the role of intellectuals as operating in contradiction to the leading role of the party in cultural production. The third consists in party discourse vis-a-vis its own history. At the beginning of the 1960s, the CPCz stance toward Stalinism was gradually shifting. As Anna Basistova (2015) argues, the party discourse at the time was:

> Marked by the breakthrough moment of the 12th Congress of the Communist
>
> Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) during which certain "mistakes" perpetrated in the

Stalinist era were admitted. Social issues were openly discussed not only in elite

intellectual circles, but amongst all citizens. Sympathizers of reform, economic

and otherwise, had begun to emerge even among members of the Communist

Party. (Basistova, p. 11).

This bourgeoning sympathy for reformers, without a doubt, provided the

discursive space for *the Joke* to arrive without the reprove of censorship. After its

publication in 1967, the novel went through three printings and received reviews from

both party and non-party magazines. Its most favorable reactions came from those who

were sympathetic to reformist positions. The appeal of the novel, for these critics, lay in

its treatment of the cult of personality and its de-mystification of the Stalinist period; they

lauded the text for its subversion and objective reflection on history (Basistova, 2015).

That the state set precedent for discourses on the offenses of Stalinism helps explain why

the text did not meet suppression during its original circulation. Moreover, *The Joke* saw

its publication so close on the heels of the Prague Spring that it is possible the novel's

fate may well have been different, if not for the relaxation of censorship that

accompanied the transition from Novotny's administration to the leadership of Alexander

Dubcek. Indeed, when the Warsaw Pact invasion silenced the Prague Spring, the novel

was met with retroactive censorship from the party. During the period of "normalization,"

Kundera's books were pulled from the shelves and "Czech and Slovak readers could read

only a single critical article, published in the official press, which reassessed, re-

interpreted, and repudiated Zert [The Joke]" (Basistova, 2015, p. 13). I will say much

more on the text's orientation toward Stalinism and the antagonistic mappings articulated

above, as well its general operation as a minor literature in the following analysis chapter.

Future research could valuably research the differences in the censored and non-censored versions of the novel. For now, *The Joke* appeared alongside the burgeoning reformist discourses of the Prague Spring, but it would be just over a year before, having been met with the onslaught of censorship accompanying normalization, its rhetorical circulation took on a different speed, a clandestine speed that links up with Vaculík's underground essays.

In 1967, the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress (or the 4th congress of the Union of Writers) brought the confrontation between the party and intellectuals to a head. The liberal writers of the period openly confronted official party policy; the discourses therein were considered so bitter that they were censured in all official press. Only the speeches of state-affiliated writers were reproduced, so accounts of the conference quickly made their way by word-of-mouth into political circles (Skilling, 1976). Censorship was subject to broad critique, and Vaclav Havel (who would come to be prime minister after Czechoslovakia peacefully transitioned to democracy in 1989) focused his statements on critiquing the bureaucratic organization of the Union of Writers. This criticism of the country's literary organ, combined with the more sweeping criticisms positioned against Czechoslovak stances on domestic and foreign policy, reified the antagonist terms with which the writers had come to meet top-down authority within Czechoslovakia. The meeting was interpreted as an affront against both orthodox Communist values and the leading role of the party, in much the same terms I have discussed previously.

Several of the attending writers met with swift rebuke from the CPCz: Pavel Tigrid and Jan Benes both received prison sentences for subversive activities. This rhetoric was supplemented by even more aggressive action toward the writer

membership. Vaculík, Liehm, and Klima were expelled from the party. Kundera

somehow escaped such censure, in spite of the fact that his speech explicitly opposed the

party's role in cultural leadership and, indeed, the hegemonic influence of Communist

ideals over the composition of the Czechoslovakian polis. His discourse "praised the

Czech democratic tradition and its cultural ties with Europe," and, as such, directly

intervened in the antagonism between Communist and pre-war Czechoslovakian senses

of political participation, and decentered Soviet leadership as the guiding voice of

political development during the period (Skilling, 1976, p. 71). The reactions to the

proceedings of the Writers' Congress, then, cemented the oppositional relationship

between writers and the party that had been building for sometime. Moreover, these

discourses participated in a burgeoning vein of reformist political discourse that found

more ground over the decade, if not to question, then to reflect with more freedom on the

state of political affairs. It was this opening of reflective political channels that

established the pretext for structural modifications within the political composition of the

state, which would eventually lead to the gradual democratization of the Czech system

and the transition from Novotny to the leadership of Alexander Dubcek. I will explicate

this development in more detail in the following section.

Point of Entry #3

The 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress made inroads to the security of Novotny's

position at the helm of the CPCz, although the signals failed to register within the

populous at first. Novotny's rebuke of the writers, while superficially continuing the line

of cultural censure and indoctrination that had characterized public policy up until this

point, also created fissures within the party; a Central Committee meeting during 1967

found "in a manner unprecedented in past sessions, however, some voices were raised in opposition, and several votes were cast against the proposed actions" against the writers, with one member going so far as to proclaim the writers as mirrors of society (Skilling, 1976, p. 164). It was during this meeting that Dubcek first appears as a relevant contributor to discourse of the period. His statements, initially understood as innocuous in their treatment of reform as being necessary specifically in reference to foiling dissatisfaction from the Slovak population, formed a counterpoint with Novotny's hardline stance against making "any serious concessions to the growing desire for reform" (p. 165). During the October Plenum Dubcek's discourse took on a far more explicit stance on reform, decrying the current stance of the CPCz as being disconnected with the "concrete people" who made up the state and indicating that conservatism should be considered as much a threat to the realization of Communist goals as liberalism. He argued that it was necessary to "clarify the relations of work in the central organs, to make some further demands of the work of the Central Committee, to work out a long-term party program," and to solidify the function and responsibilities of all governmental organizations (qtd. in Skilling, 1976, p. 167). Moreover, Dubcek's speech was met immediately by censure from Novotny, but all the same caused a deep rift in party allegiances.

It took until the January plenum for Novotny to be officially removed from power. During a previous session the month before, he placed himself at the "disposal of the plenary session of the Central committee," and resigned himself to abiding by the will of the governing body in regards to his continued leadership (qtd in Skilling, 1976, p. 174). Novotny's fate ultimately turned on the Central Committee's accession to the

necessity of intra-party democratization. In order to achieve this end, the functions of First Secretary and President would be divided, and fresh blood infused into the composition of the CPCz. Novotny, as a result, was pressured into resignation, and Alexander Dubcek was selected as his successor. The process of his ouster was "accomplished peacefully, and in a seemingly democratic fashion, through an orderly process of debate and voting in the topmost party organs" (Skilling, 1976, p. 178). Pre-Communist democratic values here briefly reemerged, although at this moment their manifestation was limited to the division of posts and dialogue within party membership, that would come to mark the developments of the Prague Spring.

There is not space within this thesis to recount in detail the voluminous discourses that accompanied the reforms that, despite expectations, came to pass in the coming months. Indeed, no matter the stance one takes on the sincerity of Dubcek's reformism, the situation quickly escalated beyond the predictions of those in power. Skilling (1976) writes:

> From the early days of March political developments assumed a dynamic and spontaneous character that awakened the fears of some that the party was no longer fully in command of the movement for reform. There was an extraordinary out burst of public discussion…which included mounting criticism of the power centers of the old political system and strong pressures for change….As a result, the leadership was to some extent overtaken by events and pushed into actions more radical than intended. By the time of the CC plenum, early April, however, it seemed to have been able to consolidate the situation and to prepare the way for further controlled advance. (p. 196)

The events of 1968 moved with great energy. The reforms quickly exposed the prevailing

antagonistic structure as fundamentally constrictive. They introduced the idea of

democracy back into association with Communist principles. Moreover, they opened

antagonistic form to experimentation. Prominent party members, such as deputy prime

minister Ota Sik and head of state television Jiri Pelikan, became vocal supporters of

reform. Williams (1997) takes care to note that the unique material conditions of

Czechoslovakia at the time enabled this antagonistic shift to take place. In some respects,

Dubeck's administration believed that Moscow's consent to the change in leadership

implicitly consented to the political mobilizations that had brought about that change.

There was also the perception that the Soviet Bloc would be more tolerant after changes

brought about under Khrushchev's leadership, prior to his death. No Soviet troops were

stationed nearby. Most importantly, the authority that a Communist structure commanded

over the economic sector ironically opened the sector up for experimentation.

"Membership in the Soviet sphere of influence would allow a state to pursue

unconventional political and economic arrangements that in the West would be quickly

overwhelmed"; a regulated market meant that it was possible to carefully hybridize

socialist and liberal practice (Williams, 1997, p. 11). The administration, then, at this

level (and for just a moment), troubles the antagonistic structure. The reform discourses

do not invert the antagonism, or neutralizes its tension, but exceeds the constraints of the

structure entirely, racing past them; for a moment, the fact that the forms are opposed

simply falls away. From a historical perspective it's hard to overvalue what we witness in

this development. As Kramer (2010) writes:

Far-reaching reforms ear in the Prague Spring, including he elimination of censorship, the emergence of unofficial political "clubs," the removal of orthodox Communist officials, and the general effort to forge 'socialism with a human face,' brought a sweeping revival of political and cultural life in a country that had been one of the most repressive in the Soviet Bloc. As the reform program gained pace and public support grew, the Prague Spring took on a life of its on and gradually eluded the control of the KSC. Traditional Marxist-Leninist institutions in Czechoslovakia were on the verge of being swept away. (p. 39)

In the wake of this forward momentum, this sweeping away, came the possibility of an integrated system that was not coherent within the Soviet antagonistic structure that so closely preceded it (which disavowed culture for party, condemned democracy as a bourgeoisie institution, and could not dream an integrated system underneath Leninist orthodoxy). The Dubeck administration's reform policies rejected the oppositional character of these coordinates. It is important to stress here that the way in which these reform discourses exceed the antagonistic modes that existed just months before should *not* allow us to slip arguments about the inevitability of liberal practice in the back door. The urge to marry socialist practice to historical Czechoslovak democratic traditions coincided with a fidelity to diplomatic ties to Moscow on a political level and, on an intellectual level, consisted in an attempt to augment, not throw off, preexisting economic practice. It is worth repeating here that it was control over economic institutions that enabled the experimental economic practice of the Prague Spring and that Dubcek, too, still saw himself as an obedient Communist.

The energy of the spring exceeded the containment of preexisting categories: "1968 was not a confrontation with the past, but an attempt at a marriage of democracy and socialism," which presented a new phenomenon to both the Soviet Bloc and the world at large (Williams, 1997, p 13). This immense deterritorialization of the conventional antagonistic code exceeded, too, the West's adversarial position toward Communism, which in its own way kept stable the antagonism between liberal and socialistic values. The reforms pushed forth a synthetic model that ungrounded the antagonistic schematics hitherto observed in history. And this experimental energy formed multiplicities of new political coordinates; new intellectual assemblages in the form of student groups, organizations of workers, associations of writers and other intellectuals.

Alongside the destabilization of the dominant codes of the political sphere, the reforms in this period also opened discursive channels of expression for writers and intellectuals that before were closed. The same forces that pushed forth an attitude of democracy saw fit for a relaxation of censorship laws, a condition that allowed for the reinvigorated circulation of *Literarni listy*, which enjoyed a 300,000-issue circulation in 1968 when Vaculík published the "Two Thousand Words." As Skilling (1976) describes:

> Written at the request of a number of scholars and scientists, it was signed
> originally by over sixty persons, some of whom were ordinary works and farmers,
> others, distinguished figures from various fields of science, scholarship and the
> arts. The magnitude of the controversy, national and international, which it
> produced, was doubt a surprise to its signatories. The document contained sharp
> criticism of the party's past record, but paid tribute to the fact that the CPCz had

launched the democratization movement and that some of its leaders were seeking

to redress mistakes. (p. 275)

I will analyze the criticisms contained within this text in more detail in the following

chapter. The most troubling part of the text to those figures, both nationally and

internationally, who would come to organize the Soviet Bloc invasion, was its call for

community organization and political expression. "The intention of the 'Two Thousand

Words' had been to alert the public to the threats to the democratization movement and to

stir people into action, especially at lower levels of government," but instead the

document further polarized the reformist and conservative members of the state and

produced intense concern both in Moscow and in neighboring countries such as Poland

(Skilling, 1976, p. 277; Williams, 1997). Critics commonly recognize the document's

causal role in the ensuing occupation (Skilling, 1967, Williams, 1997, Kramer, 2010); it

"became one of the catalysts for convening the Warsaw Meeting in mid-July [1977],

marking the point of no return for Soviet policy on rolling back the Prague Spring,"

(Kramer, 2010, p. 177). In the following chapter, I will analyze the "The Two Thousand

Words" with attention to its location in this moment of antagonistic experimentation: a

political moment in which the rate of intellectual discourse raced beyond the coordinates

of governmental reformist discourse that had, as I have illustrated, already surpassed

hegemonic antagonistic structures. This moment hints to represent a tremendous episode

of deterritorialization, of the attenuation of the political order into its breaking point; we

shall observe this in the text.

Indeed, the Soviet Bloc invasion demonstrates these breaking points had been

met; The invasion began on August 20th. The period of normalization that followed

featured an immediate crackdown on the reforms that had characterized the Spring; most key issues were reversed, but, after massive popular protest to the occupation, some reformers were kept in governmental posts (Kramer, 2010). The political reality, however, was that the ensuing years saw the "re-revolutionizing" of the Czechoslovakian system, where the old antagonisms model returned, held into place by the threat of violence and the dejected acquiescence of a large section of the populace (Williams, 1997). Any discussion of reform was censured; consolidation proceeded in both political and economic sectors. The situation for intellectuals was exceptionally dire. As Pehe (1988) argues:

> The neo-Stalinist leaders brought to power by Soviet tanks knew that if they let this entire structure exist—however controlled through censorship—the literature and people around it would eventually assume their role of a parallel political structure. To be able to assume absolute control, the leaders had to destroy the entire structure of Czechoslovak literature, the intricate organism that had grown over many years…Virtually all literary magazines were banned, editors fired, and unreliable writers---especially those active in 1968, banned, not allowed to publish even a word. Their works were taken off library shelves, and their name obliterated from text books. (p.158)

Yet, Pehe (1988) also notes that this period of normalization gave birth, through its restriction, to new literary technologies: the birth of exile literature and domestic *samizdat* (underground, clandestine press) as new modes of distribution and writing. Vaculík's essays, which I consider in the next chapter, fall into the latter category. Vaculík was a foundational writer in the Czech *samizdat*; his press, *Edice Petlice,* was the

first well-organized independent publishing house of the normalization period (Pehe, 1988). Moreover, "over the years *samizdat* publishing has become such an integral part of Czech culture that almost everyone who is interested in literature keeps at home or regularly follows samizdat publications" (p. 161). This underground literary circulation formed what Pehe calls a "parallel culture" to the hegemonic structure of normalization: a resistant culture that lives underneath the dictates of the hegemonic culture, subterranean but richer, and more important to culture, than the major tongue (p. 158). Establishing the nuances of the territory of the normalization period as it departs from that of the Prague Spring period exceeds the scope of the present thesis. Instead, the next chapter interprets these texts from two different perspectives. First, I will examine the way in which the technology of the *samizdat* writing evokes a sense of the collective (property we have ascribed to minor literature) and how that evocation, if it does exist, can be read in relation to Pehe's notion of parallel culture. Second, I will question the way in which these essays may be read as lines-of-flight[3] from pre-normalization reformist discourses. That is, at what point do Vaculík's essays link up with the political lines drawn by reform discourses? And, finally, what energetic force can be located in a political discourse that continues to proliferate after its trajectory is broken—after it turns underground? I have diagnosed in this chapter the mounting of an energetic trajectory in the 1968 period, and foreshadowed the function of intellectual discourse in the development, collapse, and

---

[3] Deleuze & Guatarri (1985, 1986) employ the term lines-of-flight to describe the movement of certain assemblage (discursive, social, etc.) away from the discursive territory of the social; the line-of-flight does not dialectically engage with the territory it resists, but defies the oppositional authority of its categories completely. A line-of-flight away from the territorial codes of the social is not necessarily politically positive; lines-of-flight can be highly experimental, but can also be violent ruptures that tend toward fascism.

underground persistence of dissident models of discourse. Now, we will make these considerations material by considering them from the perspective of the texts: another point of entry, where we can view the territory in regard to the way in which intellectual rhetors have participated in its deterritorialization.

IV: ANALYSIS

Introduction

In the previous chapter of this thesis, I characterized the territory of the major discourse of Spring-era Czechoslovakia. I centered the operation of discursive antagonisms during the period, a term I borrow from Mouffe and Laclau (1985) to describe the organization of hegemonic formations along the contingent alignment and opposition of terms, which the authors call chains of equivalence. I concluded that hegemonic relations during the Prague Spring period organized around two major antagonisms, defined by their discrete chains of equivalence. These antagonisms are as follows. Antagonism #1 consists in a chain of equivalence that unifies (the leading role of the party), (orthodox Marxism/materialism), (autocracy), (belief in the immanence of revolution), and (Party allegiance) in opposition to (religion), (folkloric traditions), (nationalism), and (democracy). Antagonism #2 consists in a chain of equivalence that unifies (belief in the imminence of revolution), (the leading role of the Party), and (orthodox materialism) equalized in opposition to (cosmopolitanism), (democracy), (intellectualism), and (liberalism).

These oppositions, I argue, constituted persuasive elements in the discursive territory of the state. As a moment, I argued, the Prague Spring engaged experimentally with this discursive territory, and in doing so served a deterritorializing function, subverting the antagonistic relations which larger Soviet alignments predicated themselves upon. Biesecker-Mast writes, "social movements can challenge the status quo either by subverting social and cultural differences through the exploitation of an antagonism or by dismantling an antagonism that structures a feature of the status quo"

(Biesecker-Mast, 1996, para 20). I argued that the Prague Spring represented the second type of challenge to the status quo: its discourse, and the modification and policies that accompanied that discourse, sped out beyond the antagonisms of the status quo, imagining the interdependent relation of democracy, liberalism and socialist economic practice. In this chapter, I read Kundera's *The Joke*, Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words" manifesto, and the discursive technology of his *samizdat press* as another way to map this discursive territory, as well as a way to identify lines of flight away from its organizational antagonisms.

This chapter examines Kundera's novel *The Joke*, employing the criteria that Deleuze and Guattari specify as belonging to a minor literature, that is, a subversive literature that performs a deterritorializing function inside of a major language (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1986). In this chapter, I primarily explicate the deterritorializing discursive production of *The Joke* as employing a polyphony sarcastic, religious, and folk discourses to form an ambivalent language that deterritorializes the terrain of the Czechoslovak social. I take special note of the way in which this mode predicates on a marrying of personal and political storylines, a narrative choice which links up the second tenet Deleuze and Guattari ascribe to a minor literature, that "everything in them is political," that their "cramped space" forces the personal to link up immediately with the political (1986, p. 17). Finally, I mark moments in which the text evokes utopian constructions, the third tenet of minor literatures. In the second section, I trace the deterritoritalizating devices of this text into Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words" manifesto and the discourses of Vaculík's *samizdat* press, which became active only during the period of normalization that followed the Prague Spring. I conclude by explicating the rhetorical potentiality of these strategies of

deterritorialization employed by these texts in the terrain of contemporary Westrern

political praxis, and, finally, assessing the utility of these strategies in augmenting our

understanding of intellectual praxis and the function of social movements.

Kundera and the Deterritorializing Function of Ambivalence

Kundera's text demonstrates the utility of narrative when employed to engage in a

symbolic deterritorialization of the hegemonic codes of its era. In *the Joke*, Kundera

evokes an ambivalent portrait of the relation between the values of the state, its

ideological apparatus, and the psychic reality of the human subject. This portrayal calls

into question naturalized power relationships within the political culture of the Soviet

Bloc. The ambivalence in the text stems from, on the one hand, an interrogation of the

norms in Prague that allowed for the regulation of individual bodies and civic practices

during, and following, Stalin's rule. On the other hand, the text does not cast the

protagonist of the novel, who finds this sort of political regulation opposed to his desires,

in a favorable light. In the character of Ludvick Jahn, Kundera constructs his protagonist

as a misogynistic cynic, a man whose desires to control and dominate the actions of

women lead (always indirectly, through a slight twist of fate) to negative political

entanglement with the state. In this section of this chapter, I will articulate how this

relationship between the values of the Party and the psychic reality individuals, as

articulated in *The Joke*, fosters a critique of the political reality of post Stalin-era Prague,

while at the same time attempting to delimit the point at which individualism becomes a

toxic value. I argue that Kundera's text, then, undermines the antagonistic structure

whereby individuality is pitted against the collective good of the body politic. By

depicting the alienating outcomes of a social structure that does not make space for the

expression of individual subjectivity, that finds such expression subversive, the author poses that this type of denial actually works against the ideal of a collective good.

In order to explicate this argument, I will first preview the larger deterritorializing movement of the novel as a rhetorical text, before turning to the text to explicate the various ways in which that deterritorialization is enacted through rhetorical strategies within the novel's discourse, Finally, I will summarize the ways in which these specific deterritorializing rhetorics contribute to the overall deterritorializing function of the text. This organizational structure will ground the description of the novel's overall deterritorializing function in specific textual analysis, while clarifying its overall function as a subversive textual assemblage.

Ambivalence Cancels Sarcasm

As I will illustrate, Ludvik seems to turn against the social (against women, against the state, against his classmates) precisely because the state, by censuring his voice and sentencing his body, cannot bring his interiority to cohere with the rigid optimism it values. The state demands homogeneity, yet something nascent in Ludvik's character remains heterogeneous, growing progressively hostile. In this view, the text condemns the restraints on individualism characteristic of the status quo at the time of Kundera's writing. At the same time, however, this nascent part of Ludvik's character, his preoccupation with individualism, possesses a toxic kernel. His primary individualistic act, the writing of a joke on a postcard at the age of twenty, stems from a patently anti-social disposition toward both romantic and platonic relationships that follows him throughout the text. This disposition delimits the horizon of individualism within the text, being the place at which individualism *becomes* threatening not only to

79

the norms and ideals of the social, but to the very agents who compose the social. In holding both of these premises (that the psychic reality of persons cannot cohere fully in an ideological structure and that individualism unchecked breads toxic social relations) as simultaneous truths, I argue that Kundera's text interrogates the antagonism that holds individualism against class unity, suggesting instead that individual expression and class unity operate interdependently rather than in contradiction.

To explicate this thesis, I isolate three rhetorical features in Kundera's text that facilitate its deterritorializing function. First, Ludvik's narrative maps his political struggles onto his interpersonal relationships (particularly, his relationships with women), both by centering romantic relationships as the causal element in his political downfall, but, concomitantly, by turning them into the vessel for Ludvik's political expression. Second, the text presents the incoherence of individual and collective realities through the vehicle of sarcasm. Sarcasm operates as minor voice in the text, a tongue that displays "a high coefficient of deterritorialization," and "that which the minority constructs within a major language" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 16). In this case, sarcasm becomes the tongue of the cynic, and of the individualist, as I will explain further, through Ludvik's ill-advised joke. Third, by upending a linear narrative structure to reveal the terrain of the social in from multiple narratorial viewpoints), the text portrays Ludvik's actions in a light that reveals the importance of rehabilitating his subjectivity without refuting the intrinsic deficiencies in his character. The first of these rhetorical tactics (integrating the political into the romantic) allows *The Joke* to submerge political critique inside an ostensibly apolitical tenor, while at the same time depicting a disjunction between the psychic reality of persons and the social reality codified in the ideology of the state. Yet,

as I will illustrate in detail, Ludvik's psychic reality, especially when directed toward

romantic relationships, consists in a cynical, abusive and fraught cognition. These

qualities aligns the protagonist's subversion with the operation of a toxic social element,

and as such subjects his stances to rebuke. The third rhetorical tactic in the novel, by

which multiple narrators (Helena, Jaroslav and Kotska) interject their vantage points and

thereby upend a linear narrative structure, accomplishes the task of resuscitating Ludvik's

political narrative, by linking his story up with the story of other agents who themselves

have diverse relations to the dominant codes of the social. In illustrating the effect of

these rhetorical tactics, I first explore the condensation of the political into the romantic

within the text, before turning to investigate deterritorializing operation of sarcasm, and

finally, noting the rhetorical effect of parallax.

Mapping of the Political onto the Romantic (Order or Ardor?)

The *Joke* is divided into sections, each with an assigned narrator save for the last

section, which features a polyphony of voices. The first "Ludvik" section renders the

protagonist's misunderstanding of the operation of social codes as the source of his

adolescent downfall. Reflecting on his "first major disaster," which occurs his first year

in university, the narrator supplies that "it all goes back to my fatal predilection for silly

jokes and Marketa's fateful inability to understand them" (Kundera, 1967b, p. 31). What

befalls him stems decidedly from a misapprehension, but the nature of this

misapprehension is more complicated than Ludvik's own voice would have it. The text of

Ludvik's joke reads, "Optimism is the opium of the people! A healthy atmosphere stinks

of stupidity! Long live Trotsky! Ludvik." (Kundera, 1967b, p. 34). He tells this joke,

however, not out of deliberate subversion or any allegiance to Trostky, but out of an

aggressive relation to romantic ardor. The joke comes as an attempt to weaken the

resistant disposition of his would-be-lover, Marketa, "the type of woman who takes

everything seriously (which made her totally at one with the spirit of the era)" (Kundera,

1967b, p. 31). Ludvik sends the joke on a postcard to Marketa during her time at a two-

week Party training course, a training course that intervened against his desire to "put our

relationship (which until then had consisted of walks, talks and a few kisses" on a more

concrete footing (p. 34). The direct exigency of his postcard was an epistle received from

Marketa in which she "praised the 'healthy atmosphere' that reigned there [at the training

session] and diligently she added a few words to the effect that the revolution in the West

would not be long in coming" (Kundera, 1967b, p. 35).

That Ludvik responds to Marketa's statements with hostile sarcasm, despite the

fact he "quite agreed with what she said," in order to refute her identity conflates his

transgressions against women with political transgressions (Kundera, 1967b, p. 35).

"Lack of respect for women," was a note on Ludvik's Party record prior to the incident

with Marketa. He himself describes the postcard as a missive purely designed "to hurt,

shock and confuse her" (p. 34). The, joke he tells, then, may not be expressly subversive,

but emerges nonetheless from an antisocial bitterness and desire to conquest over the

values and boundaries of another individual. The protagonist's action forces the political

into the personal; he explicitly contests the party ideology out of spite and discontent

toward his potential suitor, not from any overtly anti-Communist sentiments. This

resistance symbolically links Ludvik's personal and romantic dispositions. By centering

the romantic narrative as the axis around which Ludvik's political transgressions spin

(here, and later in the novel as I will illustrate), Kundera inserts a distance between the

Ludvik's political voice and the voice of the text. Because the text presents Ludvik as a misogynist and a cynic, his political voice seems to issue from a bad conscience; anything which could ring true in his commentary withdraws from the threshold of subversion because Ludvik's toxic personality subjects anything said in his tongue to reproach.

Ludvik's disposition toward Marketa is, from the outside, characterized by condescension, a desire to possess her and to prevent her from operating autonomously. The narrator explicitly presents these intentions as such, and the gravity with which they influence his actions leads not only to, as we have discussed, his composition of the joke, but also to his subsequent refusal to be helped. As Ludvik awaits trial, Marketa meets with him. She offers to return to him, and spare him of disciplinary consequences. Of this, the protagonist notes:

> On one condition, of course: that her Salvationist urge be fully satisfied for that to happen, it was necessary the object of salvation (alas, I in person) would agree to acknowledge his deep, his very deep guilt. And that I could not do…I did not give in to Marketa, I refused her help and I lost her; but is it true that I felt innocent?"
>
> (Kundera, 1967b, p. 45)

This passage reflects that Ludvik's issue with announcing his guilt does not rest, as I have noted, in following the Party ideology. In time, he comes to apologize and acknowledge the error of his ways in front of countless Party officials, and at last the court. What bars him from salvation is his inability to submit to Marketa's desire—his insistence that her ego not be satisfied at the expense of his own, even if it means expulsion from the party. The locus of his transgressions is his wish to impose his will on others. When Kundera

describes Ludvik's expulsion from the party and his university, he crystalizes this dominating will as an alienating factor, not only in regard to Ludvik's personal relations but in relation to the social body at large. He loses Marketa, but more than that. When the counsel tries and convicts Ludvik during a trial presided over by his peers, he narrates that, "Every single one of them raised their hands" (Kundera, 1967b, p. 51). Ludvik's isolation from the fabric of the social becomes complete. He finds no alliance because the sincerity and venom of his brand of individualism, even after he renounces it, exists akimbo to the standards of the social.

This framework, in which Ludvik acts on his desire to assert his authority over women, and, in turn, is sanctioned by the social, recurs at later points in the novel. The text renders Ludvik's relationships with Lucie (a woman he meets on release from his time in the mines) and later with Helena (the wife of the man who led the committee to expel him) as relationships founded equally, if not more so, on impulses to dominate. In the case of Lucie, who refuses to give her virginity to Ludvik, the protagonist both admires and wishes to command her purity. After months of sporadic visits, in which Ludvik has attempted to persuade her through more or less coercive means, he finally escapes his labor camp to visit her. When she again refuses him, the narrator opines:

> I felt there was a supernatural force standing in my way, constantly tearing out of
> my hands everything I wanted to live for, everything I desired, everything that
> was mine. I felt it was the same force that had robbed me of my Party, my
> Comrades, my studies at the university, of everything…I understood the same
> supernatural power was now opposing me in the person of Lucie, and I hated her

for having becomes its instrument; I hit her across the face, because it wasn't

Lucie I was slapping, it was that hostile force." (p. 111)

Here, the conflation of the political with the personal becomes complete; Ludvik's desires, barred from empirical realization, dissolve into the figure of Lucie. Or, rather Lucie becomes dissolved in Ludvik's desire, her identity is stripped from her as she becomes, to him, a political symbol, a paranoid symbol of a grand repressive architecture. However, in the same moment, we observe an individualist drive for possession and control overtake his character. That weeks later, after roaming the city in search of Lucie, Ludvik is arrested and sentenced to prison for desertion repeats the movement whereby the state censures his social treatment of women by proxy. This unsettles the way in which the protagonist appears as a *victim* of the regulatory codes of the state. Indeed, in opposing himself against the agency of those who he portends to love, Ludvik appears to participate in the antagonism that pits the individual against the collective. His motivations consist in a decidedly violent will to prioritize his agency over the agency of others, and as such operate antithetically against the unified good of the social idealized by the Communist Party. By refuting Marketa and Lucie's agency, Ludvik is, in one sense, making himself the adversary of the socialist ideals that seriously inform the respective viewpoints of each woman. On a deeper level, however, Ludvik's disposition is resolutely capitalistic. His desires expressly exchange with the desires of others, he can only profit at the loss of others; his desire is one of *exchange value*, where his gratification demands not equal satisfaction but his satisfaction *at the expense* of the satisfaction of others.

In his tryst with Helena, toward the end of the novel, the individualistic kernel in Ludvik's disposition coheres fully with an impulse toward possession and retribution. Helena, who he deems abhorrent, appears as an object of desire precisely because the protagonist wishes to "rob Pavel Zemanek's secret chamber; to ransack it, make a shambles of it" (Kundera, 1967b, p. 195). He reacts against the structures that oppose his individualist desires with violence, transforming people into barriers to be overcome, and locating pleasure in that act of overcoming. In this instance, this expression of desire amounts in a physical violence, as Ludvik strikes Helena again and again during sex. That Helena receives this gesture erotically, and thereafter professes her love to Ludvik and renounces her husband, foils the protagonist's urges; his attraction immediately diminishes as his desire becomes uncontested and, for him more importantly, Helena denies its function as vengeance. The narrator explains:

> But now I saw her nudity in a new light; it was nudity *denuded*, denuded of the power to excite that until now had eliminated the faults of age in which the whole history and present of Helena's marriage seemed to be concentrated and that had therefore fascinated me. Now that she stood before me bare, without a husband or any bonds to him, utterly herself, her physical unloveliness lost all its power to excite me and it too became only itself: a simple unloveliness. (Kundera, 1967b, p. 201)

Ludvik's perspective on pleasure binds the romantic to the vengeful; a woman becomes an abstract stand-in for her husband and Ludvik's sexual appetite is spurred on purely by the wish to possess what would otherwise belong to his rival. Unlike Lucie and Marketa, Helena only figures as a channel through which the narrator can engage in competition

with Pavel Zemanek. She takes on a currency in Ludvik's perception of social competition. When Helena ceases to be a proxy for this contest, he loses interest. This shift in their power relation, from the submissive to the reciprocal, alters the protagonist's assessment of Helena's body, completely removes her of any human aura and renders her worthless precisely insofar as she becomes herself. The human, in this formation, contains no intrinsic worth but only worth in exchange, in possession, or in use.

Ludvik's relations with women, then, perform three main rhetorical functions within *The Joke.* First, they integrate the political into the romantic, allowing his adversarial relationship with the Party to be viewed, not as dissident as such, but as a fateful annex to his anti-social behaviors. In turn, this alignment between anti-social behavior and anti-state behavior prevents *The Joke*, as a text, from appearing at all as a rhetorical *endorsement* of the individualism Ludvik emblematizes. A clear anti-Party dissidence *cannot* emerge through Ludvik's narrations, because these very narrations delimit the point at which individualism becomes anti-social, articulating the horizon at which capitalistic individualism requires the negation of the other. Indeed, there exists a capacity in which Ludvik's censure by the state takes on the orderly movement of a proper administration of justice. This is the case in a material sense that aligns with the antagonistic structure between collective and individualistic ideals operating over the discourse of the social. Ludvik presents an individualistic character that stands opposed to the collective and, as a consequence, the state lashes out against a social element whose interior values counter the pro-social ideals of the state. Moreover, on a more intimate social level, the law, even though it does so indirectly, enacts retribution against Ludvik's violence against women. Kundera's novel, then, offers an ambivalent treatment

of the conflict of individual psychic reality with the state. While *The Joke*'s protagonist

suffers at the hands of an ideological apparatus that cannot accommodate his interiority,

the text seems to repay the suffering he fosters in others because of this individualistic

orientation; a narrative order surfaces as Ludvik's fate seems to follow as a logical

consequence for his toxic and capitalistic stance toward relationships.

This illustrates the third rhetorical strategy in textually integrating the romantic

with the political; while the narrator, as I have discussed, enacts a certain form of social

dissidence, he fails to become any sort of *hero*. Instead, his viewpoints become coupled

with a noxious disposition, which prevents the text's representations of those viewpoints

from appearing as advocacy in any form. The effect is quite the opposite. As Ludvik

conflates political expression with romantic dominance, the threat of the individual to the

social grows more obvious. However, when Ludvik appears again within the narratives of

other agents within the text, the novel subjects his character to various modifications that

rehabilitate, if not Ludvik as a person, then the general application of his view to

individuals who do not possess the same pernicious interiority. In the following section, I

explicate the sarcastic expressive mode that acts as one aspect of Ludvik's

deterritorializing impulse. I then return to this idea of rehabilitation through multiple

narrative views, arguing for the way in which this rhetorical device bolsters the function

of his discourse as a critique of the social. For now, the structure of Ludvik's narrative

demonstrates the ways in which *character* can be wielded rhetorically to conceal the

discourse espoused by that character, to cast it in new light so that it may be reevaluated

later. However, I wish to emphasize that I do not view the flawed protagonist as *merely* a

mechanism of concealment. Ludvik's violence is real, and traces a line-of-flight away

from individualism toward capitalistic possession that, in the final instance, equates with a fascistic urge to control.

Sarcasm

Ludvik's attempts to both reduce and seduce Marketa through a shocking display of humor, and the government's interpretation and reaction to his joke, reveal a fundamental break between the territorial codes active in Prague and Ludvik's own vocabulary. Ludvik, after writing the postcard, makes no expression of worry about the message being subject of concern; he is far more tangibly concerned with Marketa's failure to respond to any of his subsequent messages. When summoned by the District Party Committee to what turns out to be his interrogation, Ludvik feels "an agreeable feeling of curiosity"—he has no idea what will befall him, and when pressed by the officers, at first the postcard takes a long time to spring to his mind (Kundera, 1967b, p. 36). The interrogation proceedings quickly reveal the contrast between the vocabulary of the Party and Ludvik's vocabulary. The officers crystalize the joke into a list of values, toward which the protagonist, they claim, stands in antagonism. "Marx called religion the opium for the people, and you think our opium is optimism," one of the men accuses—Ludvick's cynicism becomes an oppositional standpoint, one in contradiction to the spirit that drives the shockworkers toward Soviet plans of economic development (p. 37). In this moment, Kundera articulates the beginnings of an antagonistic structure, whereby cynicism and pessimism compose, juxtaposed against optimism, constitute a negative spirit against the political health of the state. Yet Ludvik cannot understand this code. When his optimistic spirit is questioned, he enjoins that he can "have a good laugh" (p. 37). The response of the officer ("even nihilists like a good laugh…a cynic also can like a

good laugh,") demonstrates that Ludvik's voice operates outside of the classificatory

schema that of the Party's language (Kundera, 1976b, p. 37). Here we see the articulation

of an antagonism, in which the alignment of the concepts of nihilism cynicism, and

individualism, comes to include a certain mode of speaking: the humorous voice with a

sarcastic kernel. I refer back to my representation of the conditions of antagonism in

Chapter 2 and the introduction to this chapter. The Party officer's words construct a chain

of equivalence between nihilism, cynicism, and individualism, and the sarcastic voice,

and in effect the officer constructs an affiliation between the way of speaking and what is

spoken. His further remarks clarify this: humor and sarcasm belong to those who wear

two faces, "one for the party, one for everyone else," while the code of the Party invests

words with "an *objective* significance that could not be explained away by the state of my

[Ludvik's] emotions" (p. 38). In the view of the Party, sentiment and expression are

unified. From this perspective, sarcasm becomes an expressive mode in which an

individual asserts their influence over the truth, prioritizing individual interiority over the

objective relation of language to the health of the social. Ludvik describes this as follows:

> It was the first year after February 1948; a new life had begun, a genuinely new
>
> and different life, and its features, as I remember them, were rigidly serious. The
>
> odd thing was that the seriousness took the form not of a frown but of a
>
> smile…and anyone who failed to rejoice was immediately suspected of lamenting
>
> the victory of the working class or (what was equally sinful) giving way
>
> *individualistically* to inner sorrows….My jokes were not serious enough as long
>
> as contemporary joy could tolerate neither prank, nor irony, being, as I said, a
>
> grave joy that proudly called itself 'the historical optimism of the victorious

class,' a solemn and ascetic joy, in short, Joy, with a capital J. (Kundera, 1967b,

p. 31-22)

Kundera's text, then, articulates an antagonistic structure in which individualism, cynicism, and frivolity oppose the linkage of optimism, class unity, and seriousness. Sarcasm becomes, in this formulation, an objectively subversive rhetorical formulation, one that undercuts the serious optimism that defines the workers' class spirit. At the same time, however, Ludvik's psychic reality is so much aligned with a sarcastic mode that he is incapable at first of conceiving his humor as subversive. In his character, then, the antagonistic structure is internally challenged—the protagonist operates, in this formative moment, in complete indifference to the coded territory of the social body. He does not operate in positive defiance of the Party, but instead he finds himself in opposition to the state precisely because his internal disposition does not cohere with the Party ideology. In turn his language cannot cohere with the language that speaks that ideology. Ludvik's way of seeing refuses to align with that prescribed by the hegemonic order and the crux of the misunderstanding between his values and the values of the state is the sarcastic voice. The state, on one level, fundamentally misinterprets Ludvik when they take his statements literally. However, Ludvik cannot, in turn, understand why the fact of his sarcasm, whether intended maliciously or not, departs from the requirements of the Party code. Specifically, sarcasm opposes Soviet realist discourse, described in the previous quotation as evincing that both the voice and the body were supposed elaborate on a unified political ethic. Sarcasm subjects the real to the ego and puts that which is political, therefore, in the service of the individual and not the public. Sarcasm is not apolitical, but an internal elevation of the individual over the social body. That Ludvik

91

misunderstands his act as apolitical and fails to grasp the nomenclature of the party wherein his words take on an *objective political* dimension, demonstrates that Kundera's protagonist operates outside the hegemonic territoriality of the Soviet system. In this territory, discourse naturalizes the relationship between the individual and the body politic as one in which the internal life of citizens map onto an optimistic expression of the historical; Ludvik's humorous discourse, on the other hand, places the internal in cynical and dismissive juxtaposition with the external.

This prioritization of the ego over the real maps onto the final and, for Ludvik, most dogging points in the antagonistic structure of Party discourse; sarcasm reflects a kernel of individuality that the party subjects to fervent rebuke.

Ambivalence and Narrative Polyphony

Ludvik, despite his centrality, is not the only character who speaks in *The Joke*. Other social voices take up his person and his ideas as fodder for discussion, and their narratives allow the deterritorializing function of the protagonist's language to persist. Both Jaroslav and Kostka employ Ludvik as a heuristic to understand the ways in which their own social voices cannot cohere with the Party's paradigms. This prevents the political elements of Ludvik's narrative and voice from being consigned completely to the realm of bad conscience, where it might be easily dismissed. As the text maps the lives of those who act according to very different psychic realities onto Ludvik's struggle, the failures of the state to account for the heterogeneous social character of its subjects comes into clear view. At the same time, the discrete agents who rehabilitate the problematic of Ludvik's fate cannot or do not attempt to rehabilitate his person.

In the characters of Jaroslav and Kostka, Ludvik's fate is subject to repetition with difference, such that the structure of his subversive interiority maps across the terrain of the social, while the violent horizon of this interiority remains fixed. Jarasolav and Kostka each participate in a psychic reality that enacts a deterritorializing function over and against Party culture, but from very different standpoints. Jaroslav maintains aesthetic and ethnic (Slavic) ties to Moravian folklore culture that preceded the Communist Party takeover in Czechoslovakia. His interior and working life, steeped in tradition, becomes diluted in the transition between ideological structures. Kotska, meanwhile, assumes the voice of a devout Catholic whose finds his morals disappointed by the new age. As I will illustrate, these individual's discourses hold close to their particular views; Ludvik's individualism couples with sarcasm, Kostka's religiosity reflects in a feverous moral discourse, Jaroslav speaks in a rhetoric of nostalgic defensiveness.

To contextualize the operation of all of these discourses as lines-of-flight away from hegemonic codes, it is useful to refer back to the antagonism, illustrated in the last chapter, in which an oppositional relationship was supposed between the folk culture (associated with nationalism) and fidelity to Party ideals. Jaroslav's narrative concretizes this abstract opposition--in fact, in many moments, it seems to bear witness to the formation of this antagonism. While folk rituals, at the inception of Party rule, had utility as a tool of social organization, Jaroslav finds himself adrift in contemporary times as the substance of these transitions becomes squeezed out by the impulse toward party fervor. As a student of music, Jaroslav ruminates frequently on the traits of Moravian folk music and, in so doing, evinces the function of that music as a line-of-flight away from the

schematic structure of the social, and indeed an escape from the trappings of a teological

understanding of history as a process of unfolding toward the present. To the first point,

Jaroslav provides that, "in one kind of Moravian dance song, for example, the second half

of the measure is always a fraction of a second longer than the first half. Now how can

such rhythmic complexity be notated?" (p. 132). It cannot according to the musical

language of contemporary culture. "The whole metrical system used by formal music is

based on symmetry," Jaroslav worries, "But what to do with a measure that is divided

into two beats of unequal lengths?" Moravian folk songs, in the narrator's articulation,

resist metrical schematization and ideas of symmetry and order. Folk music of this kind is

expressive; it resists the impulse of interpretation precisely because it *cannot* be

interpreted within the territory of the contemporary social. Similarly, it opposed itself to

Stalin's understanding of art's role within social production: "socialist content in national

form" (p. 141). The art Jaroslav has dedicated his life to indeed express a nationalistic

element, hence the Communist cooptation of the folk song for political purposes.

However, the old folk songs do not elaborate on a socialist paradigm. Instead, as Jaroslav

poses

> The folk song or folk rite is a tunnel beneath history, a tunnel that preserves much
>
> of what wars, revolutions, civilization have long since destroyed above ground. It
>
> is a tunnel through which I see far into the past. I see Rostislav and Svatopulk, the
>
> first Morovian principles. I see the ancient Slavic world. (p. 133)

The preservation of history cannot meet the demands of discursive territory that

instantiates utopia in the future, and in in the dissolution of those very traditions that

offered a n means of unity extrinsic to class struggle. In time, Jaroslav's musical practice

is coopted by the Party during the days of its inception. Ludvik told Jaroslav that socialism would remodel the folk sphere, replacing the unified utopia of the past with a vision of the future, and supplementing those folk songs which appealed to labor with new songs: "May Day, meetings, the Liberation anniversary, rallies. In all of these folk art would find its place" (p. 141). And so it does, and Jaroslav is vaulted to fame, but the new folk songs do not carry Jaroslav's passion with them, a passion for historicity.

Upon the opening of his first section, Jaroslav recounts a vision or a dream he's had: he imagines himself as a king in exile, found in a field by the disciples who sought after him. The king is a figure from a traditional folk rite, the Ride of Kings, which once served an important function in the community and became outmoded by the codes of the Party culture. Yet the admonishments of the narrator are not exclusive to Communist culture and its seriousness, but importantly apply to Western individualism too. Jaroslav is spurned by the hardness of the disposition of the contemporary social toward tradition. "Motorcycles, guitars, motorcycles, guitars. A stupid, alien world," he thinks, before entreating of his wife, 'Just tell me, what does it mean, a modern person?'" (Kundera, 1976b, p. 306). The critical kernel of his discourse generalizes over socialism and individualism alike; he finds himself sapped of meaning in a territory that views history as the shackles of progress. His question, "what is the modern world?" displays that his understanding, like Ludvik's, is predicated on codes far outside those that reify that Party line. But while Ludvik's sarcasm operates in antagonism with extant hegemonic codes, Jaroslav's codes have been disinherited by the codes of this new territory, his vocabulary slowly forced out, signifying now only an outmoded disposition. As Jaroslav narrates:

I had always lived in two worlds at once. I believed in their mutual harmony. It

had been a delusion. Now I had been ousted from one of those worlds. From the

real world. Only the other one, the imaginary world, is left to me now. But I can't

live only in the imaginary world…. Now I knew! Now I understood why the

king's face must be veiled! Not that he should not be seen, but that he should not

see! (Kundera, 1967b, p. 309)

Jaroslav cannot adapt to the new composition of the real. He views the portended

compatibility between Soviet culture and folk culture as an insane proposition now,

because the newly formed antagonisms oppose tradition to forward progress. In order to

remain King, as he was in his dreams, Jaroslav must renounce the future and the real.

Here Kundera maps the formation of an antagonistic polarity between nationalistic

traditions and forward-looking orientation of the Party ideology: "the historical optimism

of the victorious class," in which the present is not understood as a product of the past but

as an arrival of the future (Kundera, 1967b, p. 32). Jaroslav's ultimate decision to commit

suicide articulates the trajectory of a cultural death, or, from another vantage point, the

death of a cultural code. Suicide becomes a line-of-flight away from the further

proliferation of his cultural discourse; he seeks to stop its flow before it becomes diluted

by the vocabulary of contemporary socialism, of the Party, of Western corruption. Yet

when Jaroslav attempts to kill himself he also reifies the antagonism between historicity

and Party optimism; he submits to the mutual-exclusivity of his perception of reality and

(again, unlike Ludvik, who insists on his individualism in resentment of the social) the

reality demanded by the social. He seeks to undo his subjectivity, capitulating to the

Party's hegemony over what is "real" and what is "imagined."

Jaroslav, however, does not commit suicide. Instead, he finds Ludvik in the fields near the creek in which he planned to drown. Ludvik asks him if he can rejoin the folk orchestra they played in at university, which Jaroslav now helms, and perform a concert. When they do, the text articulates the generalized rejection of folk culture within both Western and Party discourses. Playing together, both Ludvik and Jaroslav find their attempts to revitalize their personal connections to folk culture soured by a group of youths who attend the concert. Ludvik narrates this event, exclaiming:

> When I saw those long-haired heads spitting out saliva and words, my old hatred
> for the age of immaturity flooded back and it seemed to me that I could see
> nothing but actors, their faces covered by mass of cretinous virility and arrogant
> brutishness; I found no extenuation in the thought that the masks hid another
> (more human) face, since the real horror seemed to lie in the fact the faces
> beneath the masks were fiercely devoted to the inhumanity and coarseness of the
> masks. (Kundera, 1967b, p. 315)

In this moment Ludvik tellingly conflates the Western-influenced rock and roll political aesthetic, which Jaroslav's language has, as I examined previously, already marked as an allegiance to progress over history. Ludvik views in their disaffection with the same blind allegiance to ideology, a "fierce devotion" to "masks," that led to his expulsion from the party (p. 315). In the same moment, Jaroslav perceives the event as a resurfacing of the same spirit of modernity that alienates him; he "suddenly lowered his violin and said that he was in no mood to play for this audience"; he wishes to return to the field--the place where he designed take his life as a commitment to the codes of his lost cultural—and play for themselves (Kundera, 1967b, p. 315). Note here that Jaroslav's only subversive

act, this moment of defiance, operates according to a Marxist logic. That is, Jaroslav explains that they had fallen into the "stupid habit of playing at prearranged occasions," and that he wants them to produce for themselves again—he wants to reconnect reunite them with the means of production and the object of their labor. For a brief moment, here, the text reveals an open critique of the restrictions on expression of the time. It exposes an aporia in the composition of social discourses, a contradiction in the formulation of power (Philips, 2001). In Jaroslav's formation, sanctioning art to foster positive sentiment toward the party functions to separate art from the very promise of socialism. Commissioning of artistic content in the service of politics separates art from the laborer; it alienates the producer from the product in a manner that strikes at the heart of the ideal of the liberated worker. In the final event, a District Committee member pressures the band to continue playing. This overt display of power over the performance of traditional rites by modern ideological structures overwhelms Jaroslav and he suffers a heart attack. This closes the novel, as Ludvik carries him through a callous crowd to a waiting ambulance. Jaroslav collapses under the weight of two codes colliding; he cannot integrate into the social assemblage, so his very body is expelled.

In this way, Jaroslav's narrative comes to match the speed and trajectory of Ludvik's. It makes sense too, then, that this moment would result in the physical linking of their bodies; they become joined into a small assemblage, together tracing a line-of-flight away from the social. However, this moment resists unification, and the urge toward interpretation that would unify its meanings into a singular conclusion. Ludvik remains a heterogeneous element, separated from Jaroslav precisely by the aforementioned "bad conscience." There is no redemption in Ludvik's return to the fold

(the last time we see him in the novel, he has nearly caused Helena to kill herself), nor is there a vindicating triumph to this last shared act of resistance.

No element of the plot can separate Ludvik's narrative with Jaroslav from linking up with the narrative that displays his dominating reflection toward women, but more compellingly a third plot linkage exists, another mapping of the same relation of dissidence and consequence that dictated the fates of Ludvik and Jaroslav. This is Kostka's narrative, a character whose Catholic faith evolves into a dissident act as the 1950's progress. There is not space in this thesis to consider Kostka's narrative in detail, but his excommunication from school and the party closely mirrors Ludvik's own. Kostka even meets Lucie, in a small farmhouse, and takes her as his lover. The character's main deterritorializating function concerns destabilizing the antagonistic relation between religion and Soviet secularism. He narrates:

> This era finally betrayed its religious nature, and it has paid dearly for its rationalist heritage, swearing allegiance to it only because it failed to understand itself. This rationalistic skepticism has been corroding Christianity for two millennia. Corroding it but not destroying it. But communist theory, its own creation, it will destroy within a few decades. In you, Ludvik, it has already been killed. As well you know. (Kundera, 1967b, p. 225)

Kostka identifies, in fundamental contradiction to the party line, belief in materialism as, indeed, a faith. The poles of this once antagonistic relationship between faith and materialism become, instead, interdependent. Skepticism, previously aligned with materialism (indeed, the episteme of materialism) is swung into opposition with Communist rule. Skepticism and cynicism become merged terms in Kostka's vocabulary.

Yet, this deterritorialization of the major tongue becomes concealed by the fact he employs faith as a way of demonstrating the deficiencies in Ludvik's character, undermining the legitimacy of Ludvik's oppositional stance toward the party. He explains:

> I am not on your side in your quarrel with the Party, Ludvik, because I know that great things on this earth can be created only by a community of infinitely devoted men who humbly give up their lives to a higher design. You are not, Ludvik, infinitely devoted. How can it be otherwise, when you always refer to yourself alone and to your own miserable reason. (Kundera, 1967b, p. 241)

In this passage and that cited before it, Kostka calls upon Ludvik to recognize his own cynicism as the same cynicism of those who will come to refute the optimistic disposition of the party, to demystify and lay it bare just as they had refuted God, those who belong to a "a petty era with the ironic intellectual in the limelight and behind him the mob of youth" (p. 225). From the vantage point of the intellectual, the Catholic, and the folklorist, the discursive assemblage of the period excludes them from the territory of the social and the law opposes their attempts to articulate themselves. However, as Kostka assures us, Ludvik remains to the end a symbol of bad conscience, the very horizon on which individualism turns violent and fueled by hate. Critically, Kostka construes Ludvik's alienation from the body of the social as the crux of his hatred, but he also configures that same alienation as a result of Ludvik's insistent self-reliance. Individualism becomes aligned in a feedback loop with alienation, wherein the hero's flaw alienates him, but the system augments that initial alienation, and the loop thus builds a violent and hateful energy.

I have identified, then, three modes of expression in the text that operate along deterritorializing lines and remain heterogeneous despite the homogenizing pressure of the social assemblage. I have identified Ludvik's sarcastic voice as a reversal of the antagonistic relation that poses collectivity over agency in the terrain of the social, Jaroslav's voice as prizing folk culture's historicity over the future-oriented ideals of socialism which view history as a secondary concern to the arrival of the future and, finally, Kostka's deterritorialization of socialist skepticism into the codes of the religious. Each of these elements, as I have argued, contains an independent relation with other lines in the novel: Ludvik's association with women delimits the violent horizon of his individualism; his uneasy affiliation with Jaroslav at the end of the novel demonstrates the linkage of individual dispositions that must each survive by rejecting the social assemblage; Kostka's hatred for Ludvik's hatefulness repeats the old antagonism between skepticism and religion, while moving socialist causes into the latter camp. As such, the discrete narrators in Kundera's text formulate the relation between the individual and the social from different vantage points that end up mapping the same relation whereby heterogeneity, in the territory of Communist Czechoslovakia, cannot submit to a mandate to become homogenous.

A line-of-flight is drawn, to the individual, to God, and to culture, as a way of escape from the social assemblage. However, not one of these lines become normative within the text, or become *the* way out; indeed, none of these lines offers even one way out for the characters, who find themselves at the close of the novel in the thrall of the social structure. This ambivalence is important. Kundera's text, ultimately, destabilizes the relation between the subject and the social structure by proposing that social

differentiation, the crux of an individual's alienation from the collective, occurs in circumstances in which voices are meant to cohere; both structurally and in sentiment, these voices refuse to cohere. They remain heterogeneous. The text, then, sends out two lines, one toward the limits of collectivity as a monolithic structure, and one toward the limits of the individual as a hermetically isolated automaton. This deterritorializes the antagonistic relation between the individual and the collective and, in doing so, signals for a new relational tether between the heterogeneous individual and the social structure, in which the individual and the social take on an interdependent relationship.

Projections of Utopia and *Samizdat* Press

Kundera's text articulates a break between the heterogeneous composition of the social and the political vehicle of the state; he renders the image of state policies as out-of-step when compared to the complex constitution of individual life, whose desires come as much from the past as from the allure of the party's future. Future research should investigate the ways in which the discourses within this text transformed, were augmented, or were produced differently as Kundera spoke at the 4th Czechoslovak Writers' Congress. A clear line can be drawn, however, between *The Joke* and Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words" manifesto, a document that, as I have noted, functioned as a signal balloon to the Soviet Bloc that the governmental structures could no longer be trusted to constrain the demands of their population. Vaculík's manifesto takes up the sentiments expressed in Kundera's text; he articulates the homogeneity dictated by the party apparatus as internally undermining that structure by alienating the sectional interests of the workers. He explains:

> The power they [the Party] wielded was that of a self-willed group spreading out
> through the party apparatus into every district and community. It was this
> apparatus that decided what might and might not be down…No organizations, not
> even communist ones, were really controlled by their own members. The chief sin
> and deception of these rules was the have explained their own whims a the 'will
> of the workers.' Were we to accept this pretense, we would have to blame the
> workers today for the decline of our economy, for crimes committee against the
> innocent, an for the introduction of censorship to prevent anyone from writing
> about these things. (Vaculík, p. 178)

Vaculík's refutation of the party ideology, which poses that the state's conceptualization

of the *will of the workers* is formed according to a socially homogenous source rather

than the heterogeneous inputs of actual workers, links its intensity to the psychic realities

of these agents as Kundera's text reflects them. The workers themselves no longer form

the collectivity designated by their name, because their identities and individual interests

have been forfeited to that collectivity. Vaculík advocates for the re-democratization of

civil society on course to reintroducing the agent into the formation of collectivity, as a

way of reasserting the collective as predicated on the interests of the people. In the "Two

Thousand Words," Vaculík codifies this reintegration of collective and democratic spirit

(again, a destabilization of antagonistic poles) into utopic vision. By operating beyond the

pale of institutionalized political currents, the text can perform a collective enunciation of

the future political terrain. As Deleuze and Guattari articulate:

> Above all else, because collective or national consciousness is "often inactive in
> external life and always in the process of break-down," literature finds itself

positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even

revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in

spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or

her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility

to express another possible community and to forge the means for another

consciousness and another sensibility. (1986, p. 17).

Vaculík (1968) attempts to command this power of collective enunciation, as he calls for

a political demand to come from the public sectors, issuing a specific edict for "public

criticisms, resolutions, demonstrations, demonstrative work brigades" (p. 180).

Moreover, he writes, "let us revive the activities of the National Front. Let us demand

public sessions of the national committees. For questions that no one else will look into,

let us set up our own civic committees" (p. 180). Counter-posed to the image of an empty

apparatus that operates only for itself, the rhetor narrates into existence a possible world

of a revitalized demos, where heterogeneous interests and sectional needs become

recognized as part of the terrain of the collective. An argument could be made about the

capacity to which Vaculík calls for these changes to happen, out of necessity, within the

structure of the Communist government and not in a more revolutionary format,

indicating that this strategy limits to the subversive quality of the text (Glover, 2013). On

the contrary, however, the idea that this sort of political change *could* foment within the

apparatus of the state enacts a far more revolutionary impulse. Indeed, Vaculík's

statement instantiates its own call for the circulation of democratic discourses, precisely

by organizing and facilitating the dissemination of the manifesto. Yet, the rhetor, unlike

Deleuze and Gutarri's vision of the writer of minor literatures, remains linked up to the

center of his community, and his centrality brought forth a particular difference. Vaculík not write from the margins, like Kundera who has cloaked his political treatise in ambivalence and rendered his utopia metaphorically, but inserts himself into the center of political discourse. In effect, his utopic vision quickly incites the state toward corrective action, to insist on its political reality over that posed here. As Glover notes, "the consequence of the Soviet invasion for the progressive reforms in Czechoslovakia was immediate and predictable….it became obvious that Vaculík was correct once again when he noted, 'the spring is over and will never come back'" (Glover, 2013, para 9). Overall, then, we witness that the deterritorializing function of minor rhetorics become susceptible to state censure as soon as they come ought of the margins, and make manifest the utopic circumstances they evoke.

So, the Warsaw Pact invasion and the period of normalization commenced, which saw both Kundera and Vaculík take on the labels of banned writers. Yet, forcing discourse underground does not cauterize its spread, but changes it the intensity of its language and forces it to move in unpredictable ways. Deleuze and Gutarri write:

> A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or new lines. You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and time again, after most of it has been destroyed. Every rhizome contains lines of segementarity according to which it is striated, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which this constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segementary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome." (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987, p. 9)

The new politics suggested by Kundera and Vaculík is rhizomatic in that it is characterized by a non-hierarchical hetereogenity. According to Deleuze & Gutarri (1987), "a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (p. 7). That is, it draws lines that persistently connect political categories typically disconnected from the social and, in doing so, finds recourse to escape from the constraints of these extant categories. Kundera and Vaculík invoke a rhizomatic politics in their endeavor to construe worlds where individuals move along lines as opposed to settle on points; the new terrain of the social becomes conceived as the linkage between individual lines, not the creation of a single point reflecting a merger of interests. The religious is not opposed to the intellectual is not opposed to the cultural; all of the elements form different lines of flight away from the apparatus that forbears their destruction in Kundera's work, and all of them link up again in Vaculík's understanding of a forceful *demos* as the only means toward an *embodied* Party. These moments form a separate cultural system as soon as they are forced underground. With the inception of Vaculík's *samizdat* press, the cultural articulations of the Prague Spring found a line-of-flight into uncontested channels, but in these channels (so divorced from external life), they took on a new quality, a more effective utopic enunciation. This underground literary circulation formed a "parallel culture" to the hegemonic structure of normalization; this is a minor culture that lives underneath the dictates of the hegemonic culture, subterranean but richer, and more important to culture, than the major tongue (p. 158). The politics could operate in the light of day precisely because they were unequivocally forbidden from operating; cultural expression could continue on course

precisely because its course no longer ran in oppositional lines to the state, because the state now denied its very existence. Literature, as such, takes on the form of the utopian territory during this era. It takes on the same character as Jaroslav's field, where the musicians may play freely for themselves. As Simeka (1991) notes, this accorded literary production with this highest kind of freedom in that it functioned out of the margins; no longer operating as a dissident, but integrated into an accepting liberal collective, the marginal enunciation of a collective utopia fails to function according to its utopic aspect because its politics become subject to the wills of the masses. The author writes:

> I know there is no other way to go: all streams of the living culture must join into the only riverbed of normal pluralistic culture working similarly in free societies all over the world. When the whole luxurious investment of the dissident culture of the past twenty years is absorbed in the future years, the balance will be restored. The dissident culture was one of exclusive character; it was restricted to the most important moral field, and it did not have to deal with the extended cultural surroundings - with pop music, television, entertainment, commercial culture. (Simeka, 1991, p. 41).

These forces dilute the function of the dissident, of the *samizdat*, in that dissident views become one line in an assemblage of views, which now all have equal weight in constructing a national history. Once minor literatures becomes major, reintegrated by the new liberalism of the Velvet Revolution, they succumb not because the oppositional voice is too strong, but because the opposition voice allows the literature to speak, hears (but does not listen) to its voice, and says that its voice belongs to an important class of discourses aimed on bettering society. Yet the discourse did not aim to belong to a class

of discourses existing within the civic space of the state, it meant to challenge the existing civic space of the state. When incorporated it ceased to mean for itself and becomes a testament to the new freedoms brought by the current administration and its respect for participation. This is not to say that the democratization of dissent negatively affects politics in a general sense, but instead that once discursive channels deregulate, discourses must work in different ways to test the hegemonic composition of the social. The implications of democratizing dissidence for contemporary rhetorical discourse will be addressed in the next chapter.

When kept underground as Vaculík's Padlock Press was, the energy does not dissipate into a broader cultural energy. This type of literature must, by the nature of its time, mutate and engage in experimentation precisely because it is bound within oppositional channels. Vaculík, in one aspect, bemoans that intellectuals must be "eternally condemned to this system of confrontation," but this pushback against antagonistic alignments immediately produces a mode of experimentation possessing a strong utopic element (Vaculík, 1986, p. 3). That is, he imagines:

> A different system should be possible: a system of great variety. An unconventional theme. A high degree of sublimation of politics….I would consider it a success if our imaginary censor had no comment to make about our *fuilletons*, because what we wrote simply did not remind him of anything, did not in any way concern him. Or, another possibility: if he felt some sympathy and was gradually won over. (Vaculík, 1986, p. 3)

An oppositional show of force produces an experimental energy in those censored, it produces a utopian and deterritorializing impulse: Vaculík dreams of creating a code so

foreign that its deterritorializing function goes unrecognized, he wishes to break entirely

with the major language. The author describes the reality of the intellectual rhetor during

the period aphoristically, saying, "how were we to act when the way things were we had

to act to discover the way things were" (p. 10). In the text, he instructs us to re-read that

phrase. Samizdat follows a rhetorical line-of-flight away from a discursive assemblage

because the codes of the social outlaw its existence, yet it exists, so it can only plunge

blindly forward, through a persistent act of experimentation. And in tangible ways,

Vaculík's press *did* create an alternative code that operated outside of the discursive

territory of the normalization period. The citizenry no longer took the state seriously as

an organ of cultural or artistic production, while the *samizdat* formed a parallel culture,

circulating discourses that became a unique cultural resource for the burgeoning number

of citizens disaffected with the Czechoslovak political structure (Pihi, 1988).The fact that,

when a democratic transition finally occurred within the Czechoslovak state in 1989,

Vaclav Havel, a *samizdat* artist now for some time, was selected as the Prime Minister

reflects the centrality of this underground literature. The underground territory, which

came to exist through an experimental process of artistic and journalistic production,

succeeds the state that both repressed and motivated, the formation of these discourses.

V: CONCLUSIONS AND CONTEMPORARY CONTACT POINTS

In the previous chapter, I articulated the deterritorializing function of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* by isolating the sarcastic, religious, and cultural discursive modalities through which individual narrators within the text pursued lines-of-flight away from the discursive territory of the status quo. Overall, the strategy whereby Kundera voices an ambivalent polyphony of social voices allows him to, at once, map the suffering caused by the Soviet structure's inability to allow heterogeneity to exist within the composition of the social and delimit the horizon at which individualism breeds toxicity toward social relations. The lines of these articulated limits extend through the "Two Thousand Words" manifesto, and the development of *samizdat* literary technologies. These technologies were catalyzed into formation by the restrictive structures of the state and exhibited a high coefficient of deterritorialization, venturing forth along experimental lines precisely because they needed to become experimental in order to exist at all.

In this chapter, I isolate the rhetorical strategies, which I have articulated as contributing factors to the way in which *Vaculík* and Kundera's texts operate as minor literature, and examine their possible utility as strategies for contemporary intellectual and dissident rhetors, first, by articulating the function of the ambivalent mode as a means to modify the political effects of sarcastic and discourses and, second, by articulating the ways in which *samizdat* texts prefigure, and help assess the political possibilities, of contemporary political discourses on the internet. Finally, I conclude by discussing in broader terms the contact points between the rhetorical negotiations of the

Prague Spring and those of contemporary Western politics, in order to contextualize current possibilities for these rhetorical strategies.

Ambivalence and Sarcasm in Political Articulations

The previous chapter describes the operation of sarcasm in deterritorializing the antagonism between individualism and collectivity that defined the Czechoslovak social during the Prague Spring. Sarcasm within Kundera's *The Joke* functions as the exertion of an individual's agency over the interpretation of events or objects; in Ludvik's case, jokes are a tool used to indicate his superiority over the conventions and values that inform the political lives of those he wishes to dominate. Literature on sarcasm and humor as a rhetorical tactic in effecting social change offers different inflections of this rhetorical tactic. Amado-Miller (2010) cites instances of sarcasm that "purport to take very seriously the oppressor's belief systems, using such beliefs for new or newly defined causes or purposes" and modes which are "absolutely serious about the belief system it relies upon for meaning, but it also holds up for ridicule those *who misuse them*" (p. 87). These uses of the sarcastic voice in this context do not prioritize individual agency above populist political aims, but endeavor to expose the hypocrisy endemic in the state's enactment of its ideological principles. Moreover, Christiansen and Hansen (1996) argue that the comic frame, in Burke's sense, is both "humane and rational because the rhetor who speaks from the comic frame assumes that humans eventually will recognize their shared social identifications and will respond in a moral manner" (p. 160).

These treatments of sarcasm and humor as a rhetorical strategy depart from the way in which sarcastic rhetoric functions within Kundera's text, ascribing it with a benign function within social discourses when compared to other rhetorical modes (e.g.,

in Christiansen & Hansen's [1996] case, the tragic frame). Yet, the assertion of the individual's agency over these shared social identifications remains a present threat in sarcastic discourses. Waisanen (2013) notes that the intermingling of comedic and political discourses can produce a number of negative rhetorical effects, including a disciplining effect on discursive rejoinder that "regulates and forestalls necessary rebuttals, the bypassing of more sophisticated consideration of issues because of the limitations of the rhetorical forms, and the high degree of negativity in comedic discourse" (p. 302). These concerns reiterate the limits of the sarcastic voice as presented in Kundera's text, in which the sarcastic, comedic impulse comes to embody pessimism and silences social connection in humiliating the social views of other agents.

I suggest that the rhetorical tactic of ambivalence augments the political function of sarcastic and humorous discourses by contextualizing them within a wider breadth of discourses, undercutting the negativity that limits the social function of humorous rhetoric by humorous discourse with the pluralistic interests of other social agents. As Waisanen (2013) emphasizes, this strategy is in keeping with the necessities of contemporary democratic politics. He writes:

> In order to meet the demands of an increasingly multicultural, pluralistic, globalizing age in which tolerance and the ability to work with a variety of peoples, cultures and perspectives are beckoned....individuals must become increasingly comfortable with expanding their communicative options, playing multiple roles, and continually trying new selves. (p. 307).

My analysis of *The Joke* emphasized that Kundera's incorporation of multiple narrative viewpoints links up the social positions of those aligned with religious and pre-Socialist

Czech values with the position of the individualist, even though these positions internally conflict. This allows the text to, as Waisanen (2013) puts it, play multiple roles and as such enfold the comedic voice within a larger framework in which its ascribed negativity does not overtake the circulation of the text itself. Further research should reflect on different strategic methods in which this multiplying of the comedic voice can be enacted. The necessity of interrogating the political possibilities in comedic treatments of politics is clarified by Waisanen's articulation that contemporary politics is "inseparable" from comedy (p. 299). My analysis suggests two additional conclusions about the rhetorical strategy of couching the comedic mode in ambivalent discourse.

First, ambivalence is produced within Kundera's text through the introduction of multiple narrative viewpoints. Because narrative ambivalence allows religious and Czech traditions to exist on a chain of equivalence with individualism and cynicism within the space of the text, unifying them as exterior to the hegemonic codes of the socialist state, my analysis has demonstrated the capacity for multiple narratives to create coalitional linkages between different demographics in a given social milieu. That is, by linking discourses that express religious, folkloric, and sarcastic modes of understanding against the common oppressive force of Soviet-era politics, *The Joke* portrays an affinity between the discourse of heterogeneous social groups. While the utility of narrative in creating social identities and enacting change within social movements has been analyzed at length (e.g. Fine, 1995; Klawiter, 2004; Poletta, 1998), this research typically ascribes the significance of narrative to its function in articulating a cohesive group identity, or a coherent sense of purpose. The strategy of narrative polyphony, or the voicing of multiple, heterogeneous narratives, warrants further discussion as a strategy within social

movements. Because the importance of coalitional associations between movement groups has been critically established (Chavez, 2011), and narrative polyphony allows for the generation of political linkages between diffuse social voices, one facet this future analysis could usefully explore is the utility of polyphonous narrative expressions and coalition formation between social movement groups.

Second, this strategy of ambivalence obscures Ludvik's actively subversive voice and the dissident rhetorics of the other narrators precisely by placing these discourses in tension with one another. As such, Kundera appears to bear witness to a circulation of political voices rather than taking the stance of a political advocate. This offers another method whereby the intellectual rhetor may participate in what McCormick (2011) refers to as a "rhetoric of withdrawal" (p.43). McCormick identifies this rhetoric as operating in Seneca's attempt to voice his removal from public affairs and civic life while, through his various articulations of this remove, demonstrating his political differences from the state "counteracting statist attitudes toward philosophy" (p. 48). Kundera's political negotiations here appear differently; he does not, upon the novel's completion, hold a position of accepted political influence within the state. Kundera's rhetoric, however, surfaced during an active period of censorship within Czechoslovakia, where the politics of major literary works were held under intense scrutiny (Skilling, 1976). The ambivalence in Kundera's mapping of the political discourses of the period participates in this described withdrawal in another way. By voicing oppositional views to the state that, in turn, oppose one another, Kundera is able to produce a rhetorical critique of state value structures without appearing to endorse a coherent paradigm of dissidence. McCormick (2011) expounds on the importance of this rhetorical tool for intellectual rhetors during

the contemporary period, characterized by intense risk: "Not since the McCarthy era has this subtle form of political contentions....been more crucial to the public and professional lives of American academics" (p. 17). The strategy of political concealment through rhetorical ambivalence articulated here offers a means of political engagement that participates in a mode of withdrawal while, at the same time, engaging in a deterritorializing of oppositional antagonisms which would keep these voices ideological separate. As a result, this rhetorical strategy holds promise both for locating a politics that advocates for the heterogeneity of social interests, while at the same time operating discretely in respect to hegemonic norms.

The Utopic Potential of the Internet *Samizdat*

In my analysis of Vaculík's "Two Thousand Words" manifesto, and the rhetorical production of his *samizdat* press, I highlighted the ways in which rhetorical production, when kept underground, forms a "parallel culture" with mainstream hegemonic discourses that performs a deterritorializing function and evokes a collective unity in contradistinction to the major language of the state. Much research on social movements has identified the Internet and social media as a means of enacting this type of counter-cultural construction (Papacharissi, 2002; Dahlberg, 2007). This research both articulates the success that the internet has had in producing discursive territories that counter hegemonic bodies, such as in the case of the Arab Spring (Penney & Dadas, 2013), but emphasizes both the threat of fragmentation within these underground political circulations and the real likelihood that these discourses would become coopted and reintegrated into the hegemonic political territory. Papachrissi (2002) explains the former concern:

115

When individuals address random topics, in a random order, without a commonly

shared understanding of the social importance of a particular issue, then

conversation becomes more fragmented and its impact is mitigated. The ability to

discuss any political subject at random, drifting in and out of discussions and

topics on whim can be very liberating, but it does not create a common starting

point for political discussion. (p. 17)

The shortcoming of the fragmented generation of counter-public ideas on the web stems

from the fact that there is not a shared, lived basis for the formulation of political thought.

This sentiment links back up to Pehe's (1998) account of the demise of dissidence after

the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The discourse of dissidents, in this account, failed to

remain truly subversive precisely because it had to engage with disembodied political

discourses that did not come from the social location of those who had been oppressed,

but which were none the less deemed legitimate within a democratic discursive sphere. I

do not mean to pose that democratic pluralism undercuts, in all instances, the possibility

of authentic political dissent. However, it remains important to note that the

democratization of opinion contains within it a kernel that can undermine the veracity of

intellectual and dissident discourse by equalizing the importance of discourses that come

from different epistemic starting places: those that come from empirical experience and

rigorous inquiry, and those of less grounded empirical speculation (Kata, 2012). The

discourse of contemporary intellectuals and activists, then, must discover rhetorical

strategies that allow for the arbitration of political articulations within the discursive

sphere. The circulation of *samizdat* press during Czechoslovakian normalization offers a

historical example of a time in which intellectual discourse linked up with a particular

rhetorical medium. In this case, the possibility of intellectual production within this medium was predicated on the rejection of the state's authority to delegitimize cultural production. As such, any discourse within this medium participated in the articulation of an antagonism between the discourse of the Party and the discourse of the discourse of the people. The advent of democracy of the period withdrew dissidence as the condition of popular expression within Czechoslovakia, and in doing so undermined the structure of this antagonism.

Future research should examine these contact points of underground Internet movements and the circulation of 20th century samizdat press. Vaculík's texts clarify that such research should pay special attention to the transition between rhetorics formed in samizdat or underground channels and the transformation in those rhetorics when accepted into more pluralistic, openly political structures. For now, my comments yield two main conclusions about the function of intellectual rhetoric. First, the intellectual stands in a fraught position in that their discourse at once portends to stand for the interests of the demos, and on the other hand enjoys a rarefied position *apart* from popular discourse (Steiner, Cruise, O'Brien, Kolakowski & Boyers, 1986). That the discourse of intellectuals seems to require an anti-democratic structure to imbue that discourse with a special rhetorical power speaks to this ambivalent relation between intellectuals and the populace. The impetus then, as in the case of the Prague Spring, seems to be for intellectuals to enmesh themselves within the social relations that they critique. This would install the common starting point for political discussion that Papachrissi (2002) poses as essential to reducing the fragmentation of viewpoints characteristic of contemporary political discourse. While I have noted that such direct

engagement with politics can pose an immense risk for practicing intellectuals in academic circles (McCormick, 2011), strategies such as the rhetoric of ambivalence articulated above can help ameliorate these risks. However, future research might attend to the ways in which risk constitutes part of the divide between intellectual political contribution and the contributions of more traditional activists.

In any case, the necessity of embedding intellectuals within the social relations which they subject to critique corroborates an important theoretical proposition of this thesis, namely, that political movements can only destabilizing hegemonic formations by formulating new antagonisms to take the place of the old (Mouffe & Laclau, 1985). That social change, then, predicates on an antagonistic mode of political engagement affirms the notion that change cannot occur if all discourses are taken to be equal. This is not an anti-democratic sentiment, but instead affirms the necessity of antagonistic relations within the overall operation of the demos. Consistent with Mouffe and Laclau's vision, then, oppositional politics must persist in order for social change to be actualized. This corroborates the vision of theorists like Cathcart (1980) who view social movements as having an intrinsically confrontational structure, but nuances the formulation of such confrontation by posing that it must, in some operation, subvert the confrontational structure (the antagonism) that *already* defines the hegemonic operation of the state. In effect, then, I conclude that the discourse of intellectuals both should attempt to come from a location embedded in the social relations subject to critiques of domination, and also must establish themselves in a new antagonism against the hegemonic formations of the state in order to both effect political change and grant power to the circulation of discourses within a democratic structure.

Looking Forward to an Antagonistic Future Politics

By re-activating Kundera and Vaculík's Prague Spring text, this thesis brings to the surface the discourses of a moment of relatively contemporary reform that, experimentally, attempted to re-envision the future conditions of the social. By illustrating the rhetorical potential of underground and sarcastic expressive modes, avenues appear down which contemporary discourses may proceed subversively. In my analysis, I have also emphasized the utility of utopic evocations in subversive rhetorical formulations during the Prague Spring, the rhetorical function of which deserves explication in future research. The ambivalence of subversive discourses toward the contemporary terrain of the social in the Prague Spring era, when held in light of contemporary politics, suggests the political possibility of discourses which attempt to delimit the points in which the social breaks down at either extreme of individualism or collectivity. This does not amount to a call for moderation, but instead explains the conditions for revolutionary praxis. Future political praxis demands an accommodation of heterogeneity into an pro-social ideological structure, the creation of multiplicities instead of the impulse toward homogeneity. The rhetorical texts considered within this thesis suggest that total individuation and total collectivization each represent fascism in thought that denies the political recognition of the other, and provide means to rhetorically express the necessity of heterogeneity in the formation of future political praxis.

These considerations have concrete applications for current political practices. Critics agree that post-9/11 politics in the West have been characterized by a high degree of ideological unity that suppresses democratic participation (Ivie, 2002). Moreover, the

state of Western politics at this juncture in the 21st century moves in a countervailing

current against the developments of 20th century Czechoslovakia, that, all the same, map

onto the political trajectory of the Prague Spring period. That is, whereas the Prague

Spring consisted in an attempt to humanize socialistic structures (Skilling, 1976),

contemporary politics is currently grappling with attempts to humanize the capitalistic

structures that replaced it. In many regions, such as Hungary where xenophobic policies

toward migrants characterize national policy, the disappointment of neo-liberal economic

structures has incited a reversion to nationalistic tendencies (Piet, 2015). In the United

States, the discourses of 2016 presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump

provide two examples of the tenuous construction of contemporary liberalism. The

campaign discourse of both candidates responds to the way in which capitalistic practise

have penetrated the democratic sphere.

The 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court ruling providing the opportunity for

almost limitless corporate spending in elections, conflated corporate and individual

persons, and, as such, conflated the difference between capitalistic and democratic

processes. As Robert Litan (2015) articulates, "in one sense, the Citizens United ruling

has helped Mr. Trump and Sen. Sanders to set themselves apart from the crowd by

emphasizing their lack of support from big donors" (para 2). The broad appeal of these

candidates during the primary symptomizes that the proliferation of economic influence

in politics strikes a negative chord with the democratic body. Moreover, both Sanders and

Trump position themselves as advocates of those who have not seen empirical gains from

the contemporary operation of capitalism within the United States. Trump for instance,

registers as highly popular with white working class voters: his populism is most

appealing to those who have experienced high levels of economic distress (Jamieson, 2016).

In many ways, then, Sanders and Trump link up to the necessity of community association and the limit points of individualism articulated in Kundera and Vaculík's texts. Trump offers recourse away from the corruption of capitalistic politics by emblematizing capitalism, which portends to stand for workers' interests by personifying their success, but bars the voices of workers from articulating their own interests. As such, the Trump campaign reflects the limit points of capitalistic individualism in a manner that rings true with to those described by Leon Trostky: "all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy," turning against the democratic composition of the social in a movement toward the restoration of order (Trostky, 2005, p. 18). Sanders, on the other hand, articulates an oppositional alignment of the interests of the workers and the interests of the economic elite. The struggle is against the 1% and Wall Street. His notion of collective interest coheres around an antagonistic relation between the workers and the bourgeoisie. This discourse follows in the lineage of the WTO protests in Seattle that began to articulate a new counter-hegemonic antagonism which understands capitalism as opposed to democratic values (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). An elaboration on the thematic connections between the Prague Spring and the territory of contemporary Western politics begs exploration in future research. The popular media has already detected the connection between the current state of politics in the United States and historical trends in European countries (Harding, 2016). Of special important are not the nuances of these similarities, which should be the subject of separate investigation, but that the renegotiation of discursive

territory in each instance grapples with the same issue: how to modify an established structure once the limit points of that structure's discourse have been articulated inside of social discourses. In this capacity, I have attempted to demarcate rhetorical strategies employed to engage in this negotiation during the Prague Spring period, and have demonstrated the utility of these discourses within contemporary public discourse at large. The rhetorical strategy of ambivalence becomes especially crucial in these articulation of future politics, both in its representation of heterogeneous voices within democratic structures that demand plurality, and its function as a rhetoric of withdrawal that allows it to operate more easily despite the restrictions of hegemonic and institutional bodies (Ivie, 2002; McCormick, 2011).

The rhetoric of both Trump and Sanders suffers from rhetorical strategies that fail to account for heterogeneous interests. Trump's campaign predicates on a monolithic individualism that stands in for political advocacy; this strategy, whereby Trump relies on his gut and his image in place of coherent policy articulations, may explicate his decline in popularity entering into the May primaries.. Trump's failure to engage coherently in an articulation of policy platforms prevents him from creating a coherent antagonism opposed to the state structure. By attempting to embody an anti-governmental ethos without articulating a clear hegemonic structure to compete with the extant one, Trump's political rhetoric lost its traction as a real dissident act. In this way, Trump's rhetoric testifies to the necessity of generating alternative antagonisms in mobilizing the political effects that come from deterritorializing the dominant codes of state institutions.

Sanders, on the other hand, has suffered from voicing a political vision that understands a heterogeneous political configuration through a homogeneous paradigm.

Sanders frequently received criticism from protesters and pundits alike on his penchant for equating cultural and racial issues with economic issues. Sheiber (2016) argues that this conflation of racial and economic issues has cost Sanders the support of minority votes because such discourse fails to take into account the vantage point of minority groups who have perceived economic gains as of late, and moreover do not take income equality as a guarantee of the United States political structure. Sander's campaign, then, reiterates the capacity in which a monolithic understanding of economic influence within the social alienates the concerns of workers themselves, whereas Trump's campaign reiterates the problematic of placing the individual at the center of politics.

The rhetorical strategies that I have isolated as accessible to intellectuals should influence our perception of what strategies are available to those who wish to mobilize support for the causes represented by these candidates and those who wish to augment or contradict these causes. Sanders, who historically has been interrupted by the discourse of Black Lives Matter protesters, has suffered in instances in which he attempts to assert the primacy of his vision and benefited when he allowed for polyphonous narratives to coexist with his own and merged dissident rhetoric with his own platforms (Aleem, 2015). The voicing of multiple narratives, and narrative voices, and its role, as exemplified here, in coalition building between political movements exemplifies the utility of polyphony as a rhetorical strategy. Moreover, my analysis delimits rhetoric that articulates the censure of such narrative as an important site of critique for those engaged with social movements. Indeed, the endeavor of this thesis was not to mark the genre of intellectual rhetoric but to demonstrate the utility of those strategies used by intellectuals during the Prague Spring period as tools to inform contemporary dissident rhetoric. The

necessity of polyphony in the articulation of progressive democratic causes is well documented in Sanders' campaign.

Finally, the third tenet I have identified as the subversive function of minor literature, being that it evokes a utopian ideal, has both catalyzed and dogged the candidates' successes. Both participate in the evocation of a utopian principle, Trump with vague appeals to reanimate America's greatness, and Sanders with a call for a reversal of numerous institutional policies, such as breaking up the banks, Nordic style health care, and free education. The unrealistic nature of these utopian evocations have been the substance of a volume of criticism against the candidates (Hinderaker, 2016; Schatz, 2016). However, these arguments implicitly concede that the rhetorical force of these candidates stems from the vision they invoke; only the plausibility of this vision becomes subject to critique. The identification of the underlying principles of the utopian ideals evoked by each candidate constitutes an important subject of future analysis. However, Deleuze & Guatarri's (1986) understanding of utopic invocation in literary texts foreshadows the rhetorical strategies that might be incorporated into the construction of utopic rhetoric moving forward. Specifically, minor literatures evoke utopia by installing an imaginary collective that, in its enunciation, is already formed. Sanders rhetoric, in which his vision of future hinges on the negation of the 1%, fails to portray the moment of unity that would follow such a reordering. Trump similarly depends on the negation of trade partners and establishment politics without espousing a clear vision of America's "greatness." Rhetors need to evoke the utopia they seek as an already formed reality to be realized; fragmented utopic enunciation fails, in effect, to invoke a coherent utopian reality to aspire toward.

In this thesis, I revisited the Prague Spring in order to re-activate intellectual texts from the era toward the articulation of future political and rhetorical potentials. My investigation yielded four key theoretical contributions. First, by defining social movements as moments of political affiliation that exist on a continuum with more diffuse modes of political organization, I concluded that historical social movements should be read in terms of what they mean for ongoing discourses on similar political issues. Second, my analysis demonstrated the utility of reading historical texts in contact with contemporary politics as a means to engage in McKerrow's (1989) critical rhetoric as a method of scholarship directed at articulating avenues of political emancipation. Third, by demonstrating the operation of what Deleuze & Guattari's (1986) term minor literatures as a subversive rhetorical operation, I illustrated how explicating the discourse produced in these texts can help locate rhetorical strategies that may be used subversively. Finally, my analysis demonstrated the potential of these rhetorical strategies, particularly those of narrative polyphony and utopic evocation, to intervene in both historical and contemporary hegemonic structures. In effect, then, I have mined historical rhetoric produced by intellectuals for its usefulness in intervening in contemporary political affairs. Instead of delimiting what counts as intellectual rhetoric, my analysis inspected the rhetoric of intellectuals precisely to identify modes of rhetorical intervention that may go unused in dissent more broadly and, moreover, shed light onto the highly experimental conditions under intellectuals and political figures produced rhetoric during the Prague Spring. As such, I called into question traditional criticism that have erased the nuance of this discourse by forcing it into the category of pro-liberal discourse writ large (Bracke, 2001). Bringing this historical discourse into our

contemporary period, illuminates both the contingency of discourses on the inevitability of capitalism leading up to this point, and provides rhetorical resources for continuing to mobilize dissenting and experimental discourses regarding future social and economic possibilities.

REFERENCES

Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (2011). *Towards a new manifesto*. New York, NY: Verso Books.

Ångman, E. (2013). Was This Just for Show? Discursive Opening and Closure in a Public Participatory Process. *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, *7*, 409-426.

Amado-Miller, M. Disorderly women: appropriating the power tools in civic discourses. In S. Stevens & P. Malesh, eds:. *Active Voices: composing a rhetoric for social movements* (p. 69-92). New York: State University of New York Press.

Aleem, Z. (2016). Bernie Sanders' response to Black Lives Matters shows their disruptions are working. *Policy.Mic*. Retrieved from: http://mic.com/articles/123657/bernie-sanders-response-to-black-lives-matter-shows-that-their-disruptions-are-working#.aGF1Iun3X

Bastistova, A. (2015). Milan Kunderas" Žert" Overviewed: Critical Reception of the Novel at the Time of Its Release and Today. *Bohemistyka*, *15*(1), 5-22.

Benjamin, W. (1978). Surrealism: the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia. *New Left Review*, (108), 47.

Biesecker, B. (1992). Michel Foucault and the question of rhetoric.*Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 351-364.

Biesecker-Mast, G. J. (1996). How To Read Social Movement Rhetorics as Discursive Events. *Iowa Journal of Communication*, *28*(2), 74-101.

Bracke, M. (2008). French responses to the Prague Spring: connections,(mis) perception and appropriation. *Europe-Asia Studies*, *60*, 1735-1747.

Bratich, J. Z. (2008). From embedded to machinic intellectuals: Communication studies and general intellect. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *5*(1), 24-45.

Brown, S. (2008). Socialism with a Slovak Face: Federalization, Democratization, and the

    Prague Spring. *East European Politics & Societies*.

Buchanan, I. (2008). *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus*. London, UK: *Continuum*.

Cathcart, R. (1978). Social movements: Confrontation as rhetorical form. *Southern Speech*

    Communication Journal, 43, 233-247.

Chávez, K. R. (2011). Counter-public enclaves and understanding the function of rhetoric in

    social movement coalition-building. *Communication Quarterly*, *59*, 1-18

Christiansen, A. E., & Hanson, J. J. (1996). Comedy as cure for tragedy: ACT UP and the

    rhetoric of AIDS. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *82*(2), 157-170.

Cooper, C. (2005). Accounting for the public interest: public ineffectuals or public

    intellectuals?. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *18*, 592-607

Dahlberg, L. (2007). The Internet, deliberative democracy, and power: Radicalizing the public

    sphere. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, *3*, 47-64.

Deetz, S. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in*

    communication and the politics of everyday life. NY: SUNY Press.

Michael DeLuca, K., & Peeples, J. (2002). From public sphere to public screen: Democracy,

    activism, and the" violence" of Seattle. *Critical studies in media communication*, *19*(2),

    125-151.

Deleuze, G. (1998). *Bergsonism*. (H. Tomlison & B. Habberjam, Trans.). Brooklyn, NY: Zone

    Books. (Original work published 1966)

Deleuze G. & Guattari, F. (1982) *Anti-Oedipus*: *capitalism and schizophrenia*. (R. Hurley, M.

    Seem & H. Lane, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original

    work published 1972).

Deleuze G. & Guattari, F. (1986). *Kafka: toward a minor literature*. (D. Polan, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1975).

Deleuze G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia.* (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1980).

Deleuze, G., Guattari, F., & Brinkley, R. (1983). What is a minor literature?.*Mississippi Review*, *11*(3), 13-33.

Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and Difference*. (A. Bass, Trans.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Original versions of compiled lectures, 1959-1967).

Duggan, L. (1998). The Theory Wars, or, Who's Afraid of Judith Butler?. *Journal of Women's History*, *10*(1), 9-19.

Eble, M. F., & Gaillet, L. L. (2004). Educating" community intellectuals": Rhetoric, moral philosophy, and civic engagement. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *13*(3), 341-354

Enck-Wanzer, D. (2006). Trashing the system: Social movement, intersectional rhetoric, and collective agency in the Young Lords Organization's garbage offensive. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *92*, 174-201.

Fine, G. A. (1995). Public narration and group culture: Discerning discourse in social movements. *Social movements and culture*, *4*, 127-43.

Foss, K. Domenici, K. (2001). Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the protests of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 87*, 237-258.

Foucault, M. (1972). The discourse on language. *Truth: Engagements across philosophical traditions*, 315-335.

Foucault, M., & Deleuze, G. (1977). Intellectuals and power. *Language, counter-memory, practice*, 205-17.

Fox, R. L., & Frye, J. J. (2010). Tensions of praxis: A new taxonomy for social movements. *Environmental Communication*, *4*, 422-440.

Fukuyama, F. (2012). The future of history. *Foreign Affairs*, *91*, 52-61.

Giroux, H. A. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and critical/cultural studies*, *1*, 59-79.

Griffin, L. M. (1952). The rhetoric of historical movements. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *38*, 184-188.

Glover, B. (2013). Two thousand words on two thousand words by Ludvik Vaculik. *Wales Art Review*. Retrieved from: http://www.walesartsreview.org/two-thousand-words-on-two-thousand-words-by-ludvik-vaculik/

Haiman, F. S. (1967). The rhetoric of the streets: Some legal and ethical considerations. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *53*, 99-114.

Hale, C. R. (2001). What is activist research? *Items and Issues: Social Science Research Council*, *2*, 13-15.

Halverson, J. R., Ruston, S. W., & Trethewey, A. (2013). Mediated Martyrs of the Arab Spring: New Media, Civil Religion, and Narrative in Tunisia and Egypt.*Journal of Communication*, *63*, 312-332.

Harding, G. (2016). Trump and Sanders are turning us into Europe. *Politico Magazine*. Retrieved from: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/02/2016-elections-european-politics-213674

Hinderaker, J. The lights go out on Bernie Sanders' utopia, Venezuela. *Powerline*. Retrieved

    from: http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2016/02/the-lights-go-out-in-

    bernie-sanders-utopia-venezuela.php

Hofstadter, R. (1963). *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Vintage books.

Jamieson, D. (2016). Donald Trump is killing it with white working class voters in the rust belt.

    Retrieved from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-working-class-

    voters_us_56aa44d0e4b0d82286d51ffa

Kata, A. (2012). Anti-vaccine activists, Web 2.0, and the postmodern paradigm–An overview of

    tactics and tropes used online by the anti-vaccination movement. *Vaccine*, *30*(25), 3778-

    3789.

Kundera, M., & La Traverse, A. M. (1980). 1968: Prague, Paris and Josef Škvorecký. *World

    Literature Today*, 558-560.

Kusin, V. (1971). *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring*. Cambridge, Great Britain:

    Cambridge University Press.

Klawiter, Maren. "Breast cancer in two regimes: the impact of social movements on illness

    experience." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 26.6 (2004): 845-874.

Kramer, M. "Introduction." (2010). In J. Navratil (ed.), *The Prague Spring 1968* (pp. 1-7).

    Budapest: Central European University Press.

Martos-Contreras, E. (2010). The Prague Spring in the Spanish Press during the Franco

    Regime. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *13,* 410-420.

McKerrow, R. E. (1989). Critical rhetoric: Theory and praxis. *Communications Monographs*, *56*,

    91-111.

Litan, R. (2015). How Citizens United helps Trump and Sanders and other 2016 twists.
Brookings. Retrieved from: http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/01-citizens-united-helps-trump-sanders-2016-litan

McGee, M. C. (1980). The "ideograph": A link between rhetoric and ideology.*Quarterly journal of speech*, *66*(1), 1-16.

McGee, M. C. (1980). "Social movement";: Phenomenon or meaning?.*Communication Studies*, *31*, 233-244.

McKerrow, R. E. (1991). Critical rhetoric in a postmodern world. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *77,* 75-78.

McCormick, S. (2011). *Letters to Power: Public Advocacy Without Public Intellectuals* (Vol. 2). Pennsylvania, PA: Penn State Press.

Mouffe, C. & Laclau, E. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. New York, NY: Verso.

Novella, S. (2013). The anti-vaccination movement. *Skeptical Inquirer*, *31*, 26-31.

O'Sullivan, S. (2001). The aesthetics of affect: Thinking art beyond representation. *Angelaki: journal of theoretical humanities*, *6*(3), 125-135.

O'Sullivan, S. (2007). *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere The internet as a public sphere.*New media & society*, *4*(1), 9-27.

Piet, R. Orban, "Hungary and the walls of Europe." *Aljazeera*. Retrieved from: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/09/orban-hungary-walls-europe-150910104328466.html

Pehe, J. *The Prague Spring: a mixed legacy*. New York, NY: Freedom House.

Penney, J., & Dadas, C. (2013). (Re) Tweeting in the service of protest: Digital composition and

  circulation in the Great Ape-Snake War movement.*New Media & Society*, *0,* 1-17.

Phillips, K. R. (2003). Spaces of invention: Dissension, freedom, and thought in

  Foucault. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *35*(4), 328-344.

Polletta, F. (1998). Contending stories: Narrative in social movements. *Qualitative*

  Sociology, *21*(4), 419-446.

Sadri, A. (1994). *Max Weber's sociology of intellectuals*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Schatz, D. (2016). Bernie Sanders' Scandinavian utopia is an illusion. *Forbes*. Retrieved

  from: http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2016/02/18/bernie-sanders-

  scandinavian-utopia-is-an-illusion/#20b0f13d3aa9

Simons, H. W. (1970). Requirements, problems, and strategies: A theory of persuasion for social

  movements. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *56*(1), 1-11.

Sheiber, N. (2016). Why Sanders trails Clinton among minority voters. *New York Times*.

  Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/22/business/economy/why-sanders-

  trails-clinton-among-minority-voters.html?_r=0

Skilling, H.G. (1976). *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton

  University Press.

Steiner, G., O'Brien, C. C., Kolakowski, L., & Boyers, R. (1986). The Responsibility of

  Intellectuals: A Discussion. *Salmagundi*, 164-195.

Stewart, C. J. (1980). A functional approach to the rhetoric of social movements. *Communication*

  Studies, *31*(4), 298-305.

Suri, J. (2006). The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism': The Soviet 'Thaw' and the

Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964–1972. *Contemporary European History*, *15*(02),

133-158.

Trotsky, L. (2005). Fascism: what it is and how to fight it. Dehli: Akar Books

Waisanen, D. (2011). Satirical Visions with Public Consequence?: Dennis Miller's Ranting

Rhetorical Persona. *American Communication Journal*,*13*(1), 24-44.

Williams, K. (1997). *The Prague Spring and its aftermath: Czechoslovak politics, 1968-1970*.

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Weigel, S. (2015). The Flash of Knowledge and the Temporality of Images: Walter Benjamin's

Image-Based Epistemology and Its Preconditions in Visual Arts and Media

History. *Critical Inquiry*, *41*(2), 344-366.

Wolfe, T. (2000). "Commencement address to the Boston University class of 2000."

101Bananas. Retrieved from:

http://www.101bananas.com/library2/wolfe.htmlhttp://www.101bananas.com/library2/wolfe.html