

The Yanqui Makeover

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[T]he human condition is now so thoroughly medicalized that few people can claim to be normal.¹

If we are talking about assassinating world leaders, that is very close to the American mainstream. I bet if you took a poll right now of whether we should assassinate Kim Jong II, we could get 85 per cent of Americans to say we should. (Chuckles.) I think when Pat Roberston says things like that he is actually representing . . . about two-thirds of the country. (Laughter.)²

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The grand promise of the United States is that how its people were born need not define them forever. Instead, they can clone themselves from some more desirable model. The means to realize the ultimate Yanqui dream—self-invention through the commodity—is, at least paradoxically, about replication through appropriation. Some of this has to do with an old Hegelian longing for ethical substance. The ethical incompleteness inscribed in Yanquiness, courtesy of a people coming from the underclass of Europe and Asia, the enslaved of Africa, and the dispossessed of the Americas, encourages an all-powerful personal self-criticism. Such processes invite faith and consumerism as means of surviving and thriving. *One* alternately

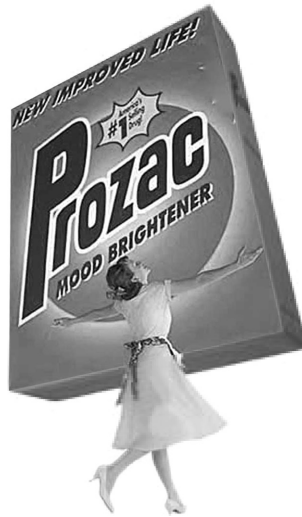


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loving and severe world of superstition (AKA religion) is matched by a *second* alternately loving and severe world of superstition (AKA consumption).

In times of cultural and economic dynamism and uncertainty, these superstitions coalesce with old myths about meritocracy and religion as the heart of the nation. Yesterday's grand industrial-era projects of land reclamation and skyscraper construction have contemporary religious and nanotechnological equivalents in evangelism and biomedicine. Faith and pharmacology offer the prospect of absolute control/development of people through three techniques: beliefs that provide zero-signified interpretations and secure patriarchal dominance; industrial drugs that destroy or augment memory, block fertility, create hypermusculature, and defy resistance to bacteria; and micro-machines that give sight and hearing to the disabled—or take them away. The next phase, genetic engineering, promises to alter the who, what, when, where, and how of being human. These projects provide a convenient entry to the phenomenon of reinvention, of the makeover, in its contemporary dimensions—as mega-churches, pills, machines, and surgeries, they can easily be counted, so restless is the search for new selves forged from a *detritus* that can be blended with desired others. Using the formula for cultural-industry success—repetition and difference—the self can be made over.

In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how demographic difference and economic change have helped to generate two powerful modes of cloning sameness with difference: faith and pharmaceuticals. Both faith cloning and pharmaceutical cloning invest in transformation, through the consumption of a repertoire of selves. The

self-as-project, undertaken via commodities, dominates a formerly human and natural landscape. The corollary is the simultaneous triumph and emptiness of the sign as a source and measure of value. Quests for the self are undertaken as quests for objects, which are made to woo consumers, to glance at them sexually. Perfumed and beautiful in ways that borrow from the subjects of romantic love, they reverse that relationship: people learn to love from objects. Wolfgang Haug's term "commodity aesthetics" captures this division between what commodities *promise*, by way of seduction, and what they are *actually about*, as signs of production (17, 19, 35). For the public, this is "the *promesse du bonheur* that advanced capitalism always holds before them, but never quite delivers" (Benhabib 3). In tracing the semiotic history to this state of affairs, Jean Baudrillard discerns four phases. Beginning as a reflection of reality, the commodity sign is transformed into a perversion of reality. A representation of the truth is displaced by false information. Then these two delineable phases of truth and lies become indistinct. Underlying reality is lost as the sign refers to itself, with no residual need of correspondence to the real. It has adopted the form of its own simulation (10–11, 29, 170). Along the way, "human needs, relationships and fears, the deepest recesses of the human psyche, [have] become mere means for the expansion of the commodity universe" (McChesney and Foster). The apparently spiritual, collective world of faith, and the apparently commercial, individual world of pharmacology, meet in this makeover lane.

Self-Invention

Life is very much a project in the United States, where religious and medical commodities are both signs and means of change—but not straightforwardly individual ones. Hence, we see the aptness of the cloning metaphor as a simultaneously collective and individual, faith-based and science-based road to transcendence. This duality of disciplinary governance and free choice is the grand national paradox. Many of us arriving here from other sovereign states do so cognizant of the country's claim to being *laissez-faire*, and are perhaps attracted by it. We, in fact, encounter the most administered society we have ever experienced, albeit through civil society as much as the state (to the extent that the two can be disaggregated).

The great national makeover is not solely narcissistic, though that figures into the story. It is about an entire *ethos* of self-invention that replicates a narrow band of norms—hence, perhaps, the perverse U.S. fixation on "character," a seemingly magical component of masculinity that is referred to with inquisitorial reverence in election campaign after election campaign. Such rituals—when the leading man in the drama of U.S. politics is selected—offer a good example of self-invention through media candidacy. Distinctions are avidly drawn between "personality"—the psychological cards one is dealt—and "character"—how one plays them: nature versus management. Failings that derive from one's "personality" (which seems to be about fun and the id)

From dawn to dusk, life is laid out across a bewildering array of public and private institutions, with various forms of government present every day and in every way, along with politically unaccountable intrusions by god-bothering and business bureaucrats, not to mention the moralistic third sector of venture philanthropists, nosy foundations, and do-gooder associations. Even the summer break from school is orchestrated for young people via the bizarre ritual of camp, while those preparing for college entry must ritualistically embark on volunteerism to boost their application packets. Simply “being”—leading life without a bumper sticker avowing one’s elective institutional affinities—seems implausible. Such is the administered society out of control—in the name of individualism. Wander through virtually any bookstore across the country and you will be swamped by the self-help section, edging its way closer and closer to the heart of the shop, as the ancestral roots of an unsure immigrant culture are stimulated by today’s risky neoliberal society. The Hollywood promise of the makeover, of turning an off-screen farmgirl into a film star, or an on-screen librarian into a siren, is at the heart of such cloning enterprises. Fitting in means being individual, and expressing individuality means selecting from a menu.

can be overcome by strengths that can be developed through “character” (which seems to be about repression and the ego/superego). In the 2000 election, George Bush’s character was routinely valorized by the *bourgeois* media as distinct from the Republican norm, because of his putative compassion and bipartisan tendencies. He was not evaluated on the measurable materiality of his public service—spectacular public-educational underachievement and record high rates of execution under his governorship of Texas—or his recreational drug record, nepotistic affirmative-action entry to the Ivy League, and sordid business history. It took years for *Newsweek*’s alarming 2003 cover story “Bush and God” to highlight the policy implications of his alcohol-addiction and business-failure-fueled conversion to evangelical Protestantism, and its effective use as electoral appeal (Republicans were overwhelmingly supported across class lines by white Protestants during the 2003 Iraq crisis and the 2004 presidential election). Conversely, Al Gore’s character was routinely problematized in 2000 because of his fund raising activities on behalf of the Democrats, and putative tall tales about inventing the freedom of the internet, inspiring the romance of *Love Story*, and uncovering the pollution of the Love Canal. He was not evaluated on the measurable materiality of his public service—spectacular economic growth and record high rates of educational attainment under his vice-presidency. Non-governmental organizations and state programs instantiate this obsession with character: the Character Counts! Coalition, the Aspen Declaration on Character

Education, the Character Education Partnership, the Character Education Network; and so it goes—civil society as behavioral governance (Newport and Carroll; Pew, *Religion*; Park).

All this palaver works as a grand metaphor for managing the differences and difficulties of language, history, race, gender, class, age, health, and faith that color the nation's history. The discourse on character references the risk and opportunity embodied in the longest-standing makeover aspect of U.S. society, immigration: the coterminous pleasure and pain of a "touch-and-go" existence, of a suddenly anonymous personal history, of "individual independence and differentiation"—of the "right to distrust" (Simmel)—alongside the need to clone new selves from available models. For immigration's interplay of repetition and difference is finally making the U.S. look truly American. The first great wave of immigrants at the turn of the 20th century left the country 87% white/Euro-American, a proportion that remained static through the 1950s. During the 20th century, the U.S. population increased by 250% (the equivalent figures are under 60% for both France and Britain). In the past decade, the country's Asian and Pacific Islander population increased by 43%, and its Latino population by 38.8%. Of the 100 million net additions to the population between 1967 and 2006, the plurality was Latino. Between those two groups, and African Americans and Native Americans, about 100 million U.S. residents can now define themselves as minorities ("Hispanic"; "Centrifugal"; Pew Hispanic). As diversity increases, whiteness becomes less normal and more conscious of its desire to replicate, with evangelicals sending spousal straights to the bedroom to have unprotected sex in the name of duty.

At the same time, successive population waves—no longer just white ones—have fled the inner city, and the nation has just become the first in the world with more than half its people living in suburbia (a quarter of whom are minorities). Seventy-five per cent of new office space is being constructed there. As this historic demographic shift continues, the trend from a rural to an urban to a suburban country, middle-class people are increasingly disarticulated from subsistence, from the state, and from the experience of rural and urban life. And economic life for many U.S. residents is becoming worse and worse. By contrast with European welfare systems, the capacity to escape poverty in the U.S. has diminished over the last three decades of neoliberalism and suburbanization, thanks to a gigantic clumping of wealth at the apex of the nation, atop a poor, unskilled, and unhealthy base. Forty-six million residents are indigent, the same number lack health insurance, and 52 million are functionally analphabetic. Access to money and net worth are massively stratified by race and gender. For instance, in 2003, black men earned 73% of the hourly wage rate for white people. And the gaps are widening. In the two decades following 1979, the highest-paid 1% of the population doubled its share of national pre-tax income to 18%. Incomes of the top 1% increased by 194%; the top 20% by 70%—and the

bottom 20% by just 6.4%. In 1967, chief executive officers of corporations were paid 24 times the average wage of employees. Thirty years later, they received 300 times that amount. Over Bush's first term, profits rose by 60%, but wages by just 10%. In 2004, after-tax corporate profits grew to their highest proportion of Gross Domestic Product since the Depression. In the three years following 2003, hourly wages declined by 2%, adjusted for inflation, while productivity rose. In California, where I live, the local economy is larger than at least 180 sovereign states around the world, depending upon the measures used. But working-class family income has increased by 4% since 1969, while its ruling-class equivalent has grown by 41%. Nationally, corporate profits are at their highest level in five decades, and wages and salaries have the lowest share of the national pie on record. For the investment bank UBS, we inhabit a "golden era of profitability." But almost half the population does not see hard work as the means to a better life, and two-thirds say they have no savings (the national rate is the lowest since the Depression).⁴ This bizarre re-concentration of wealth in the hands of the *bourgeoisie* is unprecedented in world history since the advent of working-class electoral franchises. No wonder *The Economist* captioned a photo of the Queen of England greeting George Bush and his "Desperate Housewife," Laura, as "Liz, meet the royals." No wonder Warren Buffet avowed in his 2003 letter to Berkshire investors that "If class warfare is being waged in America, my class is clearly winning" ("Ever Higher").

As immigration has become more diverse and complex, and wealth has been systematically redistributed upward, vast numbers of people have coped, I suspect, by re-pledging themselves to two key cloning technologies as means of transformation: mega-churches and Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). These developments are reshaping a tendency toward reinvention through cloning that is central to the mythology and lived experience of the entire nation. Consider the bizarre makeover of evangelicals: an almost physical, trance-like transmogrification from a faith based in ideas to something that, ironically, resembles transubstantiation (Luhmann). The outcome? Here is a recent demography of nativists:

[H]airy-backed swamp developers and corporate shills, faith-based economists, fundamentalist bullies with Bibles, Christians of convenience, freelance racists, misanthropic frat boys, shrieking midgets of AM radio, tax cheats, nihilists in golf pants, brownshirts in pinstripes, sweatshop tycoons, hacks, fakirs, aggressive dorks, Lamborghini libertarians, people who believe Neil Armstrong's moonwalk was filmed in Roswell, New Mexico, little honkers out to diminish the rest of us.

Is this the irritated rant of an urban hipster, mercilessly mocking those beyond the world of downtown lofts and polymorphous pleasure? Did these words drop from a laptop as it hurtled across the fly-over states? No. The quotation comes from a true son of the mid-West. Garrison Keillor, host of the seemingly nativist but

globally-syndicated radio program *A Prairie Home Companion*, was responding to the latest wave of right-wing reaction to the cultural difference and economic injustice that color U.S. life. With his concerns as a backdrop, I shall examine faith-based and pharma-based cloning in turn.

Faith

Religious rapture draws on a long history. For settlers and slaves alike, faith provided reasons to flee, forms of succor, and means of collective identification. Religion maintained ethnic solidarity in a new environment, leavened a lack of class bearings, gave solace through the horrors of slavery, and delivered social services away from the brutality of capital and the plutocracy of the state. Most recently, it has been stimulated by the economic riskiness of everyday life, which we might date rhetorically to a 1971 report for Presidential advisors that referred glowingly to “the development of flexible citizens . . . the kind of citizen the twenty-first century is going to need.”⁵ That neoliberal, anti-welfare flexibility has generated the economic disaster enumerated above.

So what has been the citizen response? Unlike any other First World country, most U.S. residents connect belief in God to morality and wealth. The vast majority of the population attests to the existence of a devil and individuated angels; 45% of people think aliens have visited Earth; three times more people think there are ghosts than was the case a quarter-century ago, and over a third think houses can be haunted; 84% say there is posthumous survival of the soul, up 24% since 1972; only 25% subscribe to evolution; 29% claim to have witnessed divine healing; 35% assert that the Bible is the literal word of “God”; almost two thirds anticipate millennial doom and rebirth; and, in the South, 44% believe that lightning is sent by God to punish wrongdoers (the same national proportion that has seen Mel Gibson’s anti-Semitic, directing-under-the-influence paean to sado-masochism, known as *The Passion of the Christ*). Seventy-nine per cent of U.S. citizens identify as Christian, with 41% converts to fundamentalist evangelism across a bizarre array of groups, including 23% of the population that is subject to the peculiarities of charismatic possession, speaking in tongues and laying on of hands to heal disease. Eighteen per cent are aligned with the religious right. The latter are the most skeptical people in the Yanqui population about environmental protection. Apparently, there is no future for the planet. God’s design is to destroy it, then deliver true believers to safety in a kinky theological draft of wind. The population’s embrace of these superstitions places the United States alone among nations with advanced economies and educational systems. The 96% of people who believe in a higher power, and 59% who state that religion is crucial to their lives, represent more than twice the proportions for Japan, South Korea, Western Europe, and the former Soviet bloc.⁶

In the public sphere of politics, the “values” rhetoric of the right is both a diversion from class linkage and an index of cultural bigotry, achieved under the sign of

sameness. Core ideas are cloned by over 300 right-wing “coin-operated” think tanks in Washington for use at specific sites of superstition. Funded by some of the wealthiest U.S. foundations and families, such as Olin, Scaife, Koch, Castle Rock, and Smith Richardson, these organizations extravagantly ideologize on everything from sexuality to foreign policy. Ghost writers make their resident intellectuals’ prose attractive, as part of a project that is concerned more with marketing opinion than conducting research—for each “study” they fund is essentially the alibi for an op-ed piece. The corollary numbers for media coverage and, hence, access to everyday homes, are striking. Progressive think tanks had just a one-sixth share of media quotations compared to reactionary institutions during the 1990s. In the decade to 2005, the right averaged 51% of citations, progressives 14%. The people who appear on the three major television network newscasts as policy wonks are indices of this success: 92% of such mavens are white, 85% are male, and 75% are Republican. In all, 90% of news interviewees on the major networks are white men born between 1945 and 1960—a fine instance of cloning sameness for leadership. The audience for their grandstanding comprises a second-tier grassroots network stretching across the National Right to Life Committee, the American Family Association, the Liberty Alliance, the Eagle Forum, the Family Research Council, the Christian Action Network, and the Christian Coalition.⁷

The civil-society tactics of the right, from protests to op-ed pieces, come from somewhere uncomfortably close to the left: “they” cloned “our” methods. Having learned from progressive social movements that the personal and the cultural were political, the right declared itself the ideological foe, not only of subaltern groups seeking enfranchisement, but also of liberal, humanistic expressions of universality and the secular. Minorities and feminists had protested anti-defamation with great effect, so why shouldn’t the right protest the defamation of *its* values—fundamentalism, homophobia, and nationalism? Such methods mimicked the rhetoric of civil rights and subject positions pioneered by progressive social movements. The umbrella term for these practices, “culture war,” originated during Ronald Reagan’s Presidency and became media orthodoxy when Republican Congressman Henry Hyde sought to condemn flag-burning as “one front in a larger culture war” in 1990.⁸

Consider these instances of the right cloning the left’s use of cultural spectacle. For example, the National Rifle Association was for a long time a rather mild-mannered Clark-Kentish advocate for field sports. Following an internal *coup* in the mid-1970s, it left New York City for the wilds, campaigned for people owning guns as a Constitutional right/responsibility—and overtly copied tactics from the civil-rights movement. The same period marked the advent of the Moral Majority, again drawing on the rhetoric and methods of civil rights. Ten years later, this indebtedness to civil rights activism was carried forward by the United Shareholders Association, the consumerist politics of which disempowered workers and turned corporations into ventures of speculation

rather than generators of infrastructure. Then evangelical Christians modeled their marriage movement on anti-tobacco activism. Today, both Stanford and UCLA feature organizations dedicated to undoing “institutional racism”—a concept long-derided by the white right that it now perversely embraces as a sign that groups such as the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, formed at the height of creative Chican@ cultural politics in the 1970s, has become so powerful on campus that it must be stopped for fear of its effect on whites. In 2004, the Sierra Club fended off a takeover by anti-Latin@s who positioned their nativist candidacy as environmental. All these groups were underwritten by far-right think tanks and foundations, artful practitioners of cultural politics they cloned from progressives and validated through the discourses of morality and religion. The mega-church is a fine instance of cloning, an amalgam of stadium rock and mall dross. By 2006, there were over a thousand such things, as defined by churches with weekly attendances in excess of two thousand people. That number had doubled since 2001, as had their average attendance. They were using satellites more and more, and four mega-church pastors were featured on the *New York Times*’ bestseller list, with tens of millions in sales.⁹

Pharma

In addition to religiosity, a *superstitious* response to cultural difference and economic threat, there is a *rational* and equally far-reaching reaction to such changes: pharmacology, that strange meeting point of the external and the internal where commodities encounter emotions, mediated formally and informally through professional knowledge and intervention, and mass-produced in pill form. Pharmaceutical corporations promote fast and efficient solutions to life’s problems—stop reading and start swallowing. Cosmetic pharmacology offers keys to contemporary U.S. personhood. Nowadays, “big science” and “big technology” can sit on your desk, reside in a pillbox, or inside your body” (Clarke, et al.) alongside big faith. One models the brain; the other models what it believes.

If the self is “a cultural invention” (Kessen) and we are *en route* to what Erik Davis calls “the posthuman self,” then the newest “darlings of Wall Street”—pharmacorps—are its manufacturers (Healy, *Creation* 2, 353). The drug makeover experience clearly appeals to upwardly mobile people who have decided to abandon former existences. They are living out the latest trend in a cloning nation: “SSRIs, hormones, brain boosters, neurotransmitters.” Instead of old-style recreational objects that Yanquis liked to put in their mouths (alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and illegal substances), which promised instantaneous joy and release tied, in some cases, to death, disability, pain, contempt, or incarceration, the new substances, legal and controlled, offer a permanent overhaul (Davis; Elliott, “American Bioscience”). No huddling outside the office building, no stains on the paperwork or keyboard, no obvious need to be like others. No quick pleasure, no hangover, no nightly snoring or morning cough driving

those around you to distraction, no staggering to the bathroom to be ill, no breathlessness walking up two flights of stairs, no emanations from the mouth, hair, or clothes to mark one out. Instead, a discreet, discrete, daily dose backs up the gains made the day before within one's not-so-hard drive of a body. Once the decision has been made to take these reformatting technologies, they "melt invisibly into the texture of the everyday" (Davis). This is quiet cloning.

The psy-function (psychoanalysis, psychiatry, psychology, and psycho-pharmacology) is split between the discourses of swallowing and speaking, most ignobly illustrated by a 1971 debate between Heinz Lehmann (for pharmacology) and Herbert Marcuse (for psychoanalysis). While Lehmann was addressing the audience, Frederick Qunes, who had helped organize the event, threw a cream cake in his face. The incident is legendary in the psy-function. Just as symbolically, the renowned Chestnut Lodge psychodynamic center was sued in the 1980s for malpractice because it denied drugs to a patient. While the case did not set a legal precedent—terms were agreed—it furthered a developing discourse that juxtaposed clinically-trialed drugs against impressionistic speech. Since the cake fruitlessly flew and the chestnut privately settled, pharmaceutical corporations and their prescribing delegates have become hegemonic, utilizing the slogan "You can't talk to disease" to great effect (Healy, *Creation* 175; Rose; Breggin 11–13, 17, 23, 122). As they have found, you can vend invisible goods that will disarm it and clone normativity, then leave the content of speech up to god-botherers.

The first major psychoactive drug was Chlorpromazine (sold as Thorazine). It came onto the market in 1954, featured immediately in numerous print advertisements. Combined with increased governmental employment of therapists, the new arrival reversed the institutional removal of the mentally ill from public life. Two years later, the number of mental hospital patients declined for the first time since the previous century. Patients were not the only ones to come out. Whereas almost all U.S. psychiatrists were hospital-based in 1940, by 1957 over 80% were not. The key corporations manufacturing these exit passes from asyla—Sandoz, Rhône-Poulenc, Geigy, Ciba, and Roche—convened many collusive meetings between 1953 and 1958. They set up a network of psycho-pharmacology, paid clinical researchers to exchange information, and founded the anachronistically-named Collegium Internationale Neuropsychopharmacologium to invent a classical heritage. Merck also played a part, distributing 50,000 copies of Frank Ayd's 1961 book *Recognizing the Depressed Patient* to doctors around the world. This product placement successfully promoted depression as something ordinary and diagnosable in general practice. Advertisements in medical journals trumpeted families reuniting, men returning to work, and women embracing the home—a cultural cloning that could be chemically produced. One famous promotion for Thorazine depicted the pill on a leather couch: it had displaced the patient, not just the therapist! With the advent of Medicare and

Medicaid as part of the “Great Society” reforms of the 1960s, public hospitals lost even more inmates. State governments utilized new forms of funding to shift them into non-traditional institutions, such as private nursing homes, halfway houses, and outpatient services, which were simultaneously ideologized as democratic by the emergent community care movement. This policy disaster was enshrined by the Supreme Court in *Olmstead v. L.C.* in 1999 (Herman 257–259; Rubin; Healy, *Antidepressant* 47, 75–76).

Antidepressants offered highly specific interventions, albeit with systemic effects. Although called “magic bullets,” implying precise targeting, their effect was much wider: they shifted “health to the center of Western politics and culture” (Healy, *Antidepressant* 1). By the turn of the 21st century, 38 million people in the U.S. had tried Prozac. Over 10 million new prescriptions were written for it in 1999 alone. In 2004, 91 million people took prescription drugs regularly, and only a quarter of the population had never done so. Sixty-four per cent of households filled three billion prescriptions a year. In a period of minimal inflation, U.S. expenditure on pharmaceuticals doubled in the ten years to 2000, to U.S. \$100 billion. A decade ago, U.S. residents averaged seven prescriptions per year; now it is twelve (Goode; Fox; Rowe).

Drugs are planned for the “sleep market” (Marsa) and to enhance memory—matters of far greater interest to pharmacorps than the treatment of illness (Breithaupt and Weigmann), since their military and educational market potential outstrips the temporal and spatial limitations of disease. Companies are forever developing new products to deal with newly defined maladies, such as baldness, obesity, and impotence. TV commercials promote pills to counter hair loss, weight loss, and erection loss. In fact, everything barring Lacanian loss.

What used to be part of drug subculture—a pill that transforms the self—is now central to corporate capital. To quote the *New York Times*, “Big Pharma Ogles Yasgur’s Farm.” So we find Viagra sponsoring a tour by Earth, Wind & Fire, the ’70s rhythm and blues/soul/funk group, because its manufacturer, Pfizer, wants to attract consumers who once associated popular music with illegal recreational drug use, but might now be open to a legal, lifestyle equivalent (Leland). For its part, commercial television offers politician Bob Dole, baseball player Rafael Palmeiro, race car driver Jeff Fuller, and football coach Mike Ditka needing help with erections, and a car race named after a cigarette company includes Viagra as its secondary sponsor, while football player Ricky Williams was found seeking alleviation from anxiety. More money is spent promoting psychiatric “wonder drugs” in the U.S. than on medical school and residency training—in 1998, Eli Lilly spent U.S.\$95 million just to market Prozac (Jaramillo, Scherer; Moynihan; Bloom).

Rather than forming illicit informal relationships with others through the shared experience of ingestion, the new drugs forge a new relationship with the self that becomes nearly invisible—a pre-party preparation, the perfect makeover. Or they can

become public badges of membership through water cooler discussions about whether last week's Prozac has taken hold yet, almost like evangelicals' seemingly insatiable need for recognition of their status as "born again" (a charming critique of their mothers). These drugs fulfill the meritocrat's dream—to learn the code, to crack the means of making oneself anew, to leave as something more than one arrived as—and to do so in a seamless way that does not draw attention to itself unless desired. What may have begun, through confession and therapy, as a search for authentic feelings—the real me revealed—turns commodified cloning into authenticity (Elliott, *Better* 22, 29–30), just like the search for meaning that characterizes the culture of faith.

For Prozac guru Peter D. Kramer, psy-pharmacology may be "the American ideal" (Elliott, *Better* xi). Instead of illness cured, one type of wellness substitutes for another (Elliott, *Better* 50–51). Some say "the scientific management of *production*, so prevalent in the early days of the twentieth century, has been displaced by a new scientific management of *consumption*" (Hansen, et al. 1). The *British Medical Journal* derides these commercial projects as "disease mongering" for profit¹⁰ and the *Los Angeles Times* wonders about the will "to treat . . . benign personality traits" (Gottlieb).

These changes are not only about individual choice. For instance, corporate intranets provide employee assistance programs for easy access to therapy around the clock. Cost pressures militate against individual and even group psychotherapy, encouraging both self-help software and company-sponsored electronic listeners. The American Psychological Association offers "Questions to Ask Your Employer's Benefits Manager" on its web site as part of a "Consumer Help Center" (Hansen, et al. 56, 106, 123), and the HSM Group's "Productivity Impact Model" estimates the cost of employee depression to company revenues. It operates on the assumption that 50% of depressed workers are "untreated" and miss between 30 and 50 days of work per year as a consequence. To start the process, simply log on to <depressioncalculator.com>; the neoliberal employer's perfect wake-up page, no doubt. And in order to ensure a neat articulation among the politics, economics, and culture of drugs, and despite criticism from the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, George Bush's administration introduced a New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, comprised of former drug company mavens, to screen every person for mental illness. Children were the first targets for mandatory evaluation, because the Commission's pharmacorps members regarded schools as ideal testing venues for identifying 50 million potential customers. This was happening even as the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors and the New York Attorney General were criticizing the pharmaceutical sector for hiding negative clinical trials from professional and public evaluation (Graham, "Bush"; Graham, "Big Brother"; Executive Summary; "Trials").

Conclusion

The cosmic ambivalence about the self that comes with being an immigrant underclass culture is also an animator of capitalist innovation and retardation, and social chaos and cohesion. The outcome is contradictory, because superstition often conjures up terror in the face of science. Superstition and innovation do not always play well together.

But while that struggle may be grimly fascinating, progressives must pose harsh questions as we await the crescendo when creepy Christianity and psy-function pharmacology clash, as they inevitably will, given the problems faith has with science and pleasure. We must ask what it would mean to seek salvation in the secular world, the here and now, and to do so without divine intervention, the psy-function, or corporate commodities. Could we enjoy the notion of the self as a piece of art, to be enjoyed through unpaid labor, in a way that did not postpone pleasure, defer income, or embroil us in commodity relations disguised as medicine? That would direct us to Kant's call for self-knowledge as an autotelic drive rather than an instrument, as an end in itself rather than a means toward some endlessly deferred or recurring achievement (Manninen). Such self-knowledge could produce a wisdom that transcended cultural politics through religiosity, and self-control through pharmacology—what Kant envisaged as *“man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity,”* independent of religious, governmental, or commercial direction (54).

Is such an alternative viable, a world where a person can “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic” (Marx and Engels 53)? A world that rebuts dehumanizing commodity fetishism, turning instead toward the Xhosa saying that “a person is a person through other persons?” A world where we live between the promise of cosmopolitanism and the loss of national identity (Canclini 50) rather than as “desiccated calculators . . . rational-choice rodents moved exclusively by the short range and the quantifiable” (Nairn), with “freedom to choose” only once “the major political, economic, and social decisions have already been made?” (Mosco 60).

Notes

1. New Scientist qtd. in Hansen, et al. 12.
2. Ross Douhtat, assoc. ed., *Atlantic Monthly*, at a public forum qtd. in Pew Research Center, *In Pursuit*.
3. <http://beauty.ivillage.com/0,,9jlxdd5,00.html>.
4. Higher"; "Breaking Records"; Yates; Hutton, *Declaration* 133, 148; Taibo 24; UBS qtd. in Greenhouse and Leonhardt; Wallechinsky.
5. Qtd. in Mattelart.
6. Hutton, "Crunch"; Mann 103; Pew Internet; Gallup; Grossberg 140–141; Pew, *Spirit*; Newport and Carroll; Pew, *Religion*; Pew, *Trends*; Baylor.
7. Alterman 85; Dolny; Claussen 56; Love; Rendall and Broughel.
8. Qtd. in DiMaggio.
9. Hutton, *Declaration* 85, 104; Coltrane; Lovato; Thuma, Travis, and Bird.
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