

about how power functions. What is inspiring in the figure of Manuel is his perpetual exertion toward the ideal of anarchy—surpassing even the anarchist who has perhaps settled for a system—a striving that, however misguided his choices, whatever his failings and ambiguities, takes him outside the city gates towards the forest. One hopes that he made it there.

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Anarchic Latency: Voluntary Servitude in Ernst Junger's Eumeswil



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It is not arms that defend the tyrant. Etienne de la Boétie!

No political system can survive even a generation with only naked techniques of holding power. Carl Schmitt

The work of Ernst Junger is generally taken up in two diametric modes within the anarchist milieu, following an easily recognizable pattern. When they do, it is primarily with one book, a novel called Eumeswil? The first mode is of those—the majority—who in typical fashion having heard somewhere that Junger is problematic, wash their hands of it and declare him to be a fascist. Which Ernst Junger could well have been, except that Eumeswil offers no explicit theoretical basis at all for statism, let alone the massive centralization of state power of fascism. The second mode is by those—the minority—who recognize themselves in the figure of the anarch, coined in the novel, poach the term and refashion it as a kind of identifier or nomination of "a - particular individualist, post-left or Stirnerite vision of anarchy familiar to those who

I will not pretend to be able to resolve definitively the tension produced so expertly in the novel. Anyways it would defeat the point. What the book does then is complicate any moral framework that would demand the abolition or escape from power itself. The text draws out effusively what it is about the figure of the tyrant, or the expression of power generally, that so attracts us, even precisely despite ourselves, as in Manuel's case. Our opposition surreptitiously reproduce the conditions of power. We have learned a few of these circuits. The liberal whose liberality is matched by that of the tyrant because it shores up the legitimacy of their regime. The anarchist whose attempt to bring about new forms of life that are counterposed to the static image of power insidiously comes to depend on them. And the anarch who relieved of any ethical norm by their withdrawal from life, imagines a form of survival in the interstices which mysteriously draw and align them with the space of power.

Read cynically, Eumeswil constructs a model' of survival mechanisms, coded as principled resistances, which both recycle back into the ambit of power, even for these that seek to evade this structure. Here self-awareness changes nothing

considers the Father the representation of war and the Brother of civil wars but coded in a world fallen from grace into the maw of nihilism and meaninglessness, such that, “there is a paraplegia that slices through the nerve of history. It terminates tradition. The deeds of the fathers can survive only in spectacles and tragedies, but not in action. We must resign ourselves. This has been going on in Eumeswil for generations.” This longing for past genius underlies Manuel's propensity to deny and surreptitiously accept figures of authority, producing formulations such as, “I am an anarchist not because I despise authority, but because I need it. Likewise, I am not a nonbeliever, but a man who demands something worth believing in.” A powerful melancholia animates Manuel's principle of the anarchist, shot through with loss of meaning and a nostalgia built upon waiting for a Nietzschean glimmer of the return of Great Men. His representation of paternal strength and stability is obliquely to be desired yet not to be trusted, always inverting from ideal to empirical, thus rendering Manuel's repertoire of self-descriptors: as fundamentally unattached to reflect more on his parental situation than on his political practice.

read online anarchist forums; who impute no complication or irony in the narration of the book—that is, those who treat the text as a theoretical treatise rather than a work of fiction. This essay is for these.

Certainly Junger was a ‘rightist’ of some kind, though just what that entailed changed dramatically over time. As detailed in the excellent essay by Federico Campagna, Junger’s political orientation and mode of writing enact a remarkable volte-face ‘over the course of his long life of 103 years, jettisoning the nationalism and revolutionary conservatism of his youth—his early work on the glorification of his experience in World War I as a kind of crucible which unveiled the nature of existence;’ arguments for marshaling the same violent energies of the war machine towards the creation of a worker state>—for “the extreme existential anarchism of this old age.” During World War II, Junger was courted by the Nazis but he refused repeatedly offers of a seat in the Reichstag, refused to speak on Goebbels’s radio station, and sent a ‘letter of rejection’ to the official Nazi newspaper forbidding they make use of any of his writings.” While stationed in Paris; he published pamphlets anonymously denouncing the regime and calling for the end of

the war? did not submit incriminating mail . coming through his military censure office to the Gestapo,” and partook peripherally in the Stauffenberg bomb plot to assassinate Hitler.’ After the war, he befriended Albert Hoffman and they experimented with LSD together! and he took up writing science fiction, analyzing the moribund impasse of technological society and detailing possible means of escape.

Much like: Giorgio Agamben’s treatment of Carl Schmitt, I would contend that any rigorous practice of thought of necessity must grapple directly with antipodean ideologies,” and that the more compelling of them would find in it, rather than solely denunciation, an uncannily familiar, if distorted, worldview and insights into errors, assumptions, and the groundwork upon which all ideological expressions are constructed.

Willing Service

In the first line of Fumeswil we read, “My name is Manuel Venator: I am the night steward in the Casbah of Eumeswil””* and then on the next page, “the Condor, being the current

tipping the scales of self partition. Yet the image also suggests total vulnerability and defenselessness to danger. Like a moth to the flame.

The central conceit of the novel is intimated on the second page when Manuel reveals, “right off, I must specify that while my last name is indeed Venator, my first name is actually Martin and not Manuel: Martin is, as the christians phrase it, my christian name...Manuel, in contrast, has become my nickname during my employment here in the Casbah; it was bestowed on me by the Condor”” This name, Martin, never again discussed in the story, is the first marker of Manuels split subjectivity. To be sure, it could even be made to function as his anarchic name, a name of dormancy (Martin and marten), though of course that would just lead to another power, his father. It is this naming at the outset of the book that tends to give the book its psychoanalytic valence, for there is a certain suggesting of oedipal undercurrents, given Manuel’s estranged relationship to his father, his ‘genitor,” who tried to snuff him out before he was born, and the absence of his mother, who died when he was a child.” In his metahistorical analyses, following Freud broadly, Manuel

on the hunt with the Condor, Manuel writes, “During those days, I worked intensively at the mirror in order to prepare myself for the forest. I thus managed to achieve something I had always dreamed of: a complete detachment from my physical existence. I saw myself in the mirror as a transcendent suitor—and myself, confronting him, as his fleeting mirror image.” What he has achieved through his constant practice amounts to a total reversal of position, yet leaving everything in its place. The perfection of Manuel’s identification with the image could be read as the final moment of consolidation of the latent anarchic self buried in the mirror, but precisely not its actualization, for it is the moment of his most extreme derealization and estrangement. His total transformation leaves Manuel seemingly unchanged at all. But then something inexplicable happens: he continues, “between us—as always, a candle burned; I leaned over it until the flame singed my forehead; I saw the injury, but I did not feel the pain...Had it not been for the stigma on my brow, I would have thought I had been dreaming.” These are the last lines in the text, heightening their hieroglyphic effect. Like Cain, a mark has been made on him, registering the encounter on the empirical, bodily, manifest self, a testament to his success in

ruler of Eumeswil, is my employer.””? What follows is an intricate justification of why one would voluntarily subordinate themselves to a sovereign. Manuel is not by any means innocent to the nature of the Condor’s rule. Bluntly, he says, “He is not a leader of the people; he is a tyrant.” This conscious awareness is more or less enjoyed by the general populace and even the tyrant himself, as Manuel explains, “the Condor feels like, and presents himself as, a tyrant; this entails fewer lies.”! Throughout the novel Manuel repeatedly refers to the Condor as a tyrant, to the varieties of rule and a profusion of fine distinctions of power. Indeed the book can be read as a kind of catalog of forms of relation to power, mapping onto a terrain, the city-state of Eumeswil, the modulations and patterns made by the interplay of the bonds of servitude and the will to escape them.

Manuel describes in detail the behavior of the tyrant and his staff; the docile and not so docile citizens of Eumeswil, his liberal father, his leftist brother, his teachers Vigo and Bruno, academics and students at the academy, the gourmand Kung, the volatile yet apolitical Nebek, the anarchist pamphleteer Zerrwick, the destructive nihilist Dalen. Tyranny and its

opposition are Manuel's constant preoccupation, for he is more than just a barkeep but also a historian. Manuel telescopes from his present—a future of collapsed empire and fortress city-states, simultaneously familiar and contemporary, futuristic and ancient—to relevant historical and mythic episodes in which he discerns an echo, jumping from the caesars to the twentieth century: “Presented with a wealth of types and also eras in which these types were concentrated: Greek and especially Sicilian cities, satrapies in Asia Minor; late Roman and Byzantine caesars; Renaissance city-states, including, over and over...Florence and Venice; then the very brief and bloody uprising of okklos, nights of hatchets and long knives; and finally the prolonged dictatorships of the proletariat, with their backgrounds and shadings.”” The present is rich and alive with allusion to power.

The two roles of - steward, serving drinks, and historian; impartially chronicling power, are complementary and readily blur into each other, for “the days in the Casbah are fairly uniform. I can barely distinguish between work and leisure. I like them equally” The night bar offers Manuel titillating glimpses of the inner workings of power in the city state of

It is telling that the ‘primal image’ supplies Manuel with metaphysical access to truth, when he probes things “in terms of their contradictions, like image and mirror image. Either is imperfect— by seeking to unite them, which I practice every morning, I manage to catch a corner of reality.” This magical realism results in a kind of suspension of the quotidian grasp of power over his life, allowing Manuel to withdraw from history, removed to a fundamental ambivalence at the meeting point of every antithesis. This produces the effect of being able to be oriented in any direction, to do anything. Forgetting their perspectival situatedness for a moment, they can play omnipotent, producing the caveat that “I live in a world which I ‘ultimately’ do not take seriously.” Yet the insistence on not taking sides entrenches the protagonist all the further in the binaries he seeks to circumvent, for he never abandons them to recompose the elements of the world anew but ends up entrenching them more intensely, charged with loss and nostalgia.

This episode with the mirror is significant insofar as it is layered upon to Manuel's relationship to the tyrant, for it returns in the last moments of the narrative. After being invited

I were to play pool, I would rack up many 'wins. This is the overall mood in the Eitade—especially the Condor's when he dismounts after his early-morning ride.

Then again there are days then my reflection blurs as if the mirror were misted over, and yet the image keeps gaining more and more reality the longer I stare at it. My body loses reality to the same extent. Caution is then indicated for the day; one becomes accident-prone. On the other hand, motion in mental space becomes more fluid. Studies prosper both in the libraries and at the luminar.*

This confrontation is a demonstration of the precision with which Manuel intuits the world around him, his image included, a process that requires a certain self estrangement. Ultimately it shows the extent to which the interior life of the anarchist is imaginary, that is; how susceptible he is to the effects of an image. This is because in order to keep alive the actuality of their interior freedom under the costume of servitude, Manuel must incorporate the imaginary into their definition of reality. The latent is just as if not more real than the exterior, manifest self.

Eumeswil, where the Condor, his right hand man the Domo, and his personal physician ~ Attila, - converse = and philosophize about the day's events, which provide grist for the mill of Manuel's broader metahistorical enterprise, as well as affording him access to the luminar, a powerful information and visualization technology that can call up at will any historical instance or document and even produce immersive holograms of them, essential to his historical exegeses and theorizations.

Neutral

All of his labors are directed towards elaborating a theory of the anarchist; who is in the last instance unbound by any power even in the "costume of servitude. Manuel imagines himself so in his role as night steward to the tyrant and as citizen of Eumeswil: only temporarily bound by political circumstance but essentially, because of a subterranean un-attachment, independent from power. Indeed, he imagines that this interior reserve is what furnishes his ability as a historian as well, in

the end neutral and objective even amidst the flows and rhythms of power in the present. For him, each historical episode yields a lesson, each encounter a foil for the anarch. Despite the machinations of power and ubiquity of subordination, “the anarchic remains, at the very bottom, as a mystery, usually unknown even to its bearer. It can erupt from him as lava, destroy him, liberate him,”? a force to be found in everyone, a universal capacity, if not always known or expressed.

The question then is whether we believe him, for, apart from Manuel himself, there are precious few examples of this anarchic principle throughout the novel. By his own lights, Manuel, despite working as a servant in the night bar, does in fact enact some arguably anarchic modes in his actual life—for instance, he studies and investigates history at the luminar guided only by his own interests; disentangles himself from the loyalties of blood and family, calling his father only his ‘genitor’; pursues love outside the bonds of marriage and takes multiple lovers: Ingrid, his student, and Latifah, a prostitute; “and even surreptitiously constructs a hideaway with rations of food and water. This last is significant because

technologists—or the Forest— mythical, primeval, home of the biologists—and allegiance to each is figured in his teachers, Vigo and Bruno.

So ever-present is this pattern, that it becomes a principle in itself, encoded in a maxim borrowed from his teacher: “Primal image is image and mirror image.” It is this revelation that allows him to, “not only to believe in but also to experience the possibility of being both here and elsewhere at once,” the basis of his strategy to survive subordination to power and retain himself. This encounter with the mirror is literal, producing from it his sense of self. Its worth quoting at length; each morning, Manuel writes:

I step in front of the mirror and gauge the degree of my presence by my reflected bust. Like everyone else in the Casbah, I am well tanned. The blue of the walls make my body stand out in relief, Thus usually

I see myself sharply outlined; there is no doubt, this is a mirror image. The day reckons with its tasks. Whatever turns up, I will easily handle. I will promptly notice this in the exercises. If

confirms as much: his notion of freedom, “that which also flies outside, past hill and dale,” in a word, extension,” is curiously mixed up with sovereign power, which as we know never abdicates its place in the citadel within the city walls. There is no space outside the reach of power, and this is the point, we will recall, from which the practice: of inner withdrawal of the anarch begins. Its a vicious circle.]

Mirror

Manuel’s life seems to be organized into binaries. In the morning; he takes two showers: first hot and then ice-cold. He contrasts the darkness of the night bar against the sundrenched city streets. There are two cuisines on offer in the Casbah, Mediterranean and Chinese. His two lovers are opposites: Ingrid is formal, nordic, and intellectual, while Latifah is warm, dark, sensual. His method of history vacillates between a theory of Great Men and of might, the singular ruler and the world state. The pull of the outside unknown can be rendered metaphorically either as the Catacombs—underground, plutonic, autochthonous abode of the

of its direct bearing on his nightly servitude and escape from it; unlike the others which could be attributed to the liberality of the Condor. About the hideaway, Manuel claims, “If I live on the hilltop like Robinson Crusoe on his island, T will be no freer than the man serving in the night bar. And I am no more autonomous as a doer than as a historian. However, things become more palpable in the doing Inner freedom is demonstrated.”? This latency will come to constitute the central dilemma of his theory of the anarch, undecided as it is between suggesting he already is free as expressed in his rhetorical acts of self possession or if it is only ever potential, waiting to be demonstrated. The calm certainty with which Manuel conveys this underscores the function of the anarch as a primarily interior experience. Manuel it seems is almost satisfied with knowing better alone.”

By contrast, everyone else seems doubly bound to the political situation in Eumeswil and to their ideological attachments—though the subtle sensation that each could be an anarch behind the outward appearance is always close at hand—ranging from his teachers’ open conservatism and identification with the state to the tepid liberal politics of his

father, who “still believes in a constitution when nothing or anyone constitutes anything.”* Even “the anarchist is dependent—both on his unclear desires and on the powers that be,” whose “hazy idealism, his goodness without sympathy or else his sympathy without goodness, makes him serviceable in many ways and also useful to the police.” The only candidate it would seem wherein the anarchic principle can be discerned manifestly, ironically, is the tyrant and his retinue themselves. Thus develops a hazy fascination and disavowed affinity between Manuel and the Condor, that though not constituting an allegiance as in the form of an oath, suggests a possible alignment and identification between the two figures. This radically destabilizes, but nonetheless is encoded in his theory of the anarch; he writes, “The positive counterpart to the anarchist is the anarch. The latter is not the adversary of the monarch but his antipode, untouched by him, though also dangerous. He is not the opponent of the monarch, but *Ais pendant*.” What results is an unstable amalgam of anarch and tyrant, bordering on paradox, upon whose resolution—that is, in which direction one should read the vector of the identification between the two—the remainder of the novel, and its import for us, hangs.

of power. Manuel returns to the image of the hunt again and again while in fact he is cloistered in the night bar and in the Casbah, watching the micro-dramas of power that play out there. On several occasions, Manuel likens his role as historian and observer to that of the patient hunter: “I perch on a high stool behind the bar...That is the raised blind from which I observe my game.” Yet he retains only the observational calm and patience of the hunt, lacking the possibility of a demonstration of his purported inner freedom. So even if Manuel as anarch is not bound to the tyrant as by the allegiance of his minions or the loyal opposition of the anarchist, it still seems as if Manuel is at least dependent upon the sovereignty of the Condor to supply an imaginary of surplus, excess, or exteriority. The play of identifications ties the two together in a knot that is not so easily undone: “There must be a close kinship between the chased and the chaser. The huntingmasters have totem heads; the grand *louveter*, the master of the wolf hunt, has a wolf’s face. One can guess who hunts the lion, the buffalo, the boar.”® The image of autonomy is paradoxically the same as that of rule. So when Manuel contends he “is as sovereign as the monarch, and also freer since he does not have to rule,”* he unwittingly

trapper, who had dedicated his life to this activity; the scholarly ornithologist turned into a Papageno and took part as a somnambular dancer. I myself was overcome with the deep and rapid breathing of passion.”** However Manuel is quick to insist that he really is no predator, saying, “It should, however, be noted that I am no hunter—indeed, despite my last name, I find hunting repulsive. Perhaps all of us are born to be fishers and fowlers and killing is our mission. Fine, then I have transformed this desire. During the heron hunt, I feel for the victim rather than for the hawk that kills it.”

Of course, this focus on the birds of prey cannot but lead us back to the Condor. There is something animal and predatory in the tyrant, and his name serves to bluntly remind us of this. It is the tyrant who organizes the hunt and it comes to define what is separate and distinct about his function. Manuel contends; “tyranny goes by the law: of the hunting preserve,” while hunting “captures the essence of rulership.”®” The two concepts are co-constitutive, the expansive space and agentive velocity of the hunt paired to the captive interiority and strategic mechanics

But paradox is not resolved directly in the course of the novel as Manuel, along with the Condor and his entourage, disappears in the last moments of the narrative amid murmurings of the coming end of the tyrant’s reign on a hunting trip, never to return. Instead what is left is a kind of hermeneutic gap, which like the mythic register constantly invoked throughout; the book, demands an interceding act of interpretation, wherein one must choose which tracks to follow through the dense undergrowth of allusion left like so many clues, the text left behind as Manuel’s last testament, presented ambivalently by his brother in an abrupt postscript. What can this disappearance mean? Perhaps Manuel has died in an accident. Are we to believe that Manuel, freed of his role of servitude at the night bar, rides alongside the Condor as an equal—as fellow anarchist even—into the great forest? As much an expression of inner freedom as escaping to his bunker along the river Sus? An uncomplicated adoption of the term anarchist would require this optimistic reading. Or perhaps such a possibility is irremediably beyond our grasp, stuck as we are within the city walls? Is the pendency to power of the anarchist, spiritually unbound but materially

subordinate, preserved outside the city gates, drawn as they are it seems to even greater powers beyond?

Prey

It is particularly telling that Manuel and the Condor flags of a hunting expedition. There is a zoological substratum to Manuel's thinking of power, within which the huntsman carries a special significance. The animal carries a trace of the real and worldly, lacking in thought alone. He frequently describes the animals of the realm, finding in them models for action and emblems for thought, at one point falling into a reverie several pages long in which he describes in detail the many stages and moods of the careful building of a marten's nest in preparation for winter, much like his own contingency planning for his hideaway.

The hunter, like Manuel- as historian, is a searcher, traveling alone, tracking down their prey, following the spoor, attuned to the merest signs. Like the anarch does in a different register,

the hunter provides for themselves materially, achieving for this reason a kind of spiritual = self-reliance beyond just sustenance, such that "the hunter...

is a free man, around whom the world arranges itself." The figure of the hunter provides access to the animal realm normally inaccessible when confined within the city gates and the human generally. To achieve their vaunted self-sufficiency, "the hunter is bold and cunning, and like all early hunters, he is related to the game he tracks." He takes on the character of an animal on the hunt, even coming to smell like his prey.

So the intersection of the spaces of the animal and the hunter furnishes Manuel's particular delight with birds of prey. Early in the novel, he watches Rosner, the Casbah zoologist, capture a falcon; the meeting of bird of prey and hunter has "a magical impact", at the threshold of human sense and something beyond, real and felt, hence connecting the animal world to its spiritual equal; indeed, "it seems to feather the world." The entrancing power of the hunt produces a contagious play of identifications: "In the bewitchment, the hunters become one with their prey; they alight in their wiles. It was not just the dark