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Mysterious Criticism: A Burkean Perspective on Hierarchy and Human Social Relations

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Mysterious Criticism: A Burkean Perspective on Hierarchy and Human Social Relations

by

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Dedication

To my sister, Leslie.

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Abstract

Mysterious Criticism: A Burkean Perspective on Hierarchy and Human Social Relations

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This work introduces the idea of mysterious criticism as a viable means by which to critique, explain, and understand the role that hierarchy plays in human social relations. It scrutinizes the works of Kenneth Burke and others to explain the role that mystery plays in human hierarchical circumstances, and becomes a foray into popular culture as a suitable object by which to explicate the form of critique offered in its pages as well as providing fruitful sources for the study of hierarchy in the beginning of the 21st century.

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CHAPTER ONE: A FASCINATION WITH BURKEAN MYSTERY

THIS WORK, FROM START TO FINISH, CONCERNS THE METHODIZATION OF A WORD INTO A FORM OF CRITICISM. THE WORD IS *MYSTERY*, AND THE FORM OF CRITICISM THAT WILL BE DEVELOPED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES WILL THUS BE CALLED *MYSTERIOUS CRITICISM*. AND THOUGH THE WORD ITSELF CONNOTES MANY THINGS, THIS WORK ENDEAVORS TO MAKE A SENSE OF *MYSTERY* LESS *MYSTERIOUS*, INASMUCH AS IT ATTEMPTS TO EXPLICATE HOW THE WORD IS USED BY ONE THEORIST, LITERARY CRITIC, RHETORICIAN, AND IN SOME CASES, PHILOSOPHER: KENNETH BURKE. AS WE SHALL SOON SEE, LITTLE HAS BEEN SAID OF BURKE'S UNDERSTANDING OF MYSTERY, BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT LITTLE WAS SAID BY BURKE ABOUT THE WORD HE NEVER FULLY DEVELOPED INTO A METHOD OF CRITICISM. BUT BEFORE WE DELVE INTO BURKE'S SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORD, OR EVEN HOW *MYSTERY* CAN BE UTILIZED AS A FORM OF CRITICISM, LET US LOOK AT THE WORD IN A MORE GENERAL SENSE.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives many definitions for the word "mystery," some of which are "theological" such as "Mystical presence or nature; mystical significance. in (also through) his mystery: in or by its mystical presence or nature. in (a) mystery: mystically, symbolically; with hidden or mystical significance. *Obs*." as well as "non-theological uses" such as "A hidden or secret thing; something inexplicable or beyond human comprehension; a person or thing evoking awe or wonder but not well known or understood; an enigma."[1] There are other uses of the term, as when the word "mystery" is defined as "Ministry, office; service, occupation. *Obs*."[2] These definitions are good inasmuch as they reveal certain understandings of the word that become important when methodizing a mysterious criticism, such as the divine mystery

[1] http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/Entry/124644?rskey=kQkzuZ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#
[2] Ibid.

(something outside language yet linguistically conceived), the enigmatic aura attached to mystery in general, or the fact that mystery has ritualistic or institutional connotations. But I think the second definition is an apt one for mystery in a common understanding of its usage. In this sense it is simply to call mystery the "that which is unknown" of whatever it is that fascinates in the moment. From this standpoint we might call mystery *the je ne sais quoi* of an aspect of human social relations, even if it is a bit pretentious (but then again, when discussing Burke, a little pretense is to be expected), and the je ne sais quoi of an aspect of social relations can be very powerful and lead to hierarchy.

Take, for instance, the multiple stories of the man on the mountain. A person wants to know the secrets to why we are here, what the point is to all this human nonsense. This person hears that there is a man on the mountain just at the limits of his or her sight who, it is claimed, has all the answers. A hierarchy is automatically established. For the person who wants to know does anything that is necessary to climb the mountain in order to gain the knowledge of the one who, until they meet, had never contemplated the person's existence. The person who wants to know the secrets that the man on the mountain purportedly has must come to the man on the mountain's ground, must attain some understanding of the person's point of view, by traversing a path similar to the one that the man on the mountain did in order to become *the man on the mountain*. Quite often in these stories, the person who wants to obtain the knowledge that the man on the mountain has is disappointed: we find at the end of the story that the man on the mountain is there because he was as baffled by the nonsense as the person who ascended it to gain all the answers.

This, of course, is not the only way that mystery and hierarchy are linked. Quite often we see something mysterious in hierarchies that are already established, such as in the case of

exclusive clubs like the Freemasons, in power cliques at work, in social settings, on campus, or even in the "classless" hierarchy that is both prevalent in The United States yet remains unacknowledged. The point is that *mystery is a condition that results from estrangement, from being in some way separated from something that is alluring (such as specialized knowledge, or property, or respect) while at the same time thinking or feeling, "why not me."* It is from this condition that, as we shall see, Burke takes his point of departure in discussing his own sense of mystery.

In studying Burkean mystery, one is slowly but surely inducted into a strange caste, a group that never again looks at the word as he or she once did. This is because a Burkean sense of mystery is connected to other concepts he contemplated: concepts such as *hierarchy, human social relations, dramatism, identity and identification, embarrassment, mystification, courtship,* and *dialectic*. In fact, William H. Reuckert states that "The eloquent passage which brings *A Rhetoric of Motives* to a close is the best description of what hierarchy is and why it permits the furious activities of dialectics and yet provides one with a fixed goal and those moments of stasis which are heaven's reward. Burke chants,"

> the mystery of the hierarchic is forever with us, let us, as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements, both with dismay and in delight. And finally let us observe, all about us, forever goading us, though it be in fragments, the motive that attains its ultimate identification in the thought, not of the universal holocaust, but of the universal order—as with the rhetorical and dialectic symmetry of the Aristotelian metaphysics, whereby all classes of beings are hierarchically arranged in a chain or ladder or pyramid of mounting worth, each kind striving towards the perfection of its kind, and so towards the kind next

above it, while the strivings of the entire series head in God as the beloved cynosure and sinecure, the end of all desire. (RM, 333.)[3]

This current work will rely heavily on Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, but it is also important to note the words in this passage: many of them we will see again, and will be explained in detail, including how they pertain to the methodization of *mysterious criticism*.

Burke never methodized his understanding of *mystery*. What can be said of his *systematic writing* on the subject is that he used it as what Barry Brummett calls a "speculative instrument," or, "a system for organizing our perceptions and actions in addition to being a system for communication."[4] In this way, Burkean mystery is at once rhetorical and communicative: it is rhetorical inasmuch as one's perceptions lead one to act in a certain way to achieve his or her ends; it is communicative in the sense that, in order to achieve those ends, a specific kind of communication is needed. When talking of Burke and mystery, this specific kind of communication is called *courtship*, which we will see is utterly rhetorical, but in order to methodize *mysterious criticism* we also will need to look at how Burke derived his understanding of *courtship*, which will lead us to a discussion of Marx and his analysis of *mystification*.

What makes a Burkean sense of mysterious criticism so important? As we shall see, mysterious criticism is the study of an aspect or dimension of human social relations, and is therefore important in analyzing what we do to each other, what is done to us, and how outside sources affect the motivations that direct these decisions. It is a method of criticism which asks the critic to attend to forms of human interaction that are sometimes reduced to the point that their import is lost. Burke was not one who reached for a star; he was one who reached for the stars. *Mysterious criticism* attempts the same. It attempts to account for human motivation,

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[3] Rueckert, William H. *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*. 2nd ed. Berkley: The University of California Press, 1982: pg. 140.
[4] Brummett, Barry. *A Rhetoric of Style*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008: pg. 43.

hierarchical motivation, social and personal restraints and freedoms. It is also a means by which to understand a dimension of hierarchy that results from human social relations and how it is manifested as many instantiations of something very similar. Before methodizing *mysterious criticism*, however, I first want to look at some works that have dealt in differing ways with Burke and mystery. Burke's work will be discussed in the second chapter, therefore these works will be divided into two sections, and for good reason. The first section will deal with how other theorists have understood Burke's contemplation on hierarchy, and in these works *mystery* seems to leak into the discussion. The second section deals with works from theorists that deal with some sense of *mystery*, and in these works other aspects of mystery are discussed, but often, as in the section before it, *hierarchy* (sometimes called "ideology" in the works) seeps into their discussions of *mystery*.

Burkean Contemplations of Hierarchy

I think it's important to note that the terms *hierarchy* and *mystery* are not synonymous with one another. If one were to understand *hierarchy* as a yoke, something which burdens us and is used to control us, then *mystery* would be its padding. The object of mysterious criticism then is that which separates us from social aspects which directly affect us: sometimes it is immense and chaffing, too much to bear; at other times it is slight, light, comfortable, almost escaping notice. But if *mystery* is the padding between ourselves and our yoke, then a discussion of hierarchy is where one begins in order to tease out that which is mysterious.

*I*n *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*, William H. Reuckert defines hierarchy as, "In the most general sense […] any kind of order; but more accurately, it is any kind of graded, value charged structure in terms of which things, words, people, acts, and ideas are ranked."[5]

[5] Rueckert, *Drama*, 131.

This ranking, generated by the nature of language itself, explains Reuckert, leads Burke to contemplate the "'hierarchic motive': on the one hand people are goaded by the desire to mount hierarchy, either through action or possession; and on the other hand people are goaded by the threat of descending the hierarchy, again either by action or possession, but also by the failure to act or inability to possess certain things."[6] The hierarchic motive creates the "hierarchic psychosis," or the ultimate motivating factor to Burke, which replaces motivations based on *sheer animality*, as we can never approach anything, let alone a hierarchic order linguistically created, without our prejudices and assumptions created by our symbol use: "Burke calls it a 'psychosis' because it is incurable; it can be relieved, but not cured; it is inevitable, ubiquitous, and eternal."[7]

"In Burke's scheme," Rueckert writes, "there are four major and many minor hierarchies."[8] The first three major hierarchies are the natural, socio-political, and religious or supernatural orders; but there is "another kind of ordering possible: the division of everything into non-verbal, verbal, and meta-verbal. One of the principle objects of dramatism is to study the cause-effect relation between the non-verbal, verbal, and meta-verbal as it is manifested in the natural, socio-political, and religious supernatural orders."[9] This introduces dialectic to Burke's work, as "By cause-effect relation, Burke means the ways in which language as cause affects man's views of and relations to the non-verbal, and meta-verbal, and the natural, socio-political, and supernatural orders."[10]

To Rueckert, Burke's understanding of hierarchy can be reduced to *the upward and downward* understanding of progression, which ultimately results in a sexual appreciation of

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[6] Rueckert, *Drama*, 132.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Rueckert, *Drama*, 141.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

hierarchy, what Burke calls *courtship*: "By forcing the analogy somewhat, Burke can say that the two most persistent motives in social courtship, as in sexual courtship, are the desire to mount and be mounted, with the two motives operating from lower to higher and from higher to lower."[11] The nuances of courtship will be more fully developed in the second chapter of this work, but for now it is enough to note its importance in an understanding of Burkean hierarchy as something which though "was originally part of" human "biological inheritance" is now, to Burke, "a mode of hierarchic action and sex itself [rather than courtship, is] one of the most valuable and marketable of hierarchic commodities" and is "no longer ever purely biological, but is most often psychologically and hierarchically motivated."[12]

I think we can exemplify what is meant by the hierarchic motive extending to a hierarchic psychosis if we contemplate the person driving on a highway, who wants to go the speed limit, but find him or herself in a race. This person quite often will find someone who is not going the speed limit, and so the person tries to pass the car in front. Almost inevitably, the person who is in front will begin to speed up, and then, as so often happens, so too does the person trying to pass. Each in turn speeds, and it isn't until both are going 75, 80, even 100 miles per hour that one or the other slows down. What is striking about this example is that there is no direct sexual or material motive attached to this; the object, which has now occluded both people's original desire to go the speed limit or close to it, is simply to win. Both people, who had originally been going so much slower, each find him or herself in a race, something which is socially structured, managed, and recognizable. In this example, the hierarchic motive has taken over, to the point that a hierarchic psychosis has become manifest.

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[11] Rueckert, *Drama*, 143.
[12] Rueckert, *Drama*, 144.

While Rueckert's work emphasizes the sexual undertones via courtship of hierarchy, Beth Eddy's accentuates more the religious undertones of social hierarchy and how they come to play in human social relations: "Sacred things and obscene things both deserve to be set apart; in this quality they share an identification that divides them from everyday norms."[13] The interplay of that which is obscene and that which is sacred is an important one, as it makes the two at the same time separate from one another while maintaining a synecdochic link, reinforcing Burke's spirit of *what goes with what*, or consubstantiality: "When the very obscenities of social caste can be reinforced as sacred, despite their obscenity, class distinctions get stronger."[14] "Because social hierarchy so easily imitates divine hierarchy," however, "the two become easily confused, thinks Burke."[15] Eddy points out that "Burke calls for extreme caution" here, as "he writes, 'we are unable to maintain our vision steadily, where this moment is concerned. Here is the point where the divinity of the ultimate ground merges so deceptively with the pseudo-divinity of class relationships,'"[16] a confusion that is charged by "mystery and guilt" that "characterize and pervade social hierarchy. On the bottom of that hierarchy, I experience mystery when confronted with what you know but I do not, or, more materially, when confronted with what you possess that I don't."[17]

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In a third work, this time by Ross Wolin, we see a more mutable discussion of Burke and hierarchy, as he sometimes describes it as class distinctions in the "most materialist sense," and sometimes describes it as courtship when he discusses ideology.

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[13] Eddy, Beth. *The Rites of Identity: The Religious Naturalism and Cultural Criticism of Kenneth Burke and Ralph Ellison*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003: pg. 74.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Eddy, *Rites*, 75.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Eddy, *Rites*, 74,75.

So far as hierarchy via materialism is concerned, Wolin states "In 'Identification and Consubstantiality,' for example, [Burke] makes it clear that in the realm of rhetoric, identification is the counterpart of 'substance,'" and that "Thus, like substance, identification implies that X is simultaneously X and not-X," another articulation or definition of consubstantiality.[18]He further states that "As examples of this materialistic sense of identification Burke discusses the 'turmoil and discord' that result when economic and noneconomic identities clash in 'man's moral growth,' the rhetoric of identification in postwar diplomatic posturing over American aid, and the support of science in postwar militarism."[19] Burke's point, Wolin reminds us, "is that property is one of a class of identifications that evoke feelings of stability because of the singularity or purity of the association (status, reputation, citizenship, and political affiliation are in the same orbit)."[20]

The parenthetical list above helps to transition to the second sense of hierarchy through Burke that Wolin identifies, as, when speaking of Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he states "In surveying these traditional and nontraditional texts, Burke demonstrates that various conceptions of rhetoric are reflections of social, economic, political, and intellectual conditions under which they arise."[21] Many of these "nontraditional texts," such as Bentham's and Marx's works, "focus on how these ideas form the basis of ideology."[22] Of these "universal ideas," Wolin states that they are "concepts that serve as the foundation for a system of ideas, beliefs, values, attitudes, actions, and institutions, serving especially as organizing principles for hierarchicization."[23] In this sense we see a blending of rhetoric, ideology, and hierarchy, as rhetoric becomes the ideas

[18] Wolin, Ross. *The Rhetorical Imagination of Kenneth Burke*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2001: pg. 180.
[19] Wolin, *Imagination*, 181.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Wolin, *Imagination*, 186.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Wolin, *Imagination*, 194.

which are promulgated persuasively (and often unintentionally) as common sense, or ideology, which then provides the basis for defending the hierarchy created as *natural*. "When trying to account for the relationship between ideology and human motivation," Wolin continues, "we have to realize that some theorists applauded ideology."[24] He is speaking directly about Thomas Carlyle, whose work is the basis of Burke's understanding of courtship, as Burke through Carlyle attempts to show that not all social distinctions are purely economic: "Thomas Carlyle (*Sartor Resartus*) believed that class structures reflected divine social order rich in class mystery. For him, ideology was good, and the social distinctions that clothing promotes were to be celebrated."[25] Burke, Wolin believes, "sought not to create a taxonomy, but to suggest a heuristic openness regarding the deep and often subtle role of rhetoric in human relations. And this openness allows us to learn as much from Carlyle as from Marx."[26] As we shall see, the dialectical approach to mystery that Burke takes regarding Marx and Carlyle is significant, and cannot be overestimated regarding a cultivation of *mysterious criticism*.

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As Reuckert, Eddy, and Wolin note, hierarchy is something that is everywhere in human social relations; because of the link between hierarchy and mystery, so is the object of mysterious criticism. Reuckert claims that hierarchy becomes self-fulfilling, that it becomes its own motivation for action: simply because there is a mountain, one wants to mount it. Eddy claims that hierarchy can be replicated, and we forget which is real and which is not: there are many mountains, some natural, others human-made; we treat climbing the latter as though it were the former. Wolin abandons discussion of natural hierarchy, instead splitting social hierarchy into its economic and ideological aspects: there are many kinds of human-made mountains; some we try

[24] Wolin, *Imagination*, 194.
[25] Wolin, *Imagination*, 195.
[26] Ibid.

to sunder, others we try to mount. What these three discussions have in common is an identification of estrangement, the condition of being separated from something by something else.

What a mysterious criticism would add to this conversation on hierarchy is the identification of different hierarchies at work and their corresponding influence on human action and motivation. Mysterious criticism attempts to tease out the differing motivating factors that exist as well as the registers of language that are used to describe these motivations and actions. What factors make a person describe a particular hierarchy as a yoke when other people might describe it as a freeway, or an avenue, or a web? Is one trying to sunder the mountain, or is one trying to mount it, and, just as importantly, can we tell why?

But a discussion of *mysterious criticism* brings more to the conversation than just its hierarchical aspects. If there is estrangement in the human condition hierarchically, then there is also estrangement between one human and the next. If there are some summits insurmountable to one person, then there are some people who can (or have already) reached that summit, and so a mysterious condition exists, not only between human and the summit, but between the human who can achieve it and the one who cannot. In the next section—a section devoted to what has been said of Burke's thoughts on *mystery* directly—we begin to see how this estrangement affects humans in personal ways, as, though we are all human, in some sense, we are not all treated equally.

Burkean Contemplations of Mystery

In the previous section much was made about Burke and his thoughts on hierarchies, and how their existence can lead to a feeling of *estrangement* for humans who are in some way affected by them. In this section much will be made of direct discussions of Burke and his thoughts on

mystery, while also detailing how they aid and hinder methodizing his understanding of *mystery* into a form of speculative criticism that helps to reveal certain aspects of human social relations.

In the pantheon of Burkian scholarship, relatively little has been said about Burke's understanding of *mystery*, and even less about a systematic interpretation of the concept. That being said, an extremely thoughtful, careful, and thought-provoking work dealing with an understanding of Burkean mystery is Jane Blankenship's "'Magic' and 'Mystery' in the Works of Kenneth Burke," an essay which "maintains that 'magic' and 'mystery' can be considered synoptic terms around (under) which we can place much of Kenneth Burke's work, particularly his theory of 'entitlement' and his treatment of 'social mystery.'"[27]

The term "synoptic" is not to be taken lightly. She states that "a secondary focus" of her work "is to note Burke's use"[28] of Samuel Coleridge Taylor, who crops up often in Burke's work. The word, both meaning to find common ground (in a secular sense) and to do so theologically (studying the commonalities of the Gospels) is linked to her argument that what Burke and Coleridge discuss is much the same, though Burke's work falls on the secular side, and Coleridge's on the theological. The ability to make distinctions of this sort, to place certain actions, thoughts, etc., into one realm rather than another, is her understanding of "magic by entitlement." The heart of her argument is this: When we use two words for the same or similar use (or, in the case of *synoptic*, where we use one word to convey similar yet diverging trajectories, allowing one meaning to bleed into the other), especially when investigation would lead us to understand them as not synonymous, or consubstantial, we find that before language was thinking for us, working on us. Our ability to muss through that muddle, to *discriminate*, is

[27] Blankenship, Jane. ""Magic" and "Mystery" in the Works of Kenneth Burke." In *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*, Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia, 128-155. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989: pg. 128.
[28] Ibid.

then the ability to see beyond our own linguistic confusion, creatively working through the mess. In essence, *discrimination* is the taking of something natural and making it symbolic.

The magic of language to both sort through the clutter of things previously synonymous, while occluding the mess that lies outside of it, has implications for our ability to act in the world: "We thus begin to glimpse the dangerous 'magic' of terministic screens; frequently laden with more and more personal and institutional vested interests, they are particularly dangerous when they become imbued with an aura of the sacred,"[29] an insight that has some intriguing analogies to our discussion of hierarchy and ideology.

So, what then, to Blankenship, is a Burkean sense of mystery? It would be simple to say that because she focuses so much on the discursive elements of magic, that mystery would be something more natural, the realm of the non-symbolic. And though she does not deny this sense of mystery, as when she states that "as bodies we are born into this world separated from each other, and in this sense profoundly mysterious to each other, unique in our solitary existence,"[30] what she is concerned with is "social mystery," or "our estrangement from and reconciliation with each other as humans" who live at once in a world of non-symbolic motion and symbolic action.[31]

"Human story, for Burke," Blankenship writes, "is a story of estrangements (mystifications) and reconciliations (demystifications)." This then, is the realm of mystery for Blankenship, a realm created due to our magical discriminations that separate us in ways that align themselves quite tellingly like our physiological estrangement. Separation naturally (as by being born separate entities) is like separation magically (as by the Coleridgean discrimination between *fancy* and *imagination*), and therefore estrangement is a mystery we are compelled to

[29] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 134.
[30] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 135.
[31] Ibid.

overcome: "We are separated not only from the natural world but from the supernatural world as well, whether secularly, as Burke is, by dwelling in a world of logology (words about the *w*ord), rather than in a world of theology (words about the *W*ord), or 'sacredly,' as Coleridge is by his fervent pursuit of the cosmic mystery, the enigma."[32]

Estrangement, *Separation*, *Division*: just as in the discussion of hierarchy, these are all words used to describe the roots of mystery (not only by Blankenship, but by others as well). This is due to Blankenship's claims that "mystery is inherent" in many facets of human existence, including "the generic biological divisiveness of human beings,"[33] "in the very nature of language wherein symbol systems may be grounded in nonsymbolic motion but where motion need not be grounded in symbolic action,"[34] "in that by our discriminations we direct attention to one place rather than another,"[35] and "in the *principle* of 'perfectibility,'"[36] the ultimate goal of recognizing mystery being the ability to overcome or "transcend" it.[37]

Throughout her work she returns to the similarities subsisting between Burke and Coleridge, Burke again being the secular counterpart to the more *cosmically* minded Coleridge: "Just as both men's sense of the magical functions of language pervades their works, so each acknowledges, even celebrates, the functions of mystery in any full understanding of language and the human condition."[38] There is a duality in both of their works, a dialectical appeal that Blankenship focuses on: "Everywhere (very early) we are reminded that mystery functions to reveal (as when we are initiated into the mysteries) and conceal (as when we are 'kept in the dark'); to facilitate congregation and segregation and/or 'congregation by segregation' as Burke

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 139.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 140.
[37] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 141-143.
[38] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 136.

calls it in *Dramatism and Development*."[39] Lastly, Blankenship reminds the reader often that our mysterious condition is part of the human one, as when she states that "Mystery is 'inescapable' because factual knowledge is necessarily fragmentary,"[40] or "human knowledge, although capable of a variety of ways of coping with unity and diversity, merger and division through 'creative circumfrencing' and the like remains *human* knowledge. It remains 'fragmentary'; otherwise it would be divine knowledge,"[41] or "through our own invention, our human symbol system, we may become consubstantial; that is, similar but not identical; only angels communicate perfectly, or so Burke teases us (*RM*, p.21)."[42]

All told, to Blankenship magic is entitlement by *discrimination*, our ability to use language to desynonymize concepts, actions, etc., into ever more intricate webs of social discourse; and mystery is both the web that is created by our discriminations and our wonder at how it both binds and separates us. Essentially, the symbol-using animal attempts to describe the world (the description being a both a reflection and a deflection of reality to Burke) and frequently finds this description lacking. The *magic* of symbolicity is that instead of giving up the quest to describe the world adequately through symbols, the symbol-using animal goes further down the rabbit hole, attempting refine, and redefine, the world, using ever more descriptive language. She never relinquishes her understanding of Burkean mystery being grounded in the works of Coleridge, as when she states that "Burke draws from many sources, but there seems, to this author at least, a special relationship between Burke and his sometime partner in dialogue, Samuel Coleridge Taylor,"[43] or when she states that "Although Burke's debt to Marx and Freud, among others, has been widely discussed, the Coleridgean influence has

[39] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 141.
[40] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 140.
[41] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 141.
[42] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 139.
[43] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 144.

received little attention. That influence is nowhere more profoundly manifest in Burke's treatment of 'magic' and 'mystery.'"[44] Although this current work is indebted to Blankenship's in many ways, as we shall see, Marx's and Freud's influence on Burke is not yet exhausted when discussing a sense of Burkean mystery.

This current work would desynonymize magic and mystery and instead understand Marxist mystification and mystery consubstantial with one another. Though Blankenship's work is dynamic and bold, it is more concerned with contemplating the similarities between Burke and Coleridge than it is in systematizing mystery as a form of criticism. If we are to methodize a sense of Burkean mystery, we will want to keep many of her insights in mind, though we will also have to delve into how and where Burke begins to articulate what he means by the word, rather than contemplating how Burke's work and another's are similar.

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Robert L. Heath discusses a Burkean sense of mystery in order to help explain some of the intricate nuances of Burke's *rhetoric through identification*, a rhetoric designed to add to, rather than displace, an already important body of rhetorical work: "Rather than rejecting classical rhetoric, Burke offers identification as 'an accessory to standard lore' (RM, xiv)."[45] Rhetoric by identification will be covered more fully in the second chapter of this work, but here it is enough to say that the main reason for Heath to introduce a Burkean sense of mystery in his work is that mystery is what necessitates a rhetoric by identification: "Mystery, with its implications for estrangement, requires identification as an anecdote."[46]

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[44] Blankenship, *"Magic,"* 128.
[45] Heath, Robert L. *Realism and Relativism: A Perspective on Kenneth Burke*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986: pg. 201.
[46] Heath, *Perspective*, 203.

Heath points out in his analysis of rhetoric by identification many aspects of mystery that will be more fully developed in this current work, particularly in the next chapter. For instance, he states that "Upon the base set by Bentham, Burke lays out the contribution of Marx; together they assist Burke's effort to understand the mystification of class."[47] He also claims that Burke's "rhetoric connects action, motivation, and ideology. We cannot have rhetoric, in his view, without sharing substance."[48] He believes that "identification serves notice that with unity and harmony we must always look for their counterparts disunity and disharmony."[49] He states that "Hierarchy is a constant among human relations"[50] and that "Inherent in mystery is the incentive to overcome it. People desire to understand persons of different classes, occupations, political philosophies, and such. Ironically, they often try to heighten the mystery between themselves and others. Those who seek social control may exacerbate mystery."[51] Lastly, he states "Mystery that arises naturally from hierarchy and division serves as incentive for courtship that can counterbalance mystery. The essence of rhetoric is the contest for advantage; each voice is a part of the dialectical wrangle"[52]

Though Heath makes these bold statements, he never fully develops a sense of Burkean mystery in a way that can be methodized, systematized, adequately enough to be used as a method of criticism for human social relations. Whereas Heath makes rhetoric by identification the centerpiece of his chapter that concerns a Burkean sense of mystery, this current work makes mystery the centerpiece that explains the need for identification in the first place. As stated before, a Burkean sense of mystery is something that has been understudied, underscrutinized,

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[47] Ibid.
[48] Heath, *Perspective*, 205.
[49] Heath, *Perspective*, 209.
[50] Heath, *Perspective*, 220.
[51] Heath, *Perspective*, 221.
[52] Heath, *Perspective*, 228.

and underutilized. Mystery is the keystone of human social relations. It's what makes human social relations work in the way it does, it's what makes human social relations look the way it does, and it's what makes human social relations a consistent, stable, perhaps stagnant, entity.

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A work that mentions a Burkean sense of mystery more than is utilizes it is an unpublished work by Christopher Oldenburg that deals with what Burke's understanding of identification can reveal about campaign anecdotes in American Politics. On the subject of mystery, Oldenburg is sparse: "Rhetorically considered, mystery is a major resource of persuasion."[53] He also states that "Electoral estrangement is brought about by those natural and social differences, what Burke calls 'Mystery,' between candidates and voters. As one of Kenneth Burke's central purposes of rhetoric, Mystery is inextricably linked to the socio-symbolic dynamics of an established, but not immutable order."[54] What Oldenburg is more concerned with is how people overcome what is mysterious, as when he states that "the scramble for the White House can indeed be characterized as a risky, mysterious, and competitive symbolic game with images and narratives as its central playing pieces."[55]

Oldenburg's detailed analysis of political anecdotes revolves around identification strategies, but his contribution to this current work is threefold. First, It makes mention of mystery as a force that motivates human interaction. Second, it makes identification and a Burkean sense of courtship synonymous, as when he states that "Burke argues for the close analysis of social intercourse, what he calls 'courtship,' and the exploration of those mysteries

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[53] Oldenburg, Christopher, 2008. *Electoral Estrangement and Courtship by 'the Dancing of an Anecdote': Burkean Identification Strategies in Presidential Debates*. Conference Papers—National Communication Association, p1-26. Unpublished work: pg. 3.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

that lead to division,"[56] or when he states that "Identification is performing mergers and divisions that influence the 'ambiguities of substance' applicable to one's experience."[57] Third, he notes an implicit understanding of the dialectical nature of mystery when he states that "Burke refers to this consubstantiality as being defined dialectically, because what unites us can also divide us; we come to understand what someone or something is by what they are not," but also when he states that "the central rhetorical tactic" in courtship "is to articulate glaring distinctions between oneself and one's opponent,"[58] and that candidates "must appear as both a leader and an equal."[59] As we shall see, the dynamic interplay of both courting and making symbolic war, of identifying with one and disassociating with another, comes heavily into play when discussing a Burkean sense of mystery and its motivating factors.

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A rich example of how a Burkean understanding of mystery has been used is an unpublished work by Ashley Mack titled "Keeping The Mystery Alive: Divine and Exotic Discourses in the 'I AM AFRICAN' Campaign," a campaign that had as its goal the desire to bring into consciousness the suffering of the African continent due to the AIDS epidemic and, concomitantly, maltreatment and neglect by the West. While admittedly not methodizing Burke's understanding of mystery, it does utilize his work to get at the deeper implications of competing discourses, and therefore intuitively uses certain aspects of a fully manifested understanding of mystery.

Of mystery, Mack states "Kenneth Burke argues that understanding how *mystery* operates within discourse is essential in understanding the ways in which we rhetorically associate and

[56] Ibid.
[57] Oldenburg, *Estrangement*, 8.
[58] Oldenburg, *Estrangement*, 1.
[59] Ibid.

disassociate from one another, specifically with regards to class distinctions."[60] She also states that mystery "is appealing because it shows us what we are not; what we cannot be."[61] Burkean mystery, she claims, is the scaffolding which dictates how the I AM AFRICAN campaign both attempted to overcome class distinctions between the West and Africa, and also what made the attempt impossible to succeed: "the campaign's attempt to unite the West with Africa failed because it ultimately reinforced *mystery* between both Westerners and Africans."[62] The failure that reinforced mystery, to Mack, was the use of differing discourses that were meant to be appealing and provocative, but simply because of this reinscribed the West as *savior* and Africa as *other*, what she calls "the divine" and "the exotic." The failure, therefore, was an improper use of mystery to create an aura around what is *other* at the expense of highlighting the consubstantial aspects of the West and Africa, and vice versa. Consubstantiation being a major part of overcoming Burkean mystery, to Mack the campaign was doomed to failure.

Mack, like others before, notes the dialectical nature of dealing with what is mysterious: "It is important to note that the divine does not purely make up *mystery*" in the sense of the campaign.[63] "In fact," she goes on, "it works in relation with another discourse, which mystifies class position: the *exotic*."[64] To Mack, the juxtaposition of divine and exotic "results in the reassertion of hierarchy," placing the divine (The West) in a position higher than the exotic (Africa): "Ultimately, the campaign presents African identity as foreign, uncivil, consumable, and in need of desperate help from the *divine*."[65] The dialectical opposition of the divine and

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[60] Mack, Ashley, 2008. *Keeping the **Mystery** Alive: Divine and Exotic Discourses in the 'I AM AFRICAN' Campaign*. The University of Texas at Austin, Conference Papers –National Communication Association, p1- 21. Unpublished Work: pg. 2.
[61] Mack, *Divine*, 4.
[62] Mack, *Divine*, 3.
[63] Mack, *Divine*, 12.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Mack, *Divine*, 14, 15.

exotic discourses therefore trumps any attempt at consubstantiation, making the cooperative subservient to the competitive. With the analysis of the failure of consubstantiation—which in Mack's work is the goal of the campaign—and the corresponding analysis of the triumph of a dialectical opposition that was reinscribed unintentionally, Mack treats mystery as something which "can be utilized rhetorically by the class in power to reassert social status and uphold social structures, while courting lower classes into believing it is in their own best interest."[66]

Mack's work is an analysis of the I AM AFRICAN campaign, and her use of Burkean mystery is more to explore how the campaign failed than it is to explain or methodize Burke's understanding of it: "With regards to *mystery*[…]I am less concerned with why *mystery* is appealing, and more concerned with how it sustains itself."[67] That being said, her work utilizes many aspects of Burkean mystery that are valuable and necessary to its articulation in a methodized way. She ends her work by stating that "Hopefully other rhetoricians will begin developing a more complex grammar for *mystery*, and not only how it operates within discourse but also what sustains it. *Mystery*, is ironically, a mystery. It operates often without our knowledge and exists even when we believe it does not."[68] There is more to be said of a Burkean sense of mystery, and this current work can be seen as an answer to her call.

Conclusion

In this chapter much has been discussed. First was a discussion of *mystery* in general. In the section titled *Burkean Contemplations of Hierarchy* the link between hierarchy and mystery was introduced, as well as complementary concepts such as identification, courtship, and dialectic. In the section titled *Burkean Contemplations of Mystery*, the ways that mystery has been approached in a Burkean sense was discussed, with some analysis as to why it is that they are

[66] Mack, *Divine*, 17.
[67] Mack, *Divine*, 6.
[68] Mack, *Divine*, 19.

helpful to a fuller understanding of Burkean mystery, while also previewing the reasons for which a fuller understanding of Burkean mystery is needed if it is to be methodized into a means of criticism of human social relations.

I call the first chapter *A Fascination with Burkean Mystery*. The reason to call it such is that the works discussed rarely, if at all, deal with Burke's intentional meditation on the subject of *mystery*. And the instances in which they do still do not methodize Burkean mystery into a form of criticism nearly so much as the authors discussed above use some of what he contemplated to make points about other concepts in the Burkean canon, or to cultivate their own points about which they are/were interested. What I call *tracking Burke's articulation of mystery* is what is needed in order to fully develop *mysterious criticism*. The next chapter attempts to do this, to track his articulation of mystery in a systemized way. In chapter three the method will be exemplified through a reading of the film *The Social Network*. In chapter four, the conclusion, the method exemplified in chapter three will be extended to an analysis of Kevin Smith's speech given to the Hollywood film industry at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival.

The reason to track his articulation of mystery is rather simple: it stays in the Burkean spirit. For most people who have read Burke, it is redundant to say that, for Burke, *words are shorthand terms for motives*, and in his conscious attempt to explain what he means by *mystery*, we glimpse what were the motivations behind using such articulation.

Chapter Two: Mysterious Criticism, its Articulation, and its Formation

In the last chapter, other theorists' contemplations on mystery as seen through Burke's lens were discussed. In this chapter, Burke himself is discussed, and his own contemplations on mystery and its roots will be explored as they pertain to the formation of mysterious criticism as a critical method of inquiry.

Discussing Frederic Jameson and the mysteries of identification, Robert Wess states that "*RM*[69] writes against the economistic grain of an earlier Marxism, without however, abandoning its material commitment altogether. 'Marx on '"Mystification,"' for example, is coupled with 'Carlyle on '"Mystery,"' where Burke considers Carlyle's symbolism of clothes as 'visible emblems' of the invisible spiritual bonds uniting human kind (121)."[70] As stated in the first chapter, mysterious criticism is deeply indebted to Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and Wess's statement is telling from the standpoint of mysterious criticism. It identifies the impetus of Burke's articulation on the subject of mystery. In fact, the first four sections of this chapter are labeled after the sections in Burke's *Rhetoric* that best aid in understanding a Burkean sense of mystery. In these sections—*Rhetorical Analysis in Bentham*, *Marx on "Mystification," Terministic Reservations (in View of Cromwell's Motives)*, and *Carlyle on" Mystery"*—Burke's articulation of mystery will be explained, the implications of the articulation contemplated, and how these pertain to mysterious criticism laid out. Following these sections will be one concerning other terms that tend to be introduced by Burke while describing mystery. This section—*Courtship, Identification, Embarrassments*—describes these concepts, and like the sections before them, describes their utility in mysterious criticism. The chapter concludes with sections defining and then methodizing mysterious criticism.

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[69] Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. 2nd ed. Berkley: The University of California Press, 1969.
[70] Wess, Robert. *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism*. New York: Cambridge Univerisy Press, 1996: pg. 202.

But before we get to the formation of mysterious criticism, it should be noted that this chapter, though thoroughly thought through, acts as an introduction to mysterious criticism. If we take seriously the claims made, both by Burke and by this work, that hierarchy is the realm of mystery, then the *Rhetoric*'s third part—titled "Order"—is utterly concerned with mystery, and thus with courtship*,* identification*,* and embarrassment. The point being made here is simply that, though this work is a careful examination of Burkean mystery, it is impossible to claim that all its nuances are represented. It is the work that is produced in response to this current one that will cover more fully these nuances, adding to what is presented in this work, and, as such, augmenting it.

Rhetorical Analysis in Bentham

For our purposes, discussing Bentham in terms of Burke's analysis would make parts of our section on Marx redundant. Burke's point in placing the section on Bentham just before the section on Marx is to exemplify how the two theorist's works shared a common goal articulated in different ways: Bentham wanted to place humans on equal ground by eliminating motives in language; Marx wanted to place humans on common ground by analyzing universal motives concealed by a specific use of language.

The importance of Burke's analysis of Bentham to mysterious criticism is the distinction introduced between "dyslogistic" and "eulogistic" wordings. Bentham's project again was a neutral vocabulary, one where the word spoken would refer to the thing referenced without the weight of human negative or positive connotations: "whereas we might speak of desire, labor, disposition, character, or habit (all of which, in his scheme, would be 'neutral' terms), we might on the other hand use either laudatory ('eulogistic') words like industry, honor, generosity, gratitude, or vituperative ('dyslogistic') words like lust, avarice, luxury, covetousness,

prodigality."[71] The use of dyslogistic terms or eulogistic terms to Bentham was what led to the *fallacies* he attempted to illuminate in his work, but, as we shall see, Burke associates dyslogistic terminology with Marx and his analysis of mystification, and eulogistic terminology with Carlyle and his analysis of mystery.

At first glance identifying eulogistic and dyslogistic language might seem like a trivial distinction, as, to some, it may look like nothing more than the ability to understand when a person or group is deriding or lauding a thing, concept, person, group, etc., but there is more to the distinction than this. For it also gives the critic a glimpse into deeper motives by noting the interplay between dyslogistic and eulogistic wording, as when, "in *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony cautiously begins his speech to the mob by using the expression 'honorable men' as a 'eulogistic appellative' for the murderers of Caesar" before "gradually, by the ambiguities of irony to bridge the transition, does he dare to convert it into the dyslogistic," for, had Antony "begun by using dyslogistic tonalities, he would have turned the mob fatally against him."[72]

Dyslogistic wording goes with a more materialist view of mystery (*mystification*) for several reasons. First, dyslogistic wording is divisive, as, exemplified above, using dyslogistic wording usually sets apart an individual or group from another or others. Second, as an extension of this divisiveness, it is more embodied (rather than more spiritual), as the creation of *those over there* rather than *these over here* becomes dialectical, making linguistic definitions that can be brought to completion via action or behavior. Third, by being "vituperative," it acts as an admonition, a warning against being like *those over there*, while at the same time inviting one to be like *us over here* simply by not becoming inured in the behavior admonished by the dialectical opposition. Fourth, dyslogistic wording goes with a materialist perspective because it

[71] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 94.
[72] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 94, 95.

acts as a *demystifying* tool, a way to bring more lauded, or *eulogized*, people, concepts, institutions, etc., down from the pedestal on which we often place them. We can see this understanding of dyslogistic language above, as *honorable men* become *murderers* by the use of dyslogistic language. Last, dyslogistic wording tends to be driven by a more economic register than its eulogistic counterpart.

Similarly, eulogistic wording goes with a more spiritual, idea-driven view of mystery. First, eulogistic wording merges rather than divides, by agreeing on terms rather than finding common *ground*, as when it is agreed that some humans are *honorable men* while others are not. Second, eulogistic wording is more abstract than embodied, as, by agreeing on terms (limits), there is a conciliatory aspect to the wording rather than treating bodies as equal. Third, by being "laudatory," eulogistic language acts as adulation, as an opportunity to praise a person, entity, etc., treating what is being praised as an object, and inviting the world to merge in agreement. Fourth, eulogistic wording maintains the mystification that dyslogistic wording attempts to discredit, and therefore relies on the *status quo*, as it is already firmly in place and has specific meaning. Last, eulogistic wording tends to be driven by a more courtly register than dyslogistic wording.

Earlier hierarchy was compared to a yoke, and this would be a good example of dyslogistic language. The language is divisive inasmuch as a yoke is put on one for the purposes of control by another. It has embodied aspects to it, as the controlled is separated from the controlling by the placement of the yoke. The divisive and embodied aspects of the usage lead one to fear the placement of the yoke on the self, leading to negative connotations attached to the use of the word, as one is treated as animal rather than as human. It *demystifies* inasmuch as it attempts to illuminate an aspect of hierarchy that may not have been in the consciousness of

those meant to hear its use. Last, a yoke is connected to the division of labor, an economic factor that helps reinforce the imagery in the metaphor of animals v. humans, and the cultural and economic distinctions between them.

But not all words of this sort must be dyslogistic. Above is noted that Burke gives to Bentham's understanding of the word *labor* a neutral weighting, but mysterious criticism would question Bentham's assumption. For *labor* can be eulogized as a foundation for the *American Spirit*, giving it eulogistic qualities. Similarly, *labor* can be used synechdochally and dyslogistically, as when *labor* is used to refer to one's employees, revealing that the importance of humans is what can be extracted from them for material gain.

Burke notes that "Where inducement to action is concerned, a genuinely neutral vocabulary would defeat its own ends: for there would be no act in it."[73] Mysterious criticism agrees with this assessment, and asks that the critic look at language that merges and divides, and asks why it is doing such, asks if this is the intension, and tracks the results of the use of such language.

Marx on "Mystification"

Writing of Marx, Burke states that he "forged a formidable machine" that he could "apply" in order "to shatter, as deceptive 'ideology,' traditions which had been the pride of mankind, but which in being upheld by economic and social classes as universally valid, thus protected factional interests in the wider, more general name of universal interests."[74] What Burke was writing of was a Marxist analysis of mystification, and reinforcing his claims on this analysis he further states that "As a critique of capitalist rhetoric, it is designed to disclose (unmask) sinister

[73] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 96.
[74] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 103.

factional interests concealed in the bourgeois terms for *benign* interests." [75] For the purposes of developing a mysterious criticism, we are interested in two aspects of Burke's discussion on the analysis of mystification in Marxist terms: his understanding of the analysis as rhetorical, and his understanding of it as dialectical.

We can begin to see what he means by "the Marxists have a rhetoric, a persuasion, which in turn is grounded in dialectic,"[76] by identifying how Burke understands the materialist analysis of mystification in the two ways he describes them. We will begin with Burke's contention that the Marxist analysis of mystification has rhetorical implications, and concerning this Burke states that "From the standpoint of rhetoric, the picture that emerges from *The German Ideology* looks somewhat like this:"

> Private property and the division of labor are identical. This is an important *situational* fact, since it leads to "illusions" or "mystifications" in the realm of ideas. The ideologist's inclination to consider ideas in their "purity" makes for an approach to human relations in terms of such over-all god-terms as "consciousness" or "the human essence," whereas the typical conflicts of society are rooted in *property*. If, when there is a quarrel over property, instead of confronting it squarely you begin considering abstruse problems of universal consciousness or looking for remote kinds of metaphysical or theological anguish and alienation embedded in the very essence of humanity, you are blinded by a principle of mystification.[77]

This is an apt description of the Marxist analysis of mystification in terms of its opposition to a more Hegelian understanding of dialectic. But it also serves to provide certain signposts as to

[75] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 102.
[76] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 101, 102.
[77] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 107, 108.

what one looks for when critiquing the dyslogistic aspect of an occurrence, text, etc., via mysterious criticism: "as regards the purposes of rhetoric, it admonishes us to look for 'mystification' at any point where social divisiveness caused by property and the division of labor is obscured by unitary terms (as with terms whereby a state, designed to protect a certain structure of ownership, is made to seem equally representative of both propertied and propertyless classes)."[78] He further states that the critic should "note the value of the admonition that private property makes for a rhetoric of mystification, as the 'ideological' approach to social relations sets up a fog of merger-terms where the clarity of division is needed."[79]

This opposition is itself dialectical, as "the materialist critique of Spirit is the analysis of it as a rhetorical device, and…the dialectal symmetry behind the Marxist terms of analysis seems to involve the approach to generic and individual motives through the specific."[80] The dialectical opposition here is between universal or generalized understandings of the world and a more specific, perhaps at times seemingly idiosyncratic, understanding of the world, as when "the imputing of universal or generic motives is then analyzed as the concealment of the specific motives (hence, as mystification)."[81]

The dialectical nature of the materialist analysis of mystification to Burke is set up by materialists as a science, "in the sense that equated 'dialectic' as 'science'—i.e., with a subject matter of nonverbal things and relationships,"[82] or where science and dialectic are each described as a practice "that took its start from the experiences of natural reality."[83] The relation between the Hegelian dialectic of spirit and the Marxist one of matter is one of attenuation, working in

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[78] Burke, *Rhetoric*,108, 109.
[79] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 109.
[80] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 110.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 103.
[83] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 102.

degrees rather than absolutes: "In this strictly Hegelian form, Marx may here seem to be attacking a doctrine to which few practical-minded persons would subscribe."[84] That being said, "once you begin to follow the logic of Marx's critique, you see that most people differ from Hegel, not in being immune to such thinking, but in being immune to its thoroughness."[85]

Mysterious criticism is profoundly influenced by Burke's understanding of Marxist mystification analysis. Mysterious criticism asks the critic to attend to language and behavior that point to wrangles over common ground. It asks the critic to look for language indicating some form of mystifying condition, language pointing to preconceived notions as to how *the world works*. But it also looks for language attempting to break through these notions. It analyzes any attempts to *unmask* certain ideological assumptions and attend to how the interplay of the interaction between the person *mystified* and the person *demystifying* plays out. What is said and done? Is what is said or done dyslogistic or eulogistic? What is the outcome of the exchange?

Mysterious criticism therefore attempts to account for the role that cultural proprietary aspects play in human social interaction. Is there someone claiming something as their own? How does this person (or group of people) do this? Do they uphold the norms of property relations or do they attempt to *transcend* them?

From a dialectical standpoint, mysterious criticism asks what people in a given social interaction agree upon. Another way of stating this is to ask what the people are disagreeing about. The import of attending to this question for mysterious criticism is that understanding what is in agreement leads to understanding the commonalities of the two sides in the dialectical wrangle, leading to a better understanding of how each side is consubstantial with the other. Why do the people in the interaction use merger terms or divisive terms to make their points? But it

[84] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 107.
[85] Ibid.

also asks what is lost in this dialectical wrangle, it asks what are the implications of focusing so ardently on the *this versus that* of dialectical oppositions that might be helpful to the cause, but is not introduced because of the agreement on what is being argued.

Terministic Reservations (in View of Cromwell's Motives)

In discussing Cromwell's speech to the House of Commons in 1655, Burke states that a "*general* statement of historical motives in terms of dialectical materialism is as 'mystifying' as any such statement in terms of 'Providence'—for in both, all reference to minute administrative situations is omitted,"[86] where "Providence" can be understood as a replacement for a more Hegelian understanding of dialectic. His point is that, "though *on its face*" a unifying term "reduces a whole complexity of terms to one apparently simple term, the people who used it may have been quite aware of the many other meanings subsumed in it, but not explicitly proclaimed."[87] But how is one to track these meanings, proclaimed or not, inside a unifying term? He suggests that through the historical record one may uncover some of these meanings by "studying what-goes-with-what and what-follows-what in the images and ideas overtly expressed,"[88] and it is here that we glimpse the two important factors of the section which pertain to mysterious criticism.

Mysterious criticism understands that "any over-all term for motivation, such as honor, loyalty, liberty, equality, fraternity, is a *summing up* of many motivational strands," and therefore attempts to track what can be uncovered from the words used for *summing up* to the motivations that produced it. How it does this is by studying intently *what-goes-with-what*, or identifying the words and behaviors that keep cropping up in both innocuous happenings and intense, climatic moments in a text or occurrence. It identifies themes, regardless of appeals to *logic* that other theories may strive for. It wonders why it is always the man on the mountain, and not the man in

[86] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 112, 113.
[87] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 110.
[88] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 111.

valley, or the man in the jail cell. And if it does encounter stories of *the man in the valley* or *the man in the jail cell*, it wonders what-goes-with-what in those stories in relation to *the man on the mountain*.[89] But mysterious criticism also tracks *what-follows-what*. It looks for what follows these innocuous and climatic occurrences and then identifies the *what-goes-with-what* about them. It looks at the stories of the man on the mountain, the man in the valley, and the man in the jail cell, and asks what follows. Do they all have similar endings, do they use similar language, and do they induce similar behavior? If so, then why?

It should be noted that Burke believed that the *true* achievement of uncovering all the meanings that are summed up in a universal term is impossible. This is no deterrent to mysterious criticism, however, as its aim is less concerned with *perfectibility* than it is about *thoroughness*. In this sense we may say that mysterious criticism walks a fine line. For perfectibility is something which is often described in Burke as the driving force for rigor, the constant attempt to make this or that better, until its completion. Mysterious criticism completes what can be completed while acknowledging that some mysteries remain intact. It therefore leaves behind perfectibility, while retaining the rigor that is induced by its presence.

Carlyle on "Mystery"

"**M**arx's insight into the mystification of class can get corroboration from an unexpected quarter," Burke states, "an equally urgent nineteenth-century writer, but one who, treating 'mystery' as a eulogistic term, would have looked upon the rejection of it as an atheistic abomination."[90] Burke is writing in this section on Thomas Carlyle and his work *Sartor Resartus*, a work on its face about "Clothes," yet in truth more concerned with symbolism. As it pertains to mysterious criticism, we can say this of Burke's contemplation of Carlyle: that

[89] An obvious example of this is simply to wonder why it is always a man who is always on the mountain, though this mystery may have been both exhausted and never understood.
[90] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 114.

Burke's understanding of Carlyle's work is one of symbolism; that Carlylian mystery and Marxist mystification are consubstantial with one another; and that the influence of Carlyle's work leads one to a sexual understanding of mystery—*courtship*—which, as we shall see, is but a eulogistic understanding of the object analyzed by Marxist mystification.

In order to explain these claims, let us first lay out Burke's understanding of Carlyle's "doctrine":

1. Clothes symbolize a social order that, while it elicits men's reverence, does not represent man's true nature.
2. There should be reverence, but it should be more deeply directed. Seeing behind the pageantry of social distinctions ("Clothes"), we find that all nature and history are symbolic of a profounder reality. Here is the Mystery at once revealed and concealed by "Clothes" (the "garments" of the visible world). To this our reverence is due.
3. But because the world's "Clothes" symbolize this profounder, divine order, we must reverence them too, insofar as they are representative of it. In ultimate reality, all men are united—and it is by reason of this ultimate union that the different classes of men can communicate with one another. Hence, at stage 3 we can restore with a difference the reverence for "Clothes" (i.e., the "garments" of nature and the social order both) that we withdrew at stage 2. In particular, we can restore reverence for that major class distinction, between ruler and ruled (a pattern of thinking, which could then, presumably, be reproduced in miniature, where lesser hierarchic differences were concerned). We should revere a true king ("hero") because he really does rule by divine right.[91]

[91] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 122.

We have but to replace the word "Clothes" with the word "Symbol" to get at the first contribution this section makes to mysterious criticism. For if we do so, the stages of Carlyle's work, as translated by mysterious criticism, look thus:

1. Symbols, in one way or another, represent Social Order. These symbols representing Social Order elicit human reverence for themselves in the name of Social Order. This is representative of the order itself, not of the creator of the order, be that creator human or divine.
2. Symbols themselves both occlude and reveal much about how humans understand Social Order. As such they represent human understanding of reality, at times collectively, and at times individually. This sense of reverence should be directed toward the understanding of reality, not toward the Symbol-use. This is something reminiscent of Blankenship's discussion of *magic* detailed in the first chapter.
3. Here mysterious criticism, just as Burke regards Carlyle's work, can replace with one hand what was taken with the other. For though it is true that Symbols are not reality, they do become the means by which to analyze human understanding of reality in the moment. The attention to Symbols gives a glimpse into the reality being presented by their use. So here we have reverence, but of a different sort. In stage 2 there is reverence for what lies beyond our symbolism (The Ultimate Mystery). In stage 3 we have reverence for how Symbols are used to denote how a person is understanding what is happening around him or her, and what that Symbol-use might reveal.

We get much encouragement from Burke to understand "Clothes" as "Symbols" in Carlyle's work, such as when Burke states that "Carlyle is not writing a book on the clothing industry. He is writing a book about symbols, which demand reverence because, in the last analysis, the

images of nature are Symbols of God" or when following this statement Burke suggests that "He uses clothes as a surrogate for the symbolic in general."[92] But we must not forget the other contributions that this analysis gives to mysterious criticism. Burke ends his analysis of Carlylian mystery by stating simply that, "As thus telescoped, what you get is this: Over and above all the qualifications, *mystery* is equated to *class distinctions*,"[93] which brings us to the next: that Carlylian mystery and Marxist mystification are consubstantial with one another.

Like understanding Carlyle's clothes as symbols, Burke makes many statements which reinforce this claim of consubstantiality, such as when he states that "Carlyle says in terms of stomach trouble what the Promethean Marx says in terms of a gnawed liver,"[94] or, "Examining his book to see what they [Clothes] are symbolic of, you find how Carlyle resembles Marx: Both are talking about the kind of hierarchy that arose in the world with the division of labor."[95]

The benefit of understanding mystification and mystery as consubstantial with one another is twofold. First, it allows us to see that the object under scrutiny in Marx's and Carlyle's works are one and the same. It is the gap that is brought about by the division of labor, as well as the gap's effects on human social relations. Second, it allows us to see their differences at the same time. The object under scrutiny can be understood in dyslogistic (Marx) or eulogistic (Carlyle) terms. And the terms by which mystery may be shown illuminate the object of scrutiny in such differing lights that the object itself looks as though it were two, not the one. For Marx says in economic and oppressive terms what Carlyle would say in sexual and agentic terms: the division of labor causes different understandings of the world, understandings which lead to

[92] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 117.
[93] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 122.
[94] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 115.
[95] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 117, 118.

estrangement; Marx would claim that the estrangements keep some from being able to act in the world; Carlyle would claim that this is part of the divine order.

The identification of the division of labor as the source, the impetus, for mystery is telling, and helps us introduce the third contribution that this section of Burke's *Rhetoric* makes to mysterious criticism, for "While the mystery of sex relations, which leads to the rhetoric of courtship, is grounded in the communication of beings *biologically* estranged," Burke continues, "it is greatly accentuated by the purely *social* differentiations which, under the division of human labor, can come to distinguish the 'typically masculine' from the 'typically feminine.'"[96] He further states that social relations tend to emulate sexual relations, as "the conditions for 'mystery' are set by *any* pronounced social distinctions, as between nobility and commoners, courtiers and king, leader and people, rich and poor, judge and prisoner at the bar, 'superior race' and underprivileged 'races' or minorities."[97]

This link between Marx and Carlyle, economics and sex, the sundering of social order and the climbing of it, cannot be underemphasized from the standpoint of mysterious criticism. For under this rubric, even a Marxist analysis of mystification becomes a form of courting, an attempt to sway one person or group of people into seeing the world as it should be seen, an invitation to take off the yoke of what oppresses us. Yet mysterious criticism is not quite on the track of what is or is not the truth behind human social relations. It is instead on the track of how humans perceive their reality, as it can be tracked by human symbol-use, and the corresponding actions and behaviors that are a result of their understanding. What this section gives us is the eulogistic half that corresponds to the dyslogistic half given us by the analysis of mystification in a Marxist sense. In reading Burke's *Rhetoric* time and again, one is given the feeling that his

[96] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 115.
[97] Ibid.

preference for understanding mystery would fall on the side of Carlyle. In this sense a fair way to understand his reasoning is much like Burke's preference for comedy rather than tragedy: Carlylian mystery allows us to see all actors as human and all actions as partially mistaken, thus imperfect, while a Marxist view to Burke would lead to victimage, scapegoating, and a teleological struggle for perfection. But we are not giving a mysterious reading of Burke. Here, for our purposes, we want to make clear that it is human symbol use which concerns us, in whatever form. If it is dyslogistic, then what is to be attended to should be that form of language. If it is eulogistic, then we must do the same. But the understanding of even a Marxist analysis of mystification as something akin to an appeal, an attempt to court others to a certain way of thinking, leads us to our next section. For courtship begets identification (emulation), and emulation, whatever its successes, tends to lead toward embarrassments.

Courtship, Identification, Embarrassments

As stated in the last section, mystery and courtship become linked with one another. Burke states that "all such 'mystery' calls for a corresponding rhetoric, in form quite analogous to sexual expression," adding that "the relations between classes are like the ways of courtship, rape, seduction, jilting, prostitution, promiscuity, with variants of sadistic torture or masochistic invitation to mistreatment."[98] He describes further the sexual nature of courtship, stating that "there are strong homosexual analogies in 'courtly' relations between persons of the same sex but of contrasting social status," using the example of the bully and his crony as an example.[99] "By the 'principle of courtship' in rhetoric" Burke tells us, "we mean the use of suasive devices

[98] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 115.
[99] Ibid.

for the transcending of social estrangement. There is the 'mystery' of courtship when 'different kinds of beings' communicate with each other."[100]

What mysterious criticism takes from Burke's discussion of courtship is first to identify it in what is being analyzed, before explaining its nuances. It treats courtship as a device, yet also tries to understand the organic qualities of the act itself. Is it heartfelt or calculated? If they can be uncovered, what are the motives behind the act? Is the act of courtship made in terms of dyslogistic or eulogistic language? Another way to put this is to ask if the person courting is trying to bring another or a group to his or her own level of existence, or is the person attempting to raise or lower the self in relation to the others'? What are the connotations of the act? Are they merely sexual, or are they class related, but in terms of sexual behavior?[101] What are the implications and outcomes of the courtly act?

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Courtship is a form of identification; as such, what one is looking for in courtship, one is looking for in identification strategies. Burke begins his discussion of identification early in his work, and there he links it to killing, as when he states that "the imagery of slaying is a special case of transformation, as transformation involves ideas and imagery of *identification*. That is: the *killing* of something is the *changing* of it, and the statement of the thing's nature before and after the change is an *identifying* of it."[102] He also marks the link between identification and consubstantiality, as when he states "In being identified with B, A is 'substantially one' with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of

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[100] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 208.

[101] A wonderful example of the former is Burke's section titled "'*Socioanagogic' Interpretation of* Venus and Adonis," which can be found on 212-221 of Burke's Rhetoric. It is not quoted in this work, but the section and the one following, titled "*The Paradigm of Courtship: Castiglione*" (pgs 221-233) influence greatly the formation of mysterious criticism.

[102] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 20.

motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another."[103] Discussion of consubstantiality leads Burke to contemplate that "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division."[104] Likewise, discussion of division leads Burke to contemplate what division does for identification: "Metaphysically, a thing is identified by its *properties*. In the realm of Rhetoric, such identification is frequently by property in the most materialistic sense of the term, economic property…"[105] All of this leads Burke to *sum up* his early discussion of identification in terms of consubstantiation thus:

> The fact that an activity is capable of reduction to intrinsic, autonomous principles does not argue that it is free from identification with other orders of motivation extrinsic to it. Such other orders are extrinsic to it, as considered from the standpoint of the specialized activity alone. But they are not extrinsic to the field of moral action as such, considered from the standpoint of human activity in general. The human agent, *qua* human agent, is not motivated solely by the principles of a specialized activity, however strongly this specialized power, in its suggestive role as imagery, may affect his character.[106]

If we understand identification as another term for consubstantiality, we can better understand the change from *identification* early in the work to his discussion of Veblen and *emulation* as *imitation* later: "It makes for consubstantiality by community of ways ('identification'), since men can either crudely imitate one another's actions as revealed on the

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[103] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 21.
[104] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 22.
[105] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 23, 24. It should also be noted that, giving further credit to Blankenship's insights, Burke next quotes from Coleridge.
[106] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 27.

surface, or subtly imitate the *underlying principles* of such actions."[107] Emulation, which is "but a special case of imitation,"[108] would also be "the word for imitation in the moral vocabulary, though its ethical pretensions might well be quizzically examined for traces of more mundane ambitions, and even for 'magical' attempts to coerce material by ritual means."[109] Linking identification to another concept—competition—Burke also states that "from the standpoint of 'identification' what we call 'competition' is better described as men's attempt to *out-imitate* one another."[110]

What Burke's discussion of identification brings to mysterious criticism is its emphasis on consubstantiality, its nuanced understanding of properties, and the moral emphasis attached to the concept. Whereas courtship, Burke's ultimate form of identification, accentuates a sense of merger, or better, a desire to merge with others, identification accentuates the estrangement that becomes the impetus for this desire. When noting certain behaviors that denote division, a mysterious critic can begin to look at other factors around the behaviors for underlying causes and implications to the behaviors. Its nuanced understanding of properties, which is a reflection of the means of ownership in a given culture, becomes one of the sorts of behavior that become manifest in identification. Is the person imitating for the purposes of communion or competition? What are the reasons for the imitation? Is the *something to be gained* by imitating seen in the culture as a spiritual gain, or is it more material? This leads us to the moral implications of identification, as a person identifying with another, or, more succinctly, with the class the person personifies, doing so for the person's or class's moral attributes, which would suggest a more earnest form of imitation; or if the person is imitating the other for sociological prestige, which

[107] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 131.
[108] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 130.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

would seem to be more in line with what Burke calls a "crude" form of emulation, what mysterious criticism would rather term as cynical.

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The emphases of identification are the sorts of pressures that can lead to embarrassment. In the simplest sense, Burke links embarrassment to mystery by stating that "any kind of 'stage fright' is evidence of social mystery."[111] He reinforces this idea by stating that "Quite as Sappho's poem on the acute physical symptoms of love is about the *magic* of love (the beloved is 'like a god'), so we interpret any variants, however twisted or attenuated, of embarrassment in social intercourse as sign of a corresponding mystery in communication."[112] Speaking of Empson and pastoral poetry, he further claims that "the 'mystery' is still present in such expression, but it is transformed into subtle embarrassments that cover a range extending from outright flattery to ironically veiled challenge."[113] Accentuating a sense of property relations in embarrassment, Burke further states that "attenuated, in the forms of social embarrassment, it can perhaps be reduced to this: Where there is wealth and poverty, there is awkwardness in any one of these four situations:"

a rich man speaking in praise of wealth

a rich man speaking in praise of poverty

a poor man speaking in praise of wealth

a poor man speaking in praise of poverty[114]

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[111] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 209.
[112] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 208.
[113] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 124.
[114] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 125, 126.

On the face of it, it may seem like attending to embarrassments in human social relations would be akin to watching, with mouth gaping and behind fingers laid over the eyes, a favorite character on a television sitcom do the most inappropriate thing that would never come to one's mind. This would be a mistake, one on par with thinking that attending to identification was nothing more than listing how one person or a group is *keeping up with the Joneses*. If such action or behavior is so pronounced as one's favorite schlep on a sitcom, then so be it. But more often than not what one will notice is something so utterly subtle as a pointed comment or an inside joke.

There is yet more. Embarrassments, subtle or not, are as ubiquitous as mystery. They lie in the uncomfortable silences of human social action, but they also manifest themselves in the innocuous behaviors such as not knowing whether one should simply say hello, shake hands, or hug and kiss another. One may never get to the bottom of embarrassments, but one should attempt to do so anyway. For as Burke reminds us, we are all under the pressure of the hierarchic order in one way or another: "And we are led to feel that the impulse behind such compromises is not merely an underling's fear of a superior, but rather the magic of the hierarchic order itself, which imposes itself upon superior and inferior both, and leads them both to aim at a dialectic transcending their discordancy of status."[115]

Defining Mysterious Criticism

Mysterious criticism is a form of criticism used to explain the role that hierarchy and human motivations play in social relations. In the first chapter I defined mystery as *a condition that results from estrangement, from being in some way separated from something that is alluring (such as specialized knowledge, or property, or respect) while at the same time thinking or feeling, "why not me."* The identification of mystery as a condition is important, because

[115] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 124.

understanding mystery as a condition, but a condition that is not merely predicated on not knowing something but also the hierarchical status which arises from not knowing, has important implications. It suggests that the desire to know is a property existing to some degree in all human beings, a property that can be manipulated by others who wish to cultivate a sense of mystery to create a hierarchy, since the person cultivating the mystery is ultimately responsible for the mergers and divisions that are created by it. The definition also accentuates the consubstantial nature of both mystery and hierarchy, since humans often retain the sense that they can achieve what others have obtained (a certain status in society, the material gains from that status, etc.), while also remaining entranced or mystified by those who have already obtained it.

In this second chapter I described mysterious criticism's object of study as *the gap that is brought about by the division of labor, as well as the gap's effects on human social relations.* More should be said. For the object of mysterious criticism is this gap, but the means by which to analyze the object is to study human behavior that tends to bump up against the gap, that is, behavior intended as a means to bridge it. We can go further now, and state of mystery that the gap that creates it, the estrangement that is made, is natural in its impetus and social in its manifestation. The gap or estrangement in human social relations as it pertains to hierarchy is thus the moving room allowed for acceptable or near acceptable behavior in a hierarchic relationship, and the study of mysterious criticism is linked to those behaviors which, in some way, go beyond the room allowed for movement into the realm of the remarkable, be that remarkable occurrence more righteous or more nefarious than the norm.

In broad terms, mysterious criticism is the study and critique of human social interaction with regards to both humans' own personal motivations and the hierarchical ones that are

introduced by the inevitable circumstance of being a part of culture. In reductionist terms, mysterious criticism is the study and critique of human acts of persuasion with regard to the two most basic human registers known—i.e., economic and sexual registers. In Shakespearean terms we might say that mysterious criticism is the study of *what fools* we *mortals be*, not only in what one will do for the achievement of one's aim, but also in the fickle nature of switching allegiance from one hierarchical relationship to another. In Burkean terms, mysterious criticism is the study and critique of human social interaction in its current form: where once social interaction may have been derived from sexual and economic concerns, they have now merged into one hierarchic concern; and the fact that the hierarchy exists is the reason for the ways in which people try to attain its zenith.

These above descriptions aid in the explanation of mysterious criticism as a method of inquiry in two ways. First, a list of definitions allows one to see what is being defined from disparate points of view, which, upon closer examination, will allow one to understand that which is being defined as something dynamic but fixed. Just as some undergraduate students need to study Marxist analysis of mystification, Derrridean deconstruction, or Saussurian semiotics multiple times from different professors to understand that which is being explained, so too does the definition of an object under a multiplicity of perspectives give more points of view for further clarification. Second, from the standpoint of mysterious criticism, none of these definitions would be considered the ultimate reality nearly so much as each would have particular truth conditions set upon them by the person promulgating the particular definition, and the aggregate of truth conditions gleaned from the disparate definitions may or may not approximate the breadth of the context which they describe. To put it another way: mysterious

criticism is concerned with how each of these definitions might contribute to a mystifying condition for both the utterer and the audience in that particular circumstance.

*Burke stated that "*we are not trying to decide if mystery should be considered dyslogistically, as with Marx, or eulogistically, as with Carlyle. For we need not decide here whether or not there should or should not be reverence and mystery (hence 'mystification')."[116] Mysterious criticism agrees. That being said, it never forgets that there are some mysteries yet unsolvable, and it pays reverence to that too.

Mysterious Criticism as a Method of Inquiry

So far in this chapter we have tracked Burke's articulation and understanding of mystery, its impetus in Marxist analysis, and its cultivation in Carlylian symbolism. Along the way we have come across key terms that seem to show themselves when he is writing about mystery. Also we have reiterated the definition of mystery given in the first chapter, defined the object of study for mysterious criticism, and given a plethora of definitions, each from a different point of view, for mysterious criticism. With all of this in mind, it is now time to methodize mysterious criticism.

As a method of inquiry, mysterious criticism is concerned with five key terms that are in some way linked to the mystery of hierarchy and human motivations in social relations. These five key terms—Consubstantiality, Dyslogistic and Eulogistic Language, Identification, Courtship, and Embarrassments—represent five possible points of departure for the mysterious critic. It should be noted that a mysterious criticism need not utilize all five terms in each reading. In fact, some of these terms may be so prevalent in a text that the reading itself fixates on one or two of the terms, as the actions, behaviors, and attitudes that are presented in the text are best represented under them. What follows is no roadmap, no set of instructions from point A to point B, but instead a list of important concepts and their corresponding explanations, and why

[116] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 122.

they are important to understanding mystery in hierarchical circumstances. We will take each in order, and explain their import to mystery and mysterious criticism.

Consubstantiality: This is the first term to describe, and, in a sense, the most important. The reason for its import is that all the other terms that will be described below either double back to it or are accentuated by its nuances. As stated many times before, consubstantiality is the where the object analyzed is simultaneously X and not X. For the purposes of mysterious criticism, what we are talking about is where the object, person, discursive structure, etc., being scrutinized is simultaneously enrapt in a hierarchical struggle, while also maintaining properties extrinsic to the hierarchical struggle. Something can not only be a part of a struggle and not part of it, however. There are times where two or more hierarchies are at play, and that which is in the multiple struggles can still have properties not being utilized in any of them. This is an important insight for mysterious criticism, as unraveling all of the properties at work in the various struggles can present the object in the struggle as dynamic yet torn, making for a more charismatic understanding of the object. This becomes the study of a dialectical opposition in many cases, or a study of the various dialectics that are pulling and fighting for control over the object. Attending to the consubstantial nature of what is being analyzed allows the critic to put the import of the struggle in a person's or group's own words, without necessarily becoming mired in the politics of the struggle, as there is often another perspective that can be analyzed, or, where *the something* concerning the struggle is also *not X*. But it also become a synechdocal study, as attending to consubstantiality normally constitutes noticing *what goes with what*, or *what follows what*. In this sense attending to consubstantiality tends to bring to notice redundancies of behavior, action, and language. This is useful, as it not only adds to a fuller

understanding of the consubstantial nature of the object, but it also leads to other behaviors that are important to mysterious criticism, such as embarrassments.

Dyslogistic and Eulogistic Language: The importance of attending to dyslogistic and eulogistic language is that it indicates a form of persuasion, whether it be of the revelatory sort, as with our discussion of Marx *unmasking* certain social distinctions, or of the courtly sort, as with Carlyle and the representation of symbols as reflecting the ultimate reality. It is important to reiterate one of Burke's critiques of Marxist mystification analysis here, specifically his contention that Marx's analysis was rhetorical in spite of itself. For, if Marx's analysis of mystification errs by claiming to be devoid of that which it criticizes, a deeper look into Carlyle's theory of symbols reflecting a divine order can, if taken to its limits, be understood as a form of determinism, as things being as they are for a reason. A peasant is a monarch in the Marxist sense because both are human, and placing one higher than the other is an abomination. A peasant is a monarch in the Carlylian sense because the peasant was born a peasant, but was also born with the monarchical qualities that allow him or her to rise to the status of a prince. If a peasant remains a peasant, then it was meant to be. And so the mysterious critic relies upon dyslogistic and eulogistic language to decipher in what way a person or an object about which a person is talking is treated. Does the language point to the speaker wanting to bring something of higher status down, or lower status up, in some teleological sense, in wanting all people on the same ground? Or does the language point to the speaker wanting to attain some higher status or platform, keeping social distinctions intact, so that he or she might use them to distance the self from most people, while becoming closer to others? This distinction—between language acting as a means of leveling or as a means of climbing—is a much better one for the purposes of mysterious criticism than simply looking for vituperative or laudatory language. For it is just as possible to

vituperate something unobtainable due to one's status, and to wish for the status in order to obtain it, as it is to laud something that one ultimately wants to sunder in order to have its use be available for all people. It is not only the words used, therefore, but also the purposes that can be gleaned from their use that is important. Attending to dyslogistic and eulogistic language aids the mysterious critic in identifying courtly behavior and radical behavior, and it also indicates instances of dialectical struggle, but it also helps identify the consubstantial nature of that which is being discussed by the use of the language. For if something can be dyslogized, it can also be eulogized, and looking at the language in order to understand how this is possible gets one toward the consubstantiality inherent in the object being discussed. But it also works synecdochically. Is the same language used throughout a text, or does it change, does it evolve? If so, there is a reason for it. The mysterious critic is charged with understanding the changes if they are there, and for understanding the reasons why the language does not change if they are not. Attending to these sorts of language therefore also aids in the understanding of embarrassments, as an embarrassment happening with the use of language repeatedly may indicate the reasons why the embarrassment is so redundant.

Identification: Changes in language from dyslogistic to eulogistic and vice versa were just discussed, and this is one sort of identification mysterious criticism seeks to mete out, because, as Burke noted in his discussion of killing, the change of something is the identification not only of what it once was, but what it now is. But this is only one sort of identification for mysterious criticism. Identification is linked to consubstantiality for the simple fact that, as humans, we find ourselves simultaneously in a constant state of change, while remaining the same individual we have always been. From a biological standpoint we can say that about every seven years or so all of our cells are replaced, essentially making us a different material entity from the one the seven

years previous; but we remain through this change ourselves, retain our names, and can remember what happened to that past material in the present. If we take this biological state of identification into the more social aspects of human relations, we begin to see how they are described similarly. For a reformed person can say that he or she is not the same person as in the past, while a more acerbic person in the present can say that he or she is quite the same as the person in the past, but with a simple accentuation of a personality trait that makes the person merely seem acerbic. Mysterious criticism takes seriously Burke's insight that one can either imitate crudely or cynically by copying mannerisms etc., or one can emulate more sophisticatedly or earnestly by copying something in principle rather than relying on mere behavior. In Burke's sense, imitation does not have the same ethical implications that emulation carries with it. But mysterious criticism understands the distinction between imitation and emulation with more gradation. A person can imitate crudely by wanting to be more like another, or more in line with a party affiliation, and, though attempting to be earnest, can be looked upon as a toady; a person can imitate more cynically for material gain, in essence being a courtly toady rather than simply acting like one; a person can emulate in principle for nefarious reasons, making it seem as though the emulation is the result of an earnest appreciation for that which is being emulated, while in truth doing so for material gain; and a person can earnestly emulate someone and still be painted as nefarious, or as a toady, though the intentions are to be like the person or affiliation, without conscious thought for material gain. So mysterious criticism sees the potential for ethical implications in both imitation and emulation, and understands that there can be good intentions and bad in both. Attending to this sort of behavior often puts the mysterious critic on the trail of demystifying and courtly behavior, which brings us back to

consubstantiality and dyslogistic and eulogistic language; but it also, as the above discussion suggests, indicates many instances of embarrassment that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Courtship: All forms of courtship are attempts to bridge estrangement, but the manner of the attempts illuminate the critic to how the person attempting to bridge is mystified. For example, if Christian imagery is used throughout a person's attempt to court another, you can bet that Christian imagery has been effective in persuading that person. Burke makes Marxist mystification analysis and Carlylian analysis of symbol-use consubstantial with one another for a reason: both have rhetorical aspects to them. For, the presentation of something in its true form, a glimpse of the ultimate reality, may not be persuasive in itself, but rather self-evident. But that which is self-evident still requires presentation to those who have been mystified into believing that it is not self-evident, and this presentation must be rhetorical. So, when attending to courtly behavior, it is not enough to identify sexual language, nor is it enough to treat all sexual language merely as sexual. It is hierarchical, be it a dyslogistic register being used (economic, demystifying, etc.), or a eulogistic one (sexual, mystifying, etc.). It is also important for the mysterious critic to note the sense given from the courtly behavior, and the changes in the behavior before and after its success or failure. Does a person use dyslogistic wording until a person has been converted to his or her way of thinking, before using eulogistic wording to accentuate the positive aspects of the conversion? Does a person use eulogistic wording until he or she realizes that there is no hope for a connection, and then switch to dyslogistic wording for more than vituperative means? Also, and in some cases more importantly, is the same sort of wording used throughout, regardless of success or failure? For if it is, then the mysterious critic may have not only discovered zealot, but may also have discovered a discursive hierarchy that is manifested through language. Courtship, in all its form and splendor, is one of the most

important aspects of mysterious criticism. It indicates quite plainly that the person or group using courtly behavior senses in some way that there is a condition of mystery, that there is some hurdle over which one must leap. It also, however, indicates the means by which the person wishes to bridge this estrangement, and, just as a lover treats a partner in ways that indicate how the lover wants to be treated in turn, so too does the courtier indicate through the means of courtship those behaviors and actions that would sway the courtier if he or she were being courted. But there is still more. With the introduction of the hierarchical element to decision-making, even in means of courtship, a courtier may be conscious of the goal to be obtained, and might, like a chameleon, court according to the courtier's understanding of what is most persuasive to the courted. Courtship then becomes one of the most prevalent behaviors a mysterious critic might encounter, since there are so many ways to court, to be courted, or, in other words, to be *mystified*. Mystification being an important element of human understanding, the mysterious critic will often see how one is mystified simply by studying the means by which one human attempts to court another.

Embarrassments: The final element of mysterious criticism to be outlined is embarrassments, or flubs that happen due to the desire of the human in the embarrassing circumstance to act in accordance with the dictates of the hierarchical standard, yet, for some reason, is unable to do so. Embarrassments can be as common and innocuous as not knowing which fork to eat with during a particular course at a dinner party or as outrageous as the slap-sticky sitcom occurrences mentioned earlier. The term *embarrassment* is also a bit of a misnomer, as, to some, it would mean that a person embarrassing feels the embarrassment as it is happening, or has some cognizance as to how he or she is being inappropriate. This happens often, but it is also possible for the person embarrassing to never feel that embarrassment, and so witnesses (i.e., audiences)

become important. Embarrassments occur in many situations, and also indicate the consubstantial nature of the predicament in which the person embarrassing finds him or herself. For, if there is a correct or incorrect way to act according to the particular hierarchy, and the person not only knows that there is a certain way to act but also does not know exactly how to do so, then the person embarrassing often is not familiar with the ways of acting rather than not knowing how to act in any given situation or according to other hierarchies in which he or she finds themselves. It also connects to dyslogistic and eulogistic language inasmuch as it may indicate why the particular type of language is being used. So far as identifications are concerned, embarrassments are often understood as trying to imitate or emulate another, and yet failing to do so. Lastly, embarrassments connect to courtship inasmuch as courtship is a type of behavior where one is identifying with another or with a group, or at least attempting to, but ultimately seems foolish to those who are more intimately connected to the hierarchy in which they all find themselves. The import of embarrassments to mysterious criticism is that they offer the mysterious critic rather noticeable behavior that can be identified as a point at which to delve into the estrangement that is necessarily created by the various hierarchies around which human social relations revolve.

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This chapter ends with a quote, a long one from Burke. The reason to end with Burke is that it is where we began, with Burke's fascination and then articulation of a word. The quote is meant to serve as an example of one point of departure that mysterious criticism utilizes to understand the role that mystery plays in human social relations, but also as a reminder of the ubiquity, fascination, and seriousness of mystery, and its utter import in hierarchical relationships concerning human social interaction. Burke states:

As regards rhetoric, our point is: Marx and Carlyle, taken together, indicate the presence of a "mystifying condition" in social inequality; and this condition can elicit 'God-fearing' attitudes towards agents and agencies that are not "divine." The two doctrines, taken together, can put us on the look-out for expressions that both reveal and conceal such an aspect of "consciousness," as is the way of symbols (for the dictionaries tell us that "mystery" is related to *muein* which, accented on the first syllable, means "to initiate into the mysteries," and accented on the second syllable, means "to shut the eyes"), but we believe that, if you will read *Sartor Resartus* with *The German Ideology* in mind, and without a blinding prejudice for or against either, Carlyle's enigmatic symbol may contribute as much as Marx towards indicating a relation between mystification and class relationships. This is a very important consideration for rhetoric, since it puts rhetorical analysis on the track of much courtship that might otherwise remain undetected. And courtship, however roundabout, is a form of persuasion.[117]

[117] Burke, *Rhetoric*, 123.

Chapter Three: *Mystery in* The Social Network[118]

In the last two chapters, mysterious criticism has been defined and, as much as is possible without demonstration, methodized. In this third chapter, by giving a reading of a popular text it is hoped that the method will be demonstrated, and the import of the insights provided by a mysterious criticism exemplified.

In order to exemplify the importance that mysterious criticism can play in understanding hierarchical wrangling and the continuous attempts to both create and bridge the estrangement that is brought about by the existence of hierarchies, this chapter will focus on a popular text only recently released: *The Social Network*. It is a film adaptation of the book, *The Accidental Billionaires*, written by Ben Mezrich. The film is directed by David Fincher, and the screenplay, by Aaron Sorkin, is fast-paced and stylized to a particular brand of substantive banter and mixed metaphor often used to distinguish the writer's vision of the brilliant and to accentuate a good mind's ability to, as it were, *turn the table* on any conversation. But whatever its merit as entertaining, informative, artistic, suppositional history, or even as lucrative, the film itself offers a snapshot of how many understand the mystery of social relations and hierarchical wrangling in the beginning of the 21st century.

The Social Network as text is exceedingly complex, with a budget of about $40,000,000, and it is utterly stylized, not only in language, but in visuals and artistic flavor.[119] As a revenue generating endeavor, it made almost $100,000,000 at the box office and has been released in the aftermarket of DVD and Blu-ray distribution as well. The popularity of the film indisputable, one must wonder what it is that makes it so, and some of it is obvious: it is a film about the founding

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[118] Sorkin, Aaron. *The Social Network*. Blu-Ray. Directed by David Fincher. 2010. (website citation). It should be noted from the outset of this chapter that the scenes cited below are not named on the Blu-Ray Disk, and are therefore numbered in this work in accordance to the one which will lead the reader to the quotation most quickly.
[119] http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=socialnetwork.htm

of Facebook, a social networking site that has over 500,000,000 members worldwide; it was written and directed by two well-known Hollywood insiders, aided by many people, both in front of and behind the camera, who know how to make something that will resonate with audiences; and last, that nobody really knows what happened with the founding of Facebook, as, due to the lawsuits depicted in the film, everyone who would know is under financial obligations to keep quiet.

I think we can add another, and it is this: *The Social Network* is a text that deals well with the sorts of thing that people are capable of doing to one another when hierarchical motives are involved. In this sense, the action portrayed in the film need not be utterly factual, as the action still has a truth condition attached to it, even to the point that some might say that they would do the same thing as others in order to get so much, or that they would have felt the same way if something similar had happened to them. And so what we have is something that rings true to audiences, and allows them to feel the exhilaration of mysterious circumstances without having to be under the pressure that such real-life occurrences might yield.

What follows therefore is a conversation with *The Social Network*, a conversation between the film itself and the pages which preceded this one. This conversation is meant not only to use the text as a test-case for mysterious criticism, it is also one that hopes to illustrate how mysterious critics might be able to utilize the form of criticism as it has been developed thus far. The analysis therefore focuses on the text itself, by looking for redundancies in what is presented through the text that can be articulated by the five concepts of mysterious criticism detailed in the last chapter, redundancies that can be identified by the critic and conveyed by the text in different ways, be those ways through language or clothing or presentation of other social aspects such as the nightlife presented in the film. This mysterious reading will therefore attempt

to explain how the film conveys its own understanding of how human social relations play out with the introduction of hierarchy as a factor which motivates human endeavor, thus creating a cohesive message that can be decoded by audiences.

Synopsis of the Film

The film is mediated throughout by two depositions from the pair of lawsuits Zuckerberg is facing in the present of the film, but it opens with a conversation already in progress in a bar, a conversation between the main character, Mark Zuckerberg, and his soon to be ex-girlfriend, Erica Albright. Albright wants to hang out with her boyfriend, Zuckerberg wants to talk about final clubs, the exclusive clubs that have emerged on the already exclusive campus of Harvard University where Zuckerberg goes to school. The question is simple: *How do you distinguish yourself in a population of people who all got 1600 on their SAT's?*[120] Zuckerberg suggests some answers: sing a cappella, row crew, or invent the $25 PC—or, one can get into a final club. Albright isn't a student at Harvard and so Zuckerberg's obsession is less a mandate than it is an annoyance to her, and so she teases him a bit before asking him earnestly which one is the easiest to get into. Getting defensive, he tells her that the import of membership in a final club that they are *exclusive, and fun, and they lead to a better life*.[121] An argument ensues, and she breaks up with him. He tries to keep her at the bar where they are arguing, telling her she doesn't have to study because she goes to Boston University. He then asks her if she wants to get food. She looks at him, seriously, and tells him that she is sure he will be a *very successful computer person* before letting him know that he shouldn't go through life thinking that he can't get a girl because he is a nerd: *it'll be because you're an asshole*.[122]

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[120] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 1.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

This episode becomes the driving force of the film, what sets everything in motion. Upset, hurt, Zuckerberg goes to his dorm and, while blogging and venting his frustration, comes upon an idea, an idea augmented from one given to him by his friend. His friend's idea is to put pictures of girls next to farm animals in order to compare the beauty of woman as compared to animal, but Zuckerberg decides to put the pictures of girls who go to Harvard next to one another and have people rate their beauty in reference to the woman's picture next to it. Thus, in a matter of hours, facemash.com is born. The website crashes Harvard's network, and Zuckerberg is placed under academic probation, but also gets a story about him written in the school paper, *The Crimson*. The *Crimson* article is noticed by three friends and business partners—Tyler and Cameron Winklvoss and Divya Narendra—and they decide to approach Zuckerberg with their idea for a website, a dating site for Harvard students and alumni which requires a harvard.edu email address to join. Zuckerberg says he'll help, and then instead augments this idea and creates thefacebook, with financial help from one of his friends who helped with facemaash, Eduardo Saverin.

The creation of thefacebook is an immediate success, and the two founders—Zuckerberg and Saverin—become something of celebrities on campus. At a talk given by Bill Gates, which mesmerizes Zuckerberg, they meet women, but it isn't until Zuckerberg meets again with Erica Albright, his ex-girlfriend, that he wishes to expand. Zuckerberg chooses Columbia and Yale for the next schools to be introduced to thefacebook, and Saverin also insists on Stanford, as *They need to see this in Palo Alto*.[123] It's a good move for the company, but it sounds the beginning of the end for Saverin.

Saverin wants to monetize the site, and so he sets up meetings in New York, none of which are to Zuckerberg's liking, as they are in offices and suck out the *cool* flavor that

[123] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 8.

Zuckerberg finds in his creation. But the last meeting, set up by Saverin's girlfriend Christy Ling, fascinates Zuckerberg. The meeting is with Sean Parker, the founder of Napster, and, to highlight the difference in style of the meetings, they meet Parker in a restaurant rather than an office building. Parker is late, a fact that helps to heighten Saverin's distrust of the man, but he courts them wonderfully, talking and telling stories, giving a little advice here and there, telling Zuckerberg that the only place for his company is California, and not the older, Ivey League New England, and only after wooing the trio does he bring up thefacebook. Parker sides with Zuckerberg on the idea that thefacebook should not yet be monetized, and leaves after paying the check, but not before he gives *his biggest contribution* to the company: *Drop the 'the'. Just Facebook. It's cleaner*.[124] Zuckerberg is astounded.

On the way home Zuckerberg begins to parrot much of what Parker stated in the meeting and it isn't long before Zuckerberg decides to move to California. Saverin stays on the East Coast for most of the summer, at first for an internship, though he quits the first day and goes from one place to the other in New York trying to get advertising interest in the site, though Zuckerberg still does not want advertising. While in California, Zuckerberg and Parker meet again, and Parker offers to put Facebook on the European continent, with an air of simply helping out, but also intermingled by asking where Eduardo Saverin is. The upshot of the encounter is that Saverin slowly but surely becomes less important to Zuckerberg from the standpoint of the company, Parker becomes more important, and the Winklevosses and Narendra, after several attempts to stop Facebook's momentum, including calling, emailing, chasing Zuckerberg, and even calling a meeting with the President of Harvard, Larry Summers, find out that Facebook is now overseas, and decide to sue. Saverin comes to California and finds Parker living in the house he has funded, gets angry, and freezes the account set up for

[124] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 10.

Facebook's survival. Zuckerberg has a meeting with venture capitalists, gets an investment, and then discovers that Saverin's account was frozen. He calls Saverin and yells at him, saying that the difference between Facebook and everyone else is that Facebook can never falter, can never shut down. He also tells Saverin that the venture capitalist has funded them to the point of setting them up in an office, and that he needs to come back to California to sign some papers. These papers are the end of Saverin in the company, as his stock shares eventually become diluted from 34.4% down to .03% of the company's holdings, at which point Saverin confronts Zuckerberg and Parker, bringing to action back to the depositions that are scattered throughout the movie, telling them he intends to sue.

The movie ends with an associate from his law firm, a woman named Marylyn Delpy, explaining to him what is going to happen: he will have to settle, and for both lawsuits. He gets frustrated, and he tells her that the reason she has been sitting in on the depositions is that she specializes in voir dire, explaining to him some of the more pragmatic aspects of law, such as *likeability*. He asks her if she wants to grab some food, and, like with his ex-girlfriend Erica, this gets him nowhere. He tells her he is not a bad guy, and she agrees. But as she walks out, she turns to him and tells him that he's not an asshole: *you're just trying so hard to be*.[125] Zuckerberg looks up Erica Albright to see if she is on Facebook, and she is, so he sends her a friend request. The film ends with him hitting refresh over and over again, as the Beatles song "Baby You're a Rich Man" plays, and the screen turns to black.

The Hierarchical Metaphor

No, don't ever apologize to me for losing a race like that. Don't ever apologize to anyone for losing a race like that—Mr. Winklevoss

Hierarchy can be understood in many different ways, and these disparate ways are often used to accentuate some form of classification. Otherwise put, hierarchy can be seen as a metaphor, as

[125] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 16.

when one states that he or she is *climbing the corporate ladder*, that one is *getting to the bottom of things*, or that one is trying *to get ahead*. Identifying the hierarchical metaphor in this case helps to illuminate how, just as in our discussion of the hierarchic motive and hierarchic psychosis from the first chapter, the characters in the narrative find themselves mystified. In *The Social Network*, the main hierarchical metaphor used is *hierarchy as a race*, and it is a good one, thematically speaking, for the film. The Winklevosses of real life were/are competitive rowers, and the movie highlights the fact that they placed 6th in the Olympics in 2008. The text itself accentuates the real-life racing attributes of the Winklevosses and thematizes those attributes in the film.

When we are first introduced to the Winklevosses, they are rowing down the Charles River in the early morning, lengths and lengths ahead of their competitors' boats, all four of the other boats about equal to one another. In fact, we are presented with the competitors before we ever meet the Winklevosses, one of them saying to his rowing partner, *These guys are freakin' fast!*[126] The camera then turns to the Winklevoss twins as they banter with one another on how they could make the race a *fair fight*.[127] Additionally, when Narendra discovers that Zuckerberg has *stolen* their website, he races off to the Winklevosses to tell them, finding them in a rowing tank practicing. As they debate whether or not to sue Zuckerberg, or what else might be done to bring light to the fact that Zuckerberg's creation will be in dispute, Narendra tells Tyler that Zuckerberg obviously knows what Tyler does not: *Getting there first means everything*.[128] Tyler of course reminds Narendra that he is a competitive racer, and understands that perfectly.

Later in the film we see the Winklevosses rowing in a competition on the Thames in London, and here too we see the visual metaphor of a race take on some of the aspects of what is

[126] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 2.
[127] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 2.
[128] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 6.

happening in the film. The Winklevosses are rowing against a Dutch team who win a close race, though only by a few feet, in an event that is usually won by *at least a boat-length or two*.[129] It is in this moment that the Winklevosses and Narendra discover that Facebook has expanded across the Atlantic to Europe, with at least three schools in Britain carrying it. Consternation over the discovery that Facebook is on two continents is intermingled with the disappointment over losing such a close race. Cameron Winklevoss points out to his brother this connection, saying that he doesn't mind losing a race like the one against the Dutch, as it was a *fair race*, and one that can be run again. What he does mind, however, is *showing up for a race on Monday that was run on Sunday*,[130] further highlighting the sense that Zuckerberg somehow usurped existing understandings of fair play laid out by implicit rules of the existing hierarchy that he in one sense is trying to transcend, and in another he is trying to mount.

This is not to say that other metaphors are not used in the film. They are, and to good result. But one is often reminded of the racing metaphor, and particularly of the boating sort. The language of the metaphor is accentuated throughout the film, even in the language of people not associated with boating, such as when Zuckerberg tells Saverin that he is afraid Saverin *will get left behind*,[131] or when he tells Saverin, in reference to the fact that Zuckerberg is moving to California, that he has to *get on board*.[132]

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Identifying the main hierarchical metaphor may or may not be so simple in all texts as it is in this one. But the importance of identifying it for the purposes of this reading is that it gives the critic some cues as to the differing means of mystification that are presented in the text and embodied

[129] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 13.
[130] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 13.
[131] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 13.
[132] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 11.

by the characters. For if the hierarchical metaphor in this text is *hierarchy as a race*, and races, whatever else they may be, are socially defined, then we can begin by saying that the film itself is predicated on an idea that might, without mysterious criticism's usage of the concept of consubstantiation, seem contradictory: from the standpoint of hierarchical wrangling, Mark Zuckerberg in this film both changes social relations and keeps them intact.

This is a bold statement, and one that will be explained throughout in the analysis, but we can give a preview of it here. It is true that Zuckerberg changes social relations in the sense that he takes something found in the real-world—exclusive final clubs—and digitizes it; but it is also true that, by the end of the film, he has not changed the nature of hierarchy, or replaced the existing one, nearly so much as he has ascended the one currently in place—to put this in the terms of the hierarchical metaphor given in the film, we could say that he wins first place.

Clothing in The Social Network

You're talking about fashion? Really, you?—Eduardo Saverin
I'm talking about the idea of it, and I'm saying that it's never finished—Mark Zuckerberg

Defining his understanding of the concept, Barry Brummett states that "*Style is a complex system of actions, objects, and behaviors that is used to form messages that announce who we are, who we want to be, and who we want to be considered akin to. It is therefore also a system of communication with rhetorical influence on others. And as such, style is a means by which power and advantage are negotiated, distributed, and struggled over in society.*"[133] Taking this idea of style in general and applying it to clothing, we can agree with Brummett when he states that "When we put on jeans, we are not just clothing our nakedness, we are speaking a language formed in cloth."[134] Under the lens of mysterious criticism, the import of clothing as a system of signs in *The Social Network* is that it tends to delineate those who are pulled by some older sense

[133] Brummett, *Style*, xi.
[134] Ibid.

of hierarchy that is never explained so much as it is stipulated in the film, while also connoting a waning sense of power and its shift toward a newer order of hierarchy. So in this sense we see the consubstantial nature of clothing as a system of signs, its use for the purposes of identification and its signifying practice as a means to connote certain instances of successful courtship. It's true that in the film Zuckerberg is rarely seen wearing something so stifling or boring as a suit and tie, but if this is all that could be said about clothing in *The Social Network*, then little would be added to the analysis of the film as it pertains to the mystery of social relations in its world. So too if all one could say is that clothing defines what is *nerd* as compared to what is *standard*. What we are interested in is the beautiful interplay of clothing, signifying, and recurrence that is presented to audiences in reference to clothing and how the use of clothing ultimately paints Zuckerberg as both blazing a trail in hierarchical relations while remaining bound to the older sense of order that is represented by the clothing he himself seems so ardently to despise.

In one sense, what we can say of clothing and its uses in *The Social Network* is this: symbolically speaking, in the realm of cloth, there are not two but three separate sign systems at work; there is the older order of cloth, the suit and tie, and this represents the old guard of hierarchy, and in the film this guard is reduced to something that is obsolete, ineffective in the newer realm of business and hierarchical wrangling emerging in the late 20th and early 21st century; there is a second order of cloth, an intermediate one, one where people at times wear suits and ties, and at others, more casual wear, and this intermediate guard is being pulled at simultaneously by the older one and the newer; and there is the third order of cloth, the new order, one that is represented by hoodies and sandals, and is ultimately painted as coming out on top, as replacing the old guard of the suit and tie. But, as mysterious criticism is predicated on a

sense of consubstantiation, we can also say this of clothing as it is used as a sign system in *The Social Network*: there are *ins* and there are *outs*, people on the inside of this new order and people excluded, and to put on a suit or a tie is to spell one's own defeat, however that defeat is defined.

In order to understand how these two senses of clothing in the film work to create a cohesive message about people moving in its world, we should describe the two senses of clothing identified above, though, as will be seen, the second sense of clothing—the *ins* and the *outs*—is a reduction of the first. Quite often in the film these depictions of one order of cloth are presented alongside one of the other orders, or just before the presentation of another order, for the purpose of signifying one's allegiance to a particular order, and to aid in classifying behaviors, attitudes, and mindsets.

A wonderful example of the film using the older order of cloth next to the newer is the short scene depicting Zuckerberg being brought before the administrative board for creating facemash, hacking into the disparate dorms' facebook's to use females' images, subsequently crashing Harvard's network. The scene itself begins quite tellingly: it shows three pairs of feet. To the left and right of the middle feet are two pairs of legs sitting in chairs, both of which are clothed in pants, with dark socks and dress shoes. In the middle there is a pair of jeans, no socks, and sandals. The camera pans up and we of course see that Mark Zuckerberg is surrounded by suits, being worn by people decades older than he. The man to his right is wearing a tie under a sweater, with a jacket covering both, the man to the right a button down white shirt, tie, and jacket. Zuckerberg wears a hoodie, and though he himself is there to be judged, and is, he cannot help but point out the difference between young and old already signified in cloth: he asks for recognition for exposing holes in Harvard network's security.

A beautiful example of the second use of the older order's cloth in the film, where the older order is presented just before a younger one, are the scenes that help to juxtapose one business meeting from the next during Saverin's and Zuckerberg's trip to New York. In the first scene, the audience is presented with a fairly standard representation of a business meeting, with the party who wants advertising (or on some level called for the meeting) coming to see the party who has money to spend. Saverin and Zuckerberg are sitting in an advertising executive's office, with Saverin pitching the ad executive and Zuckerberg doing everything he can not to notice. The advertising executive sits back, showing a tannish suit with the standard button down shirt and tie, while Saverin leans toward the executive, giving the many good reasons that the ad executive would want his products attached to facebook. Zuckerberg, however, is sitting to Saverin's side, looking down, wearing again his jeans, his flip-flops, and his hoodie. He makes a sound, one that interrupts Saverin's sales pitch. The ad executive asks what that sound was. Zuckerberg tells him it's a glottal stop, *almost like a gag reflex*.[135]

It's a scene that helps to set up the next one, what Saverin in the deposition calls a *Seanathon*. During this scene we as audience are presented with a trendy restaurant, a swank New York hot spot with an ambiance that becomes almost synonymous with the character to be introduced, Sean Parker. He's late, and while Saverin, Zuckerberg, and now Christy Ling (Saverin's girlfriend), are waiting, they discuss Parker. Ling and Zuckerberg are looking forward to the meeting; Saverin, on the other hand, is not. He claims he looked up Parker on the internet, and found rumors of drugs and young women, and also read the stories of how his two companies to date have *crashed and burned*.[136] Parker finally shows up and we are introduced to him walking alone, but greeting and being greeted by almost everyone who sees him. He sits

[135] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 9.
[136] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 10.

down, shakes hands with everyone at the table (making sure to include Ling), and is greeted by the server as *baby boy*.[137] Parker is dressed quite obviously similarly to Saverin, Saverin still wearing his button down shirt and silver tie from the meeting with the ad executive, while Parker is dressed all in black too, but without the pretense of a tie. His conversation matches his look: it's sleek and stylish, moving from one topic to the next, though always returning to himself. The atmosphere of this meeting, and the clothes that are worn during it, offer a stark contrast to the meeting before it, representing a mixture of business and pleasure rather than groveling for money, with good food and sharing, drinks and banter, to accentuate the contrast of clothes from the older one just given the viewer moments before.

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The introduction of Saverin and Parker to this analysis could signal many things, but here it introduces us to the intermediate order of cloth, one that in the film becomes pulled by both the older order represented by suits and ties, and a more youthful and casual order that is represented by Zuckerberg and to a smaller extent, his roommate and fellow programmer, Dustin Moskovitz. Saverin and Parker are not the only representatives of the intermediate order, however: we see good examples of this order in the representations of Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss and Divya Narendra. Each of these characters exemplifying the intermediate order seems to know when to dress, for what occasion, and for what reason. Another way to put this is to say that each has a sense of appropriateness that is only faintly shown in Zuckerberg, and is never shown in any of the examples of the older order—such as the advertising executive or Larry Summers, the President of Harvard—due to the fact that, with the exception of the manager of Harvard's network security getting out of bed, audiences never see the older order represented in any fashion than an official one, underlining their waning import.

[137] Ibid.

We could discuss the Winklevosses and Narendra, and their appropriateness of dress in all situations, their ability to look like the older order during the depositions or during the scene shot in London for the boating race, while also maintaining something of a preppy casual look for less formal occasions; but the better examples for our purposes are Saverin and Parker, as a description of each will aid our reading in subsequent sections. Saverin throughout the film is expressive, emotive, and he has an appropriateness about his character that lets the audience know he is earnest, and his clothes reflect this as well. Audiences never see Saverin in attire like Zuckerberg's, he never puts on a hoodie or wears jeans and flip-flops. But his appropriateness is probably best described in the scene depicting Zuckerberg and Saverin founding Facebook. In this scene Saverin is not wearing his usual suit, or even his more casual look of a suit sans tie with the collar unbuttoned, but instead he wears sandals, shorts, a Hawaiian shirt, and a wickeresque hat that has fraying for a brim. Zuckerberg and Saverin are still students at Harvard, and the scene is depicted as such, as being part of the old, East Coast variety, cold, and dark. The reason for the outfit is simple: the Jewish fraternity, A-E-Pi, of which he is a member, is holding a dance with a Caribbean theme, and so he has dressed according to the theme's mandate. Seeing Zuckerberg, Saverin dances over to him, a move that Zuckerberg does not quite fathom, and Zuckerberg asks to talk to him outside, where they found Facebook in the 20 degree weather.

The importance of adhering to the mandates of societal and personal hierarchies is a theme that recurs in Saverin's character, and we see it performed repeatedly in his dress. Other than the Caribbean scene, Saverin is most often clothed in some form of suit, but one that is worn casually, with the collar undone and the buttons unhooked. His departure from the company is a decent example of this form of dress, as when he states in a deposition transition scene that he was called by Zuckerberg to attend a meeting in California for a mixture of business and

celebration for Facebook's one millionth member, and didn't know whether he should dress for the meeting or the party: *so I dressed for both*.[138] He walks into the new offices of Facebook wearing a black button down shirt, pants, and coat, but no tie. He quickly learns that he has been pushed out, that his shares in the company have been diluted down from 34% to .03%, and in a fury he destroys Zuckerberg's computer and confronts him. In the ensuing argument Parker inserts himself, stating what a preposterous idea it was that *we would let you parade around in your ridiculous suits, pretending to run this company*.[139] Saverin's retort is expressive, angry, and a wonderful example of dyslogistic language for the purposes of consubstantiation. He turns to Parker, yelling, *Sorry! I forgot my Prada at the cleaners*, before turning again to Zuckerberg and shouting, *along with my hoodie and my fuck-you flip-flops, you pretentious douchebag!*[140]

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Contrasting greatly with Saverin yet still remaining in the same intermediate order of cloth as he, Parker in this scene is wearing jeans, a tee shirt, and a zip-down hoodie, though this is not how he is always depicted. We are first introduced to Parker as he wakes up from a one night stand, and in this scene we are less presented with clothes than we are with behavior that will follow him throughout the film, behavior such as a willingness to banter to get what he wants, an unshakable demeanor, and a penchant for young undergraduates. The second scene in which we see Parker is described above, the scene in which he is dressed in all-black, sans tie, but his clothing changes throughout the narrative. When Parker and Zuckerberg meet again in California, he is wearing jeans and a shirt, casual and unassuming, But in the next scene, where Parker takes Zuckerberg to a nightclub and offers to introduce Facebook to Europe, he is again wearing his trendy black *Prada*.

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[138] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 15.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.

What becomes so fascinating about the use of the intermediate order of cloth to represent Parker is not just how it contrasts so starkly with its use to depict Saverin, but also, from the point of view of courtship, how his dress indicates what he is doing in the moment. He both leads and follows, as the situation dictates, and so we see the same sense of appropriateness exemplified by Saverin directed toward a different goal. In Saverin's dress, the emphasis is upon the dictates of society; in Parker's dress, we see the emphasis being upon the achievement of his goals, which are a blend of the dictates of society which he deems appropriate, while also keeping in mind how he is courting Zuckerberg in the moment. In the two scenes in which he is dressed in suits, he is leading, reminding Zuckerberg that he has already been in the same situations as Zuckerberg is now, and giving advice and good rules to live by. In the scenes in which he is dressed more like Zuckerberg, with jeans and shirts, hoodies, etc., we see Parker following, taking Zuckerberg's lead, acquiescing to Zuckerberg's mandates.

If Parker is a chameleon, then the intermediate order of cloth is his skin, his disguise, and the appropriateness it affords him is a comfort, though it does not extend to his nature as it seems so often to do with Saverin. In his next to last scene, audiences are not presented with clothing as stylistic markers, but rather accessories that reveal his true character, a revelation that is a visual representation of Zuckerberg's pending demystification of Parker. In essence, they refute the presentation he so carefully molds in cloth throughout the film. One of the hallmarks of understanding clothing as signifier for something larger is the distinction between surface and substance, the belief that one can clothe oneself in the airs of something that he or she in reality is not. We see this distinction of surface and substance being exemplified through Parker's character throughout the film, his ability to seemingly dress appropriately for all situations, his chameleon ways, but in the penultimate scene in which Parker is present—the scene in which he

is arrested on drug charges at a sorority house party—his veil is lifted, and we see the real Parker, the Parker behind the cloth. In this scene he is talking about the *true digitalization of real life*,[141] while both drunk and high at his latest sexual conquest's sorority house. The police raid the party and break it up, and find Parker with cocaine on his hand. They ask him to turn out his pockets, and he does, putting two items on the table. The police look at each one and ask him what they are. He has an epi-pen and an inhaler, and Parker is revealed for what he truly is: an asthmatic nerd who forgot his pocket protector.

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Zuckerberg himself represents the new order of cloth almost throughout the film, but, because he is also the man who comes out on top, he comes to be identified with the older order of cloth he so often is set at odds against. As mentioned before, the new order of cloth is set in jeans and sandals, *hoodies and fuck-you flip-flops*, and Zuckerberg not only embodies this order of cloth in the film, he in fact defines it. Looking around for other members of this order one is hard pressed to find one, though a member can be found in the minor character of Moskowitz, Zuckerberg's roommate and fellow programmer. As insinuated earlier, the new order of cloth is usually visually represented in contrast to the older or intermediate orders to convey a sense of rebelling against authority, of flouting the fact that the old order is heading out the door. But there is still more to say. Zuckerberg has been described as the usurper in these pages, and is depicted as such in the film; but there are aspects of his clothing which signify not only the flouting of the old order, but also his inclusion in its fold.

During most of the film, Zuckerberg is depicted as wearing jeans or shorts, a hoodie or tee shirt, and always sockless with sandals. But near the end of the movie, the audience is presented with a change. It is at first a slight change, and Zuckerberg is wearing a hoodie over

[141] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 15.

something seemingly innocuous, something not really there. Audiences see this change first presented in the deposition montages toward the end of the film, especially once Saverin is describing his expulsion from facebook, his hurt and disappointment, and the effect this experience has had on his relationship with his father. But it isn't fully manifested, it isn't fully exposed, until the final scene in which Marylin Delpy, one of his legal counsel, reiterates with sympathy what Zuckerberg's ex-girlfriend, Erica Albright, proclaims with vehemence: *You're not an asshole, Mark. You're just trying so hard to be*. It is in this scene that the hoodie is off, that, like Parker and his pen and inhaler, we see something revealed that was once so hidden. Mark Zuckerberg is wearing a white button down shirt, poorly ironed, and a black tie, poorly tied, loose around his neck. And so we see how the three orders of cloth—the old, the intermediate, and the new—are in fact reduced down to two, and, more importantly, how they are ultimately reduced down to one. For each order of cloth is representative of a hierarchy according to age, class, and status as seen through clothes, each one attempting to vie for the top position in the society of the film, the older order being the established one, the intermediate order being one that feels as though it can live in two worlds and take the best of both to create a hybrid of sorts, and the new being the one that wins out in the end. *But in the end*, the film suggests, *what is the difference?* While discussing the similarities between the works of Karl Marx and Jeremy Bentham, Kenneth Burke once wrote that "often the shifts between ins and outs is but the most trivial of palace revolutions, where an apparently cleansing change of agents has left the morbidities of the scene itself substantially unchanged,"[142] and this film, I think, would agree. For Delpy leaves on her enigmatic statement, and Zuckerberg turns back to his computer, to do a search on Facebook. He finds what he's looking for: Erica Albright is on Facebook, on his creation. He sends her a friend request, and begins to refresh the page. The

[142]Burke, *Rhetoric*, 102, 103.

movie ends with a number meant to capture this sentiment, meant to place an explanation point on the entirety of the silliness the film portrays, while also treating the action that was depicted as not only real, but also important. The song is from the Beatles, and as the screen goes to black we feel its power: *Baby, you're the rich man, Baby, you're the rich man, Baby, you're the rich man, too!*[143]

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Clothing in *The Social Network* is utilized in Carlylian fashion, as though things turned out in the narrative as they ought, with the older order of cloth not replaced by the new nearly so much as the people fitting the new order replaced those fitting the old. If we add to this our discussion of the hierarchical metaphor, we might say that Zuckerberg's tie and white shirt at the end of the film are his prizes for first place, and the fact that they fit him so poorly simply signifies that those who made the cloth expected another to win. If these two statements seem contradictory then perhaps it would be good to remember that Carlyle relied on a different judge than those who held the race: Zuckerberg may have been born a peasant, but those kingly qualities he possesses end up being reflected in cloth. All is as it should be, and, the film suggests, what should be must be reflected, must be evident, in the representation of cloth.

The Social Life

It would be exclusive…See, in a world where social structure was everything, that was <u>the</u> thing—Eduardo Saverin

Much as the clothing worn in the film is presented to audiences not merely for the purpose of *clothing one's nakedness* but also to send and receive messages to audiences and the characters, so too does the film utilize other aspects of human social behavior as signifiers of something larger than themselves. In fact, having a social life in the film is predicated on such messages, on being part of something bigger than oneself.

[143] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 16.

In the film having a social life is everything, and we see the people who have one as being happier, more active, and more successful than those who don't. Quite often the clothing worn by those who have a social life is starkly contrasted to those who are not depicted as having a social life, as those who are socializing are seen wearing a suit or a tie but worn more youthfully or casually, or, in the case of women, skimpy dresses, revealing their bodies with the standard use of underwear or lingerie, or other sleek styles. Those who do not have a social life, on the other hand, tend to wear jeans and tee shirts, and so we begin to see how clothing and social life are blended together to create a message: those who dress like Zuckerberg tend to have a social life like Zuckerberg—they have no social life at all.

Having a social life in the world created by the film thus becomes a means of identification, but the means of identification are many-layered, dynamic. For instance, in the opening scene audiences see Albright and Zuckerberg sitting together in a bar, talking to one another. At this point he is not utterly on the outside of social involvement, but he is soon to be. Albright wants nothing more than to sit and relax, have a couple of drinks and eat some food with her boyfriend; Zuckerberg, however, wants to discuss final clubs. He has to get the attention of a final club in order to be happy, or, drawing on our understanding of consubstantiation we can say in Albright's terms, that he has *finals clubs OCD*.[144] She asks him why it is so important to him to get into a final club, and he tells her: *Because they're exclusive, and fun, and they lead to a better life*.[145] She makes fun of him a bit during the conversation, asking him why he can't try to be *the best you you can be*,[146] or, in other words, to be content with who he is rather than be defined by some form of hierarchy that doesn't even know he exists at this point. He thinks this is ridiculous, and they eventually break up over the argument, just after he tells her that if he

[144] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 1.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

gets in he will be able to introduce her to the sort of people she cannot meet on her own. And so the idea is introduced that hierarchies, in this case exclusive clubs, exist because there is a difference among people, that this difference can be distinguished to the point of exclusion, and that there are ways to act and be that allow one, not only to understand the distinction, but to move beyond them and become exclusive. But the idea also exists that these clubs are in the business of mystery, of creating a very human sense of estrangement for the purposes of gaining prestige in order embody what the text means by *a better life*. There is comfort in judgment, or in being judged favorably, and especially in the act of being included amongst the judging rather than the judged.

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The images of parties and night life introduced in *The Social Network* help to convey these two messages. After Zuckerberg's breakup with Erica Albright, he returns to his dorm, drinks, and then sets up a website that allows people to judge the beauty of Harvard undergraduate women. During this scene there are several montages and hard cuts between people judging these women in their own homes mixed with scenes of a party hosted by the Phoenix Club, one of the exclusive final clubs with which Zuckerberg is so obsessed. The scenes of people judging the women on the website are intermingled with the scenes of women dancing, kissing, and stripping at the final club party for a reason: the film presents the two activities as consubstantial with one another. The visual argument is this: just as women are judged by their looks in order to be asked onto the bus that takes them to a final club party, so too, with Zuckerberg's help, do men judge women online via the website Zuckerberg created; just as there is a buffer between judge and judged based on bringing the women to the Phoenix Club's clubhouse, so too is there the buffer of one's own private space for the purposes of judgment; and just as this space creates a sense of

comfort in one's actions in actuality, so too can one have this sense of comfort from doing the same thing digitally. This being said, there is always the other side to consider when making something consubstantial with something else, and the visual argument for this other side presented by the images in *The Social Network* is this: there are material aspects to a more real version of judgment, material aspects that cannot be accessed digitally; these material aspects, and the frequency and ubiquity of their existence to the human affected by them, creates a difference in character; and the form of judgment presented in the montages gives us a glimpse at who the human judging is, and to what they are accustomed, those who are at the Phoenix Club party being more accustomed to judgment and the feeling it provides and therefore more visibly comfortable with their enjoyment, while those who are in the privacy of their own homes, and not as used to the feeling brought on by the ability to judge, are happy to the point of giddiness.

In the middle of this montage is a wonderful example of the juxtaposition provided by these images, a point at which audiences as judge is presented with an outside look separate from the two arguments being made simultaneously. The website Zuckerberg creates which allows for people sitting at home to judge, facemash.com, presents the viewer with two pictures side-by-side, for the purposes of evaluation on the basis of beauty. During the action of the cut scenes, along with the music being played in the background, are people choosing who is more beautiful, the one on the left or the one on the right. Time and again we hear from one of the people, or two or more at once, saying the words *left* and *right*. But at one point the music stops, and the film presents three women, dressed more for studying than for partying, viewing facemash. One of them looks on and says definitively *This is pathetic*, just before a cut scene to two men looking at the website lazily, one with his head on a desk, both saying almost in passing, *Right*.[147] The next cut shows two more men smiling, giddy, bespectacled, and exuberant. At once they both say,

[147] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 2.

left, the three cuts together playing both on the website's direction and as a retort to the first statement, for who could blame a person for being so caught up in the moment?

This sequence becomes so important to the film, not just from the standpoint of the story, but also for the reasoning of Zuckerberg's actions in the text, the reason for which he does what he does in the manner in which they come about. For Zuckerberg leaves the bar fresh from his breakup, fresh from being judged and found unsuitable or unforgivable, and creates something that will allow others to judge as he himself feels he has been judged, but on different criteria, criteria based on how he himself has judged Albright via his blog, and before that, at the bar. In a matter of hours his creation gives him what he needs, the feedback that he knows how the system works even if he himself does not know in a real-life context how to work the system. He crashes the Harvard computer network, getting 22,000 page requests in 2 hours. People have identified with him, with how he has presented what he needs in order to feel better, thus allowing others to do the same. He feels a sense of accomplishment, but also a sense of belonging, for others want what he wants, and it is unimportant that he never sees their faces.

A second example of social life, this one intended to accentuate the sort of social life to which Zuckerberg was accustomed prior to the founding of Facebook, is the presentation of the Jewish fraternity's—A-E-Pi—party. In this party we as audience see quite a different presentation of social life, of how human relations in a social setting are gone about. Instead of a comfortable spot, a private space one can call one's own, the audience are brought into an auditorium, a large, cold, austere place more in line with a high school formal than a gathering at Harvard. People are still talking, and people are still dancing, but the feeling of the ambiance is so far removed from the example of the party given by the Phoenix club (where women and men both felt, with the introduction of such a private space and in similar company, more comfortable

being judged and judging, as everyone seems to understand the reason for the space) that the two can hardly be understood as the same thing, and so the audience gets more visual proof that, even inside of formal hierarchies used for classification (such as the term *party*, rather than *meeting*, or *class*), there are still gradations to be exemplified inside these classifications, and ways in which they can be embodied.

For example, women help to populate the fraternity party just as they do at the earlier example of the Phoenix club, but even here we see a stark contrast of what is preferred as opposed to what one receives. Eduardo Saverin himself expresses this sentiment, looking at a group of women who are talking to one another and dancing slightly, saying that *it's not that guys like me are attracted to Asian girls. It's that Asian girls are attracted to guys like me*.[148] This statement not only foreshadows the introduction of Christy Ling, Saverin's future girlfriend, to the film, but it also aids in making a distinction between being able to pick and choose what one wants, and having to settle for what one can get.

Another instance of this sort of classification exists in this example, but it has already been discussed previously in the discussion of clothing. To reiterate, the A-E-Pi scene has a Caribbean theme, and so many of the people there are wearing Hawaiian shirts and silly hats, lays, and flowery dresses, a stark contrast to the example of the Phoenix Club party presented earlier in the film, where the silliness of hats is only conveyed if one expects a suit and tie to be worn without a ball cap, and if the silliness of clothes is that they are worn by women.

But the ultimate import of this scene to the film, and to the mystery of social relations, is that it explains the impetus of the formation of Facebook. In this sense we see some of Zuckerberg's thinking to the world of the film, how it is that he understands what will become his masterpiece work. Bringing Saverin outside for some privacy, and because he is embarrassed

[148] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 4.

to be in that setting, Zuckerberg tells Saverin of his idea, of what he sees as the vision of Facebook. It won't be just a site based on friendship, or on going to see other people online; it instead will be a website based on the idea of exclusivity. People won't just go online to view their friends; they will go online for one more form of acceptance, of one more way of being included in others' lives. But it will also be based on judgment, and that judgment can be changed at any time. People will be able to accept or exclude anyone he or she wishes, on the ability to ask to be accepted, and the ability to pass judgment, and on any basis, not merely the basis of physical beauty. A line from Zuckerberg states it best: *It'll be like a final club, but we're the president*.[149] Saverin hears it described thus and is immediately drawn in. He will become the financer of Facebook, and change his life forever. And so the founding of Facebook is based on the ideals of the final clubs, the clubs that have denied Zuckerberg inclusion. It is a brilliant form of emulation, a subtle kind, but profound. Facebook then becomes not only a world-wide phenomenon, but also Zuckerberg's critical analysis of what exclusivity affords a person.

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Social life in *The Social Network* is presented by gradation, basing the messages conveyed to audiences and characters on consubstantiation. But they are presented as such for the means of identification through emulation. The recurrence of images depicting disparate social scenes in the film is set up to provide grounds for judgment, but also for justification. For the recurrence of both more and less seductive images of social life, and more specifically, their juxtaposition against one another, allows audiences not only to understand that there the differences presented are not only able to be qualified, but quantified as well. And so the film is able to convey its own message—that the depictions of a *better life* are seductive because they are ethically dangerous—while also allowing for the existence of a specific human element—the desire to

[149] Ibid.

belong—to acquit those who become enrapt in the depictions' arms: after all, who wouldn't want a life full of glamor, swank, and levity.

There are many analogues to these two messages echoed in the language of the film, but the best examples are from Mark Zuckerberg himself, and how he continually looks down on the more mundane presentation of social life from which he continually runs in the movie. During a deposition scene meant to introduce audiences to the night he and Saverin found thefacebook, Zuckerberg responds to a question regarding when it happened with a rather vituperatively phrased answer. He tells the attorney asking him the question that he and Saverin had their first conversation about thefacebook at the Alpha-Epsilon-Pi party. She asks him what that is, and he responds, *The Jewish fraternity. It was Caribbean Night.* Later in the action of the narrative, just before Saverin is forced from Facebook, Zuckerberg yells at him on a phone, calling their old lives before a *joke*, and telling Saverin that he *won't go back to Caribbean Night at A-E-Pi!* And so we begin to see the connection being made between the consubstantial nature of images depicting social life in the film, but also why they are so important. They end up accentuating the reason for which Zuckerberg's creation is an ethical emulation of final clubs: they're just better, and we as audience know it as well as him.

Women and their Exclusion from Hierarchical Circumstances

You're not supposed to be in here. This is a men's room—Eduardo Saverin

If up to now this analysis has seemed sexist, there would be a reason for it. The film itself, as a description of the changing nature of hierarchy, and the consubstantial nature of this change, treats women as a whole as objects rather than subjects.[150] The ways in which women are objectified in the film are of the standard sort, with visual images of women understood as sexual

[150] We get much invitation to understand this as intentional from the film's screenwriter, Aaron Sorkin. In an interview with Stephen Colbert, when answering questions on this very subject, Sorkin states that, with the exception of two, the women depicted in *The Social Network* are "prizes."

beings and little more, as using drugs at the behest of men, or as in some way helping successful men go about their business.

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The way in which Christy Ling is involved in the founding of Facebook is a decent metonymy for how most women are portrayed in the film. Ling first meets Zuckerberg and her future boyfriend, Saverin, at a talk from Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, on the Harvard campus. While Zuckerberg's attention is set on Gates, Saverin's wanes and he notices a woman trying to get his attention. He looks at her and she asks him if he is sitting next to Mark Zuckerberg, who has recently gained notoriety for his Facebook. He tells her it is, and that thefacebook belongs to both of them, and she tells him to *facebook* her later so they can all have drinks. He and Zuckerberg do, and Zuckerberg ends up in a bathroom stall with her friend, while Saverin is in the next with Ling.

The pair stand outside the restroom door to stand guard while the women freshen up, and they revel in the fact that they have *groupies*, and enjoy intimating it to a stranger. When Zuckerberg sees his ex-girlfriend, Erica, he has a short but disappointing conversation with her and then decides to expand thefacebook to other campuses. During the discussion of the logistics of how they would be able to do this, Ling and her friend ask if they can help. Zuckerberg pauses for a moment to let the request sink in, and then says *no* just before asking if anyone has a question. Moskovitz does, and he asks who the women are. It is only then that Ling and her friend are introduced. This, of course is not her only involvement. During one of the deposition scenes, when describing his and Zuckerberg's introduction to Sean Parker, Saverin states that it is Ling who helped to set up the meeting, accentuating the fact that she is absent from the scene just before it. This, in the scheme of the story, is a momentous event, yet it gets a quick mention

before going on to other things. So the critique of the newer hierarchy is very close to the old in this respect, that women are excluded unless their contributions cannot be overlooked, and then they are still glanced over. As portrayed in the movie, this is yet another instance of the older hierarchy not being replaced so much as the individuals who control it.

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There are two female characters who resist this stereotype, and yet in the film both are objectified to an extent, the difference between the two types being of course that where the more stereotypical of the types accept their roles, the other two characters resist the stereotype offered them. The first is Erica Albright, and in the film she is portrayed as Zuckerberg's true object of desire. Each time she rejects him, he acts out in a way that is meant to get attention. She breaks up with Zuckerberg in the first scene, and the result is the creation of facemash in a few hours' time. She refuses to speak with him alone, and refuses to forgive him for abusing her on the internet, just after he and Ling's friend have a tryst in the restroom of the club, and the result is the expansion of Facebook outside of the Harvard community and into other colleges, along with an article about the expansion in her school newspaper. The film ends with her in digital form, in spirit, a picture of her on Zuckerberg's laptop. He has just sent a friend request through Facebook, of which, after everything, she is actually a member. The film ends on this note, and, if looking at the three acts in sequence, the audience is left with the idea that what his next achievement will be is beyond the scope of the text, but is still knowable. She will never respond (the text proclaims), and so Zuckerberg's next achievement is something that will be told only by Facebook's next big feat.

She acts in the film as perhaps the only character who is not seduced by the hierarchical motive presented, as one who is not only excluded from the hierarchy's classification of rank and

status, but also of the powerful influences which goad most of the other characters in the film to action. Albright's resistance to its charms are also usually felt through language, through the dyslogistic undertones of her voice and the interpretations she gives of her place in relation to Zuckerberg and how he presents the world to her.

For example, Albright never allows herself to let her ignorance of jargon keep her from expressing her feelings. In the first scene of the film, where she breaks up with Zuckerberg and becomes the fuel by which all actions from Zuckerberg burn, she doesn't use a term such as *programmer*, or *ceo*, or *founder*, etc., to describe what Zuckerberg will one day be, instead she uses the term *computer person*. It's a gorgeous use of language in the moment, and a wonderful delivery of the language, to convey that not only does she know nothing of this world of status and belonging by which Zuckerberg is so entranced, but that she doesn't care to either. In the next scene in which she is presented we see a sense of this ignorance being put to use, as when, after she has shot down Zuckerberg's attempt to talk to her, while he walks away she says to him *good luck with your video game*,[151] not only conveying the idea that she isn't a part of the hierarchy or society that keeps up with his notable activities, but also that she is immune to its influences, at least in this sense.

There are other instances of her language being used in a dyslogistic manner to not only vituperate the way in which she is or has been treated, but also to give a more embodied interpretation to what Zuckerberg does to her. One of the most striking is her interpretation of what Zuckerberg wrote about her on his blog the night that they broke up with one another, resulting in Zuckerberg creating facemash and crashing the Harvard computer network. In the scene in which he tries to apologize to her she looks at him, furious with indignation, and reminds him that *the internet isn't written in pencil, Mark; it's written in ink. And you wrote that*

[151] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 8.

Erica Albright was a bitch just before you made some wise crack about my name, compared women to farm animals, and then put pictures of women next to one another to compare them for their beauty.[152] His retort that he *didn't end up doing that*, referencing comparing women to farm animals, is comical, and gives the audience a bit of relief; but her contention is that some acts are permanent, beyond reparation, and that there are also spaces, even if they are considered conceptual spaces, in which acts are so profound they cannot be erased. And so her dyslogistic language helps to accentuate the fact that she embodies an outsider's view of what is happening in the film, and, more to the point, that she will not let it affect her any more than it must, and even then it is on a personal level, and not one dealing with the hierarchical wrangle.

And so in a sense we come full circle by discussing Albright's use of dyslogistic language to bring Zuckerberg back down to a different level of evaluation, as her use of dyslogistic language becomes one of the few instances in which Zuckerberg feels the embarrassments that he causes throughout the film, which leads him to act in ways that can be understood in positive and negative lights. For when she uses dyslogistic language in the first scene of the movie, he creates facemash, which gains him notoriety, proves that he understands certain human wants and needs, and can provide outlets for them, eventually leading him to create Facebook. But the way he goes about it is also exceptionally sexist, cruel, and feeds on a human need to pass judgment to the point that some humans are seen as *other than*. In the second instance of her use of dyslogistic language, he expands Facebook, leading to a company that is worth billions of dollars by the end of the film; but in doing so he also breaks state and federal law, and destroys a friendship, leading to two simultaneous lawsuits. Her use of dyslogistic language makes him feel these embarrassments, but it also urges the creative drive in Zuckerberg.

[152] Ibid.

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The second example of a female character that resists the influence and classification of the reigning hierarchy in the film is that of Marylyn Delpy, one of Zuckerberg's council throughout the film. Her lines are few, but when they are stated, they are usually a comment on how the action of the film is playing out, and in this sense she acts as the eyes, ears, and judgment of the audience.[153] We see what she hears in the depositions performed throughout the film, and when the action being presented in the depositions comes to a halt, we as audience are in the room listening to the deposition as well.

In this sense Delpy as character is insulated from the hierarchical wrangling in the film, as the film itself is presented as being as much for the voyeur as for the entranced, as much for the person who wants to know what happened, if even in a stylized fashion, as it is for the person who is already enamored by the hierarchical struggles so accurately portrayed on screen. There are a few instances of this estrangement, of this immunity to be utterly taken in by the struggles of the film, of both living inside the action of the film and yet at the same time being able to resist its pull. One of the most profound of them is the last scene in which we see her, the last scene of the film. In it Zuckerberg is sitting there, button down shirt and black tie, looking at his computer. She says goodbye to him for the evening, and, looking up from his computer, he realizes she is beautiful and then he asks her to dinner. She tells him she can't, and there is a ring of both sympathy and finality in her tone. He accepts this, but then adds that he's *not a bad buy*. She, as a character and as the stand-in for the audience, agrees with him, and it is here that we see her use of language play out in a fashion that makes Zuckerberg, and the audience, understand the ultimate evaluation of film's judgment of Zuckerberg's character. Nobody knows

[153] We are also given much invitation to understand her this way by Sorkin, as, in the interview with Colbert, he states in no uncertain terms the Delpy is a *stand-in for the audience*.

what really happened concerning the founding of Facebook, but many people feel the reverberations of the actions. She states quite clearly the standpoint of the film, saying that, when emotions are involved, 85% of what is said is exaggeration, and the other 15%, perjury: *Creation myths need a devil*.[154] He asks her what happens next, and in a side comment to how hierarchy excludes women, she says that that her boss and the other men on Zuckerberg's legal team *are having a steak on University Avenue*,[155] but that when they are finished they will come up with a settlement agreement that will put the two lawsuits behind Zuckerberg and Facebook. He at first is astounded that he will be advised to settle, and it is here that we see Delpy's language used to give Zuckerberg a more realistic interpretation than the one he himself would give. In Albright's case we see dyslogistic language used to bring Zuckerberg down to a ground of evaluation that he can understand, if not in its practice, then in its theory. Here we see Delpy use eulogistic language, language pointing to upholding existing standards of ideals rather than being more vituperative or more embodied, and then switching to a more dyslogistic register. Kenneth Burke once stated that the appeal of ideals laid out by Hegel with which Marx so ardently disagreed was not something that humans were immune to in its entirety nearly so much as humans are immune to the degree to which Marx described it. And here we see in Delpy's eulogistic language confirmation of this sentiment, we see how these ideals that humans create in order to move about the world do have impact, and that the impact at times is felt materially. For she tells Zuckerberg, and the audience, that her specialty in law is jury selection, in the ability to read an audience and come up with the conclusions in advance that the audience will inevitably arrive at given the state of information in relation to existing ideals set in place. She appeals to a sense of these as she explains to him how the narrative will play out to a jury, and how the idealistic

[154] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 16.
[155] Ibid.

aspects of the narrative will come to be quantified in the form of remuneration. *I specialize in voir dire, jury selection*, she says, *What a jury sees when looking at a defendant: Clothes, hair, speaking style, likeability…*,[156] and at this last comment Zuckerberg scoffs: *Likability*. She switches tone and moves to a more dyslogistic register in order to make her point. She tells him that she has been *practicing law for all of 20 months*, but that she could convince a jury of the plausibility that Zuckerberg set up both Saverin and Parker for their falls from grace, for their expulsions from facebook. Zuckerberg, once again reminded by his original embarrassment, tells her that he *was drunk and angry and stupid*, and she adds, *and blogging*,[157] giving voice to the evidence that would be used against him. Delpy tells Zuckerberg to *pay them*, and that *in the scheme of things, it's a parking ticket*,[158] relating the scheme of things to the grander scope of what has happened, and what will happen, though still speaking to his sense of what is important. Zuckerberg is left sitting alone at a table built to accommodate many, and as she walks out, she makes a statement, voicing the judgment of the film, one that is meant to accentuate the fact that Zuckerberg has not changed the nature of hierarchy nearly so much as he has achieved its zenith: *You're not an asshole, Mark. You're just trying so hard to be*.

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The repetition of women presented as objects in the film is something which heightens an appreciation of the two female characters that are able to resist the stereotype offered them. The fact that Albright and Delpy both use dyslogistic language in order to bring Zuckerberg to a level of evaluation that embarrasses him in their respective ways not only gives credence to the idea that a dyslogistic use of language is often a means of demystification, but also indicates that there is a level of evaluation that works as an undercurrent in the work counter to the metaphor

[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

hierarchy as race. It seems as though the level of evaluation can be understood as the audiences' level of evaluation, as Zuckerberg is never so embarrassed about his actions as he is when talking to either Albright or Delpy (both of whom are presented as being on the outside, just as the audience is), and in fact has no problem at almost any other point of the film. There are two exceptions to this, but both of them still involve women: when the administrative board member denounces his actions, and when a note is passed to him in one of his classes.

Though both Albright's and Delpy's use dyslogistic language is used for the purpose of introducing an audience's level of evaluation, each does so in a fashion that gives further evidence of their respective estrangements from the hierarchy in place in the film. Albright, once she decides she no longer wants to be involved with Zuckerberg, refuses to have anything to do with that sense of evaluation, and therefore uses dyslogistic language throughout. Delpy, on the other hand, by being a member of his legal team (and by that virtue, the eyes of the audience), uses both eulogistic and dyslogistic language: the eulogistic language is meant to appeal to Zuckerberg on his level, what he deems important, while the dyslogistic language is used to bring him down to a level of reality that will allow him to realize that there is no way he can be shown in a positive light, and that he will be judged poorly if he allows the lawsuits to go to court. And so the film presents audiences with the idea that proximity matters when dealing with the hierarchical motive: the farther one is from the potential successes and failures of it, the less one has to deal with it. For audiences are reminded often that Delpy is one of Zuckerberg's legal counsel. As for Albright, however, there is never mention of her job, her value to this hierarchical wrangle, and, the film would suggest, that is the way it ought to be.

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All told the presentation of women in *The Social Network* is a double edged sword, one that is rather common in texts that are meant to be a comment on the existing states of social relations. In one sense it is descriptive, but descriptive to the point of upholding the very ideal on which it is meant to make comment. In this sense the presentation of women, and the nature of audience as multiple, diverse, allows some to believe that, as this is the current state of things, that the maintenance of the status quo would also include the exclusion of women. But it also becomes a backward compliment of sorts, where women, by virtue of their involvement in hierarchical circumstance being only the realm of the object, are also the only ones who have the capacity for an immunity to its influence. Where the ability to act as individual is trumped by the pull of the hierarchical wrangle, where woman *qua* woman is able to see both the import of the moment and the silliness of the situation in which she either finds herself or is witnessing. For we have no examples of this coming from the character of men in the film, and this, it would seem to the eyes of the film, is quite a compliment indeed.

Courting Zuckerberg, or, The Rivalry between Eduardo Saverin and Sean Parker

Have you ever been inside the Porcellian? Alright, now you understand we can't take you past the bike room, because you're not a member—Tyler Winklevoss
I've heard—Mark Zuckerberg

If it seems that with the exclusion of women from hierarchical circumstances there could be no room for romantic involvement, no acts of courtship and the sort of wrangling that comes about from these acts, then one would be misled, and probably by the strong hetero-normative impulses that the film conveys with so much vigor, partially by the treatment of women as objects except in the two cases described above. In a world where women are excluded, yet courtship remains, then courtship becomes directed from one man to another, or, from one group to another, and the world of *The Social Network* is no exception.

And yet I think it would be wise to admonish the reader that simply to view the rituals of courtship found in the film as merely having homosexual undertones is to err in the same way as to think that there is no courtship in the film, but to err on the opposite end of the spectrum. We must remember that this movie, in almost every aspect, is about social movement, and therefore about hierarchical wrangling, and so to impute only a sexual motive for the actions in the film that are courtly would be to deny the role that hierarchy plays in human motivation. That being said, the film offers a wonderful depiction of a love triangle, and from this standpoint what audiences are watching is the dissolution of a dysfunctional marriage, and the beginning of a another relationship, though Zuckerberg learns from his first.

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When examining *The Social Network* for courtship and courtly behavior, we begin to see how the action of the film is predicated on Zuckerberg's inability to court women in the practical, or non-digital, world. In the first scene he takes for granted the assumption that what he is interested in, the means by which he is prepared to get what he is interested in, and what will be gained by acceptance, are all valid to his girlfriend at the time. When he finds that he is wrong, he is left with the fact that though he may understand how human social relations work in theory, he has little skill in applying that theory to practice. He goes into the digital realm, the realm of ideas and theory, and puts what he knows in place via his website facemash.com. There he gains acceptance, and this, while he isn't faced with his own practical or real-life failures, is enough to fill the hole left by Albright's rejection and his lack of know-how.

It becomes a bit of a drug for him, if we think of a drug as something which simultaneously heightens positive sensations while also dampening negative ones, and yet in the real world, the world in which he must face judgment, the drug is not enough to erase the

disappointment of public and private censure, of the realm of criticism that is everyone's purview in the actual world by virtue of speech and the ability to voice opinion. He's judged in the real world, rather than judge, and this for him is a problem, one that must be remedied.

The film goes a long way to show that Zuckerberg's reactions are impulsive when it comes to disappointment, and here we can see them as embarrassments to his understanding of himself as sufficient for acceptance, and to his own sensibilities of judgment. In the first scene he is disappointed, and is shown as feeling this disappointment to the point of embarrassment, leaving without finishing his drink, going straight home and creating facemash. After being brought before the administrative board for Harvard University, and being publicly censured, he is passed a note in his operating systems class, a note passed from a woman sitting in front him. The note states simply *u dick*, and he feels the censure to the point of walking out of class and into a partnership with the Winklevoss twins and Narendra. He is embarrassed again, in front of people he doesn't know who side with Albright on principle rather than information, keeping him from apologizing, stating his case, and bragging about his new invention, this embarrassment induces him to expand Facebook to the point that it will become a worldwide phenomenon. He tries to cash a check and is embarrassed to find that his account has been frozen by Saverin, and he dilutes Saverin's shares in the company down to nothing. He finds a remedy for this condition, a cure for what continually sparks his impulsive behavior. It would be nice to think of this remedy as simply being the digital world, but there is more to it than that. The digital world of Facebook he creates is a reflection of the loftier aspects of the real world he cannot penetrate—final clubs—and so it might be comforting to think that his actions are merely to transfer the real world in which he is a social failure onto the world of ideas where he is an utter success, but he does more than this in the realm of changing social relations.

Of Adolf Hitler, Burke once wrote that one of his most ingenious insights in the realm of rhetoric, of the ability of one to move people in ways that are predictable and in one's own favor, was to understand that there is more to be gained by being the one who is courted for favor than there is being the one who is courting for favor. I think we can say something similar of Zuckerberg in the film, that he begins to show an implicit understanding that, in order to gain power, you must be the one who is asked for favor, rather than being the one asking for it.

The audience begin to see this shift during and just after Zuckerberg meets Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss and Divya Narendra, the people who will one day sue him for intellectual property theft. Just leaving his OS class, fresh from being embarrassed by the woman passing the note, he meets the Winklevoss twins, who are waiting for him outside of class to talk to him about their idea, Harvard Connection. He is not only fresh form this most recent embarrassment, but the sting of being publicly brought before a room convened to pass judgment on his actions revolving around facemash is still in his mind. But from being ignored, and totally alienated from the exclusive final clubs of which he is so enamored, he finds himself in the clubhouse of the Porcellian Club, the club that he, in the first scene of the film, called *the best of the best*, even if it is only the bike room into which he has been admitted. They immediately tell him of their idea, and of what makes it special: *exclusivity*.[159] This is the sort of thing that would entrance him, and he acts accordingly. The trio make mention that working on this project with them would help to improve his image, would help show people that he can put his considerable skills that they make sure to laud to better use than that of something so embarrassing as facemash. To this sentiment he balks, and so they switch gears and simply say they want to work with him.

It's a tremendously important insight to him, that a nefarious deed impressively done can garner the attention of others, and make them overlook the more ethically problematic aspects of

[159] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 1.

the deed in favor of the more impressive. And so the change begins, the knowledge that to get the attention of those who are in power is one thing, and to be the one in power by the enigmatic display of something done well is another altogether. He takes this understanding and adds to it the one given him by Albright, that, once attention has been gotten, to ignore those giving attention is the best way to ensure that attention does not wane. Throughout the rest of the film we see that Zuckerberg is courted—except of course in the case of the two women who will not be defined by the reigning hierarchy he himself continually climbs—by those around him. He is taken to nightclubs and meets women, he comes to California where venture capitalists will give him money though he rubs their exclusion from his company in their face, but the most glaring examples of courtship, courtly behavior, and hierarchical marriage in *The Social Network* are those of Eduardo Saverin's and Sean Parker's actions, and how their rivalry for Zuckerberg's favor plays out.

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Of the rival pair, Eduardo Saverin is the one mystified rather than the one mystifying. He is not mystified in the sense that Zuckerberg or Parker are able to dupe him nearly so much as he is mystified by a relic of the past to which he in many respects embodies. And so Eduardo Saverin is one who can be understood in dyslogistic terms, but in dyslogistic terms that describe his mystifying condition.

In order to explain the roles that each character—Zuckerberg, Saverin, and Parker—plays in the action of the film as it pertains to this particular hierarchical wrangle, it will be helpful to rely on some standard, stereotypical portrayals of men and women found in depictions of love triangles from popular culture. Saverin would be a stereotypical male patriarch, one who goes to work while having little or no interaction in the day to day running of the household over which

he believes he rules, and little understanding of why such interaction would be important. Another way to say this is that Saverin buys into the role given him by the division of labor laid out during the meeting at the Alpha Epsilon Pi Caribbean dance, where it was decided that for his investment he would be given 30% of the company and be named CFO. With the division of labor in place, and a belief in the stability of the division, Saverin begins to talk about *monetizing the site* as soon as he sees the potential to make money through advertising.

The film portrays Saverin as one who would rather grow the company the old-fashioned way, the tried and true, *good old American way* of the fabled success story rather than wait and see what a newer understanding of what a company is and what it can be can provide. In the scene in which Zuckerberg and Saverin start talking about the advantages and disadvantages to monetizing the site, Zuckerberg says that advertising isn't *cool*, that it is the sort of practice that would keep more people from joining at that moment, even if it would generate revenue. *Because thefacebook is cool, and if we start installing popups for Mountain Dew it's not gonna be cool*, Zuckerberg says, to which Saverin immediately responds *Well, I wasn't thinking of Mountain Dew, but at some point…I, I'm talking as the business end of the company*.[160]

As discussed earlier, Saverin's dress is usually in a suit of some sort, though one worn more casually than the norm. This is the stereotypical garb of the patriarch, of the business man and head of family, and his actions reflect the look quite often. For example, after the first meeting with Sean Parker, Saverin, his girlfriend Ling, and Zuckerberg are riding in a taxi, presumably going home. In this wonderful scene we see that Zuckerberg is already imitating Parker's speech, that he is identifying more with Parker than with his best friend and CFO. Parroting some of Parker's language from the meeting just before, Zuckerberg looks at Saverin and accuses him of wanting *to end the party at 11*, a sentiment that Saverin turns, saying in

[160] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 7.

response, *I'm trying to pay for the party*.[161] It's an argument that happens time and again, and in the end Saverin loses.

There is more evidence that Saverin is mystified by an older understanding of how things work, and of roles that are brought about by the division of labor, if we look at some of his actions in the film as being partly motivated by both who he is as a character and as an adherent to certain stereotypes. For if we take adages such as *behind every great man there is a great woman* or *a man doesn't run his house, he only thinks he does*, then we begin to see how some of Saverin's personality is cultivated throughout the film as being subservient to Zuckerberg despite his own role as the patriarch of Facebook. He is ever backing down to Zuckerberg, especially when Zuckerberg is making dyslogistic (in these instances, often of the vituperative sort) comments toward other people, things, or actions. When Zuckerberg first finds out that Saverin has been *punched* by one of the exclusive final clubs—The Phoenix Club—he sees that Zuckerberg gets defensive, even if he is trying at the time to be supportive. At this point Saverin switches gears, trying to save his feelings, saying that *it's probably just a diversity thing*,[162] rather than tell Zuckerberg the truth that some people will never make those clubs. Later, when thefacebook is ready to go live, Zuckerberg asks for the listserv mailing address of the Phoenix Club, because these are people who can get thefacebook out into the world, Saverin gives it to him: jabberwok12.listserv@harvard.edu. The moment he hears the name of the mailing list, Zuckerberg begins to vituperate the members of the club, saying that they pretend to be literary geniuses because they have the *most obvious Lewis Carroll reference* they can find in the name of their list, and Saverin starts to defend the members of the Phoenix before stopping and saying,

[161] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 10.
[162] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 4.

You're right.[163] Time and again, in dealing with Zuckerberg, he indulges him, treating each situation like a man who doesn't want to upset his lady, a man who simply wants to keep up a sense of domestic tranquility.

The way Saverin treats Zuckerberg also affects how Zuckerberg reacts, and Zuckerberg's language begins to reflect this this sort of change. After a long flight, and waiting at the airport for an hour, Saverin, after flying to California, comes to the house that he is financing so that Facebook can have a presence in Silicon Valley for the summer. When the door opens, Saverin sees that Parker is living at the residence now too, something that makes Saverin extremely unhappy. Parker tells Saverin that Zuckerberg is taking a nap, and that he forgot to pick up Saverin from the airport. Zuckerberg enters, visibly weary, just waking up, and Saverin and he go to a private place to argue. During the argument, Saverin makes sure to let Zuckerberg know how displeased he is. Zuckerberg, wanting Saverin to stay in the company, and to remain in the fold, tells Saverin that his place is not out in the world; it's at home, and that home is now in California. *I don't want that guy representing himself as part of this company*, Saverin says. Zuckerberg responds by telling him that Saverin needs to be in California, because *this is where it's all happening. The connections, the energy…* Saverin, as male, asks Zuckerberg, *Did you hear what I just said?*[164] They argue, and Zuckerberg admits that he wants Saverin out in California, that he needs him there, and that he's afraid Saverin will *get left behind*. He asks Saverin not to tell Parker that he needs Saverin in a fashion that let's Saverin know that Parker having that knowledge would be embarrassing for Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg starts talking business, telling Saverin that the company is now in 160 schools, and is in Europe as well.

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[163] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 6.
[164] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 13.

Saverin starts yelling, saying he is *aware of that, Mark, I'm the CFO!*[165] Zuckerberg tells Saverin that they are in need of more and more money, and that Parker has connections to venture capitalists who will help fund them better, but he also tells Saverin that it is Parker who is setting up all the meetings for the funding that Zuckerberg wants. Saverin wants to know why Parker is setting up meetings without his knowledge, without the expressed permission of Saverin, to which Zuckerberg responds that Saverin is in New York, thousands of miles away from where everything else is. *I'm in New York riding subways 14 hours a day, trying to find advertisers!*[166] Zuckerberg, angry, frustrated, looks at Saverin and says *And how's that going so far?*[167] Saverin immediately wants to know what Zuckerberg meant by him *being left behind*, leaves, freezes the account, and eventually fades from the household of Facebook.

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If Eduardo Saverin is the more mystified of the pair of rivals, then Parker is the mystifier. Like Zuckerberg, Saverin, and others, much has already been said about the nature of Parker's character in the film, and how the film itself uses visuals to convey that he is a seducer to great effect. He is often seen in the company of young, beautiful women, he wears clothes to match each occasion, and he has about him an air that is to some comforting, and to others dangerous. We have also discussed how the film maintains the distinction between style and substance, a standard adherence that can be seen in the juxtaposition of his clothing and airs as opposed to his pen and inhaler. Last, we have discussed how his character is predicated on being both leader and led, as the opportunity calls for, of appropriateness in courtly behavior that never extends to the more private aspects of his life. But it's the wonderful use of Sorkinian language that best exemplifies how Parker is able to seduce others with a subtle blend of eulogistic and dyslogistic

[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.

language, and wonderful identification strategies, for the use of seduction, for luring one away from another, in beautiful and infamous acts of courtship.

There are a few examples that one might pick to exemplify Parker's courtly ways, such as the dinner meeting in New York already discussed, as it sets a foundation for Parker's character. It is also a good example of the film indicating how well Parker has cast his spell, as it is in the next scene that Zuckerberg begins to parrot his language, and thus to take on how Parker thinks. But this scene is only Parker's introduction to the audience as a player in the narrative of Facebook, and so acts as *a foot in the door* both for Parker and the narrative.

A better one for our purposes would be the night club scene just after Parker has discovered that Zuckerberg has moved to California and brought with him Facebook. Parker comes to the door of a house whose chimney has just been shattered by someone propelling into the backyard pool with a rope tied to it, only to find himself in the new headquarters of Facebook. He looks around, makes some complimentary comments, and then asks, *Where's Eduardo*?[168] Zuckerberg tells him that Saverin is in New York. Parker smiles, seeing his opportunity.

The action shifts immediately to Parker, Zuckerberg, and two beautiful women sitting in a night club, one where, once again, Parker is known. It's loud, and so Parker and Zuckerberg have to yell across a table at each other, but this doesn't kill the intimate nature of what is happening. Parker has brought Zuckerberg to yet another swank hotspot, another example of the *better life* to which Zuckerberg made mention in the first scene of the film. Beautiful women dancing, both in the crowd and up on stages, Zuckerberg is impressed.

Parker explains that he is living nowhere at the moment because the woman with whom he was staying has moved out of the house across the street from the one Zuckerberg is renting

[168] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 11.

with Saverin's money and back into her parents' house, and Parker's date for the evening makes fun of him, *The homeless rock star of Palo Alto*.[169] He doesn't like the mention of his status as both famous and broke, and so he switches gears to Zuckerberg and his plans for Facebook over the summer. Zuckerberg isn't paying attention, instead mesmerized by a beautiful woman dancing, and Parker, his date for the evening, and her friend all notice: *I, I'm sorry, I was looking at the architecture.*[170] He says that his goal is to have Facebook in 100 schools by the end of the summer, and the ladies excuse themselves, giving Parker and Zuckerberg even more intimacy. Zuckerberg notices that Parker's date looks familiar to him, and Parker tells him that she looks familiar to a lot of people. Zuckerberg doesn't quite understand, which brings us to a wonderful use of eulogistic and dyslogistic language for the purposes of courtship, Parker's Parable.

> *A Stanford MBA named Roy Raymond wants to buy his wife some lingerie, but he's too embarrassed to shop for it in a department store. He comes up with a high-end place that doesn't make you feel like a pervert. He gets a forty thousand dollar bank loan, borrows another forty thousand from his in-laws, opens a store and calls it, Victoria's Secret. Makes a half million dollars his first year. Starts a catalogue, opens three more stores, and after five years he sells the company to Leslie Wexner and The Limited for four million dollars. Happy ending right? Except two years later the company's worth five hundred million dollars, and Roy Raymond jumps off the Golden Gate Bridge. Poor guy just wanted to buy his wife a pair of thigh highs, you know?*

At first this seems like no parable: *My date's a Victoria's Secret model, that's why she looks familiar to you*. That being said, it becomes the foundation of the seduction.

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[169] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 12.
[170] Ibid.

Don't be impressed by all this, Parker says, *I read your blog*.[171] Zuckerberg becomes embarrassed by the remembrance of the night he created facemash and the remembrance of the blog's results. *You know…no, that was for web cretins,* Zuckerberg says, trying to explain himself. But Parker needs no explanation, he instead identifies with Zuckerberg on a very intimate level: *You know why I started Napster? The girl I loved in high school was with the co-captain of the varsity lacrosse team, and I wanted to take her from him, so I decided to come up with the next big thing.*[172] His attempt to identify with Zuckerberg works, and Zuckerberg visibly appreciates someone expressing a feeling of that sort in the same way he himself felt it, but Parker will not be derailed. *Napster wasn't a failure. I changed the music industry for better and for always. It may not have been good business, but it pissed a lot of people off. And wasn't that what your facemash was about?*[173] If Zuckerberg wasn't taken before, he certainly is at this point, for his face changes to a shrewd, slightly smirking look. He's found someone who thinks like he does, who's been through before what he is now, and it's at this point that Parker stops following, and starts leading.

They're scared of me, pal, Parker says, *and they're gonna be scared of you.* He tells them what he will have to face: *What the VCs want is to say, 'Great idea, kid. The grownups will take it from here.' But not this time. This is <u>our</u> time!*[174] But he switches again, leaving off identification, and reminding Zuckerberg who is in charge, who has the power, even power Parker has never had: *This time, you're gonna hand em a business card that says 'I'm CEO,*

[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

bitch!' That's what I want for you.[175] He then takes a brief, but brilliant moment, before saying simply, *So where the hell's Eduardo?*[176]

It's another beautiful switch, one that will come back to play in Parker's Parable. But the switch is not just from one subject to another, it's a switch from the eulogistic language that he has been using up to this point to a more dyslogistic register, one that, instead of giving good advice, identifying, and lauding the future, is more focused on the here and now, on what is happening, and how things can all go horribly wrong. The tone switches in this part of the parable from dyslogistic language when talking about Saverin, back to eulogistic language when speaking about Facebook, what it is, what it will be.

Zuckerberg rolls his eyes, looks down, and says that Saverin is in New York, to which Parker adds, *Suckin' up to ad execs.*[177] Zuckerberg again tries to defend him, saying that he is busy with an *internship,* which Parker finishes for him, shaking his head too. *The company's here*, Parker says, *A billion dollar company's here.* He asks Zuckerberg to what he is committed, saying *Do you live and breathe Facebook?*[178] Zuckerberg says *yes* emphatically. Parker then shows him how Zuckerberg and Saverin are different from one another, so different that Saverin and Zuckerberg are in two different realms of understanding: *Wardo wants to be a businessman and for all I know he's gonna be a good one, but he shouldn't be in New York kissing Madison Avenue's ass.*[179] Zuckerberg's eyes pop, and he starts shaking his head, and gesturing, while Parker flails his hands, lifts his head and his eyes, and says, *This is a once-in-a-generation, holy*

[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.

shit idea, and it is in the next line that we see the parable play itself out by a powerful use of dyslogistic language: *And the water under the Golden Gate is freezing cold…*[180]

Parker's Parable told, he looks at Zuckerberg and asks him if it isn't apparent that he knows what he's talking about. Zuckerberg, with demons of his own, asks Parker if he still thinks of the girl from high school for whom he founded Napster, to which Parker says *No* just as the Victoria's secret model and her friend sit back down. It's beautiful and telling how the women show up just after the business talk is over, and Parker's date makes sure to indicate this shift from business to pleasure: *If you guys are gonna talk about bandwidth, we need shots.*[181] Just a little more talk of business then, perhaps, is all that is needed. Parker reminds Zuckerberg of his goal, asking if it's 100 schools by the end of the summer. Zuckerberg says yes, and Parker, to top off a beautiful performance of courtship, says to Zuckerberg, *Tell ya what. Gesture of good faith. While you're getting into 100 schools, I'll put you on two continents.*[182] It's this sort of sentiment that makes Zuckerberg astounded, mesmerized even more. He tells Parker that if he has no place to live, that he should definitely stay at the house Saverin is funding. A new place to live, and an opportunity to make some headway in a company that he has never stopped calling a billion dollar venture, he looks over and orders drinks for them all. The next time we see Parker, he's making food in a bowl, getting margaritas for the ladies, talking on the phone, and keeping the coders in line: in essence, home-making, but a for a home built for a 21st century startup company.

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From the standpoint of mysterious criticism, Parker's Parable has it all. It uses consubstantiation to magnificent effect, making Parker and Zuckerberg the same in one moment while at the same

[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

time reminding Zuckerberg, and audiences who see the parable play out, that Zuckerberg is alone on the mountain, the top of the top. It uses dyslogistic language to glorious effect too, presenting Zuckerberg with the fact that Saverin is not the person who will help him achieve his goals, while not being so vituperative that it might slight Zuckerberg or his friendship with Saverin. It utilizes eulogistic language to the point that Zuckerberg and the audience understand that Saverin's way of doing things is brought about by an understanding of how the world worked—rather than works—while at the same time lauding a future that will come to be, and of this fact Parker's Parable has no doubt. It uses identification to wondrous effect, turning a former embarrassment into a beautiful connection between two people. Lastly, it is a courtship ritual, one that uses language and action to the point that Parker gets what he wants, a place to stay and inclusion in the company. Once again, from the standpoint of mysterious criticism, this is a masterpiece of courtly behavior, and the means by which people bridge the estrangement of a given hierarchy.

There is only one mistake in Parker's Parable, though it isn't a mistake in the writing but rather an intentional mistake written to accentuate a part of Zuckerberg's character in the film, and to help signify Parker's eventual fall. The mistake comes when Zuckerberg, looking for more identification, and perhaps even more advice from him as a leader, asks Parker if he still thinks about the girl he loved in high school, the girl for whom Parker claimed he founded Napster. Parker undeniably says that he doesn't, and here is his mistake: he misses a cue from Zuckerberg to more deeply identify with him, identify with Zuckerberg about something which, by the film's end, we see that Zuckerberg still carries with him. It is unclear of the nature of this mistake, whether Parker says he doesn't think about the girl because he misses the cue, or if he gets the cue and tries to keep Zuckerberg from thinking about the girl. Of the two, this particular

critic tends to align with the latter rather than the former, but because of the performance presented rather than the words written. Zuckerberg at this moment seems vulnerable but still guarded. Parker may be thinking that he's helping Zuckerberg, but he's really expressing who he is as a person rather than what will help Zuckerberg in the moment, what might help him get his mind off of Erica Albright. The expression of who a person is isn't the sort of thing to vituperate, but the thing to note is that Parker hasn't shown much of himself in the film to this point, nearly so much as he shows what it is that has affected him in the past: bright cars, flashy suits, and swank hotspots. It's not a horrible mistake, it's not something that ruins the attempt to insert himself into Facebook and get him a place to sleep, but it is the only instance in the parable where Zuckerberg looks for something from Parker that he doesn't deliver. But the reason to bring this to light is threefold: first, it illustrates a mistake in courtship and identification that can be studied to a point through mysterious criticism; two, it exemplifies that mysterious criticism does not claim to have every answer, and that the critic therefore is not tied to a sense of perfection, but allows, when appropriate, to leave things unsettled, and: three, it helps to illustrate the role of the critic in mysterious criticism, the critic's ability to be suppositional, and yet at the same time read under mysterious criticism's rubric.

But the role that courtship plays in the rivalry between Saverin and Parker is undeniably complex. Maintaining the stereotypes we have used to describe the love triangle between Zuckerberg, Saverin, and Parker, we begin to see not only how the narrative of the film shift's in Parker's favor, but it also allows us to understand the consubstantial nature of Zuckerberg and most of the women portrayed in *The Social Network*: both are excluded, at least until Zuckerberg creates Facebook. This point cannot be stressed enough, because it begins to open the text to so many more connections between the roles that mystery plays in the hierarchical circumstances of

the text. We as audience begin to see that Zuckerberg being allowed into the Winklevosses and Narendra's business idea doesn't extend to allowing him into their social life, into the life of the Porcellian. Unless he strikes out on his own, Zuckerberg will remain in the bike room. And like the Winklevosses and Narendra, Saverin would contain him in his own little space, the realm of the creative genius, where artistic endeavors are only ever artistic endeavors, with their import to the larger world outside that space left for more socially—that is, more economically—minded people to deal with. Locked away until someone needs something from him, a new idea, more programming, or a more stylized way of doing what has already come before, Zuckerberg would be easier to control, easier to conceal. Do what is asked, and leave the thoughts to the men. This is not the sort of life for a character like Zuckerberg. He is in control, both of himself and his household, and he will not be placated by being able to tell people in the privacy of the space allowed him that he really runs the world that others would, having their way, claim as rightfully their own. But we must also say that Zuckerberg doesn't dislike exclusion, nearly so much as he dislikes being excluded. He is happy to maintain the standards of the status quo, the rights to exclusion—he merely wishes to be one who has the right to judge.

The Demystification of Cameron Winklevoss

Let's take the considerable resources at our disposal and sue him in federal court!—Tyler Winklevoss

So far little has been said of the storyline involving Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss and Divya Narendra. And, though dyslogistic and eulogistic languages have been identified, and their import as subordinate concepts supporting other aspects of mystery have been discussed, little notice has been given to them as important components of mystery in themselves. But the two missteps can be remedied at once, as much of the action in the film regarding the Winklevoss twins and Narendra, after the founding of Facebook, revolves around reinforcing the hierarchical

metaphor, but also around having the same conversation over and again until one of the trio finally falls in line with the other two and agrees to sue Zuckerberg for intellectual property theft.

Cameron Winklevoss is depicted in the film, much like Saverin, as mystified by a relic of the older hierarchical order, namely that there are some things that one can do and some things that one cannot do if one is to call himself a *Gentleman of Harvard*. In the scene just after Narendra discovers that Facebook is live, and that Zuckerberg has stolen their website, the three sit and have a phone conversation with the Winklevosses' family lawyer and each other. They read from an article in the school paper about the new site and begin to list the similarities that they see between their site and Zuckerberg's. They also find that Zuckerberg's site had already gotten 650 members, to which Tyler says that he *couldn't give free drugs to 650 people in one day*,[183] noting not only the popularity of the site, but also the changing nature of distribution thanks to the digital age. Cameron eventually ends the call, agreeing with the lawyer that he is sure Zuckerberg is a *good guy*, a reasonable person that simply made a mistake, a statement which utterly perplexes Narendra. *We don't know that he's not a good guy,* Cameron says, to which Narendra responds, *We know he stole our idea, We know he lied to our faces for a month and half…He gave himself a 42 day head start, because he knows what apparently you don't, which is that getting there first is everything*.[184] The three argue a little longer, Cameron asking if Narendra wants to hire an intellectual property lawyer to sue Zuckerberg, to which Narendra says *No, I want to hire the Sopranos to beat the shit out of him with a hammer. We don't' have to do that,* Tyler says, and Cameron at first agrees before Tyler finishes: *We could do that ourselves; I'm six-five, two twenty, and there are two of me!*

[183] Sorkin, *Network*, scene 6.
[184] Ibid.

Cameron keeps trying to be the calm voice in the sea of anger, and yet the angry voices of Narendra and Tyler always seem to have a better grasp on the situation facing them. Each time Cameron tries to say that the three don't really know what went into Zuckerberg's decision to lead them on while creating theFacebook, Narendra brings up facts that are meant to try and bring him down from the cloud on which Cameron seems to be living: *We met with Mark three times, we exchanged 52 emails, we can prove that he looked at the code.* Tyler reads that Zuckerberg claimed in the article a hope that theFacebook would help restore his reputation after the awful notoriety he received from facemash, a sentiment the three of them tried to use as an enticement to work with them, Tyler stating that Zuckerberg, after everything else, is *giving us the finger in* The Crimson! Tyler suggests putting something in the paper themselves, something that Cameron equates to *starting a knife fight*,[185] then reinforcing that they would not be suing Zuckerberg. Tyler and Narendra want to know why, and Cameron at first doesn't want to tell them, saying that his brother would make fun of the reason. Narendra pushes him, and Cameron tells him why: *Because we are Gentlemen of Harvard. This is Harvard, where you don't plant stories, and you don't sue people*.[186] Given the circumstances, Narendra's retort seems appropriate: *You thought he was the gonna be the only one who thought that was stupid?*[187]

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This not only serves as a decent example of how the conversations the three have with one another turn out in the film until they finally decide to sue, it also acts as a good example of the standard distinction between dyslogistic and eulogistic language for the purposes of winning over another in an act of courtship. Remember that Carlylian courtship and Marxist mystification analysis are in this sense consubstantial, and courtship itself is not merely the imputing of a

[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

sexual register onto an act of compliance, but the winning of favor by the best means available. The point of courtship is to bridge the gap of estrangement that makes humans at once separate and mysterious to each other, and in this scene we see the gap set firmly in place by the use of language.

Tyler and Narendra are not only in agreement that they need to act, and act quickly; they are in agreement with the sort of language they are using to attempt to demystify Cameron as well. Both use dyslogistic language, dyslogistic in both the vituperative and embodied sense, to try and make Cameron realize that Zuckerberg has already gone too far, and that there is no way to stop him from going even further without some sort of intervention. They of course use embodied language, violent language, meant to vent their anger, express the seriousness of the situation, and snap Cameron out of the eulogistic funk in which he finds himself. But at this point, Cameron will not be swayed. At every instance, except when he is vituperating their ideas of what should be done, Cameron relies on ideals that he hopes will somehow save them: they are *gentlemen of Harvard*, people who don't *start knife fights* or *plant* stories. In this sense we see a battle of movement being fought with the weapons of language. In the end, and only after appealing to others whom he hopes will also uphold the ideals to which he is so bound, and finding time and again that nobody will, does Cameron become demystified, and even then it is only after witnessing the magnitude of what Zuckerberg has done while Cameron rested on his laurels.

There is still more to be said, for the way in which Tyler and Narendra decide that without Cameron on their side there is no point in moving forward, while at the same time witnessing Zuckerberg moving forward always, even to the point that he and Saverin become utterly estranged from one another, play out in the narrative of the film, we see the hierarchical

metaphor show itself once again. This is a race, and one of the teams, though two of the three use dyslogistic language throughout, are still mystified by the thought that a team is only as strong—or in this case as fast—as its weakest link. The other team realizes something else: if a team member is weak—or slow—then that team member should be *left behind*.

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Cameron's demystification is important to note from mysterious criticism's point of view for one more reason. In discussing *courtship* in the second chapter, we stated that courtship and mystification are linked to one another, as how one attempts to court often helps to indicate how one is mystified. But we must also admit that the different forms of mystification are in some sense consubstantial with one another, meaning that since all forms of hierarchy mystify in one way or another, that different forms of mystification, though manifest differently or individually, are still connected at least in form.

This insight allows us to see one more means of identification in the film, though it isn't one that is necessarily played up so intentionally as the recurrent uses of clothing or one's social life to convey the message. The link here being identified is one between Cameron Winklevoss and Eduardo Saverin, and it is a link that is often obscured in the narrative due to the competitive nature of the film.

We would certainly be erring on the side of simplicity to state that how Saverin and Cameron are mystified in the film is one and the same. Saverin's mystification seems to be derived from a from believe in the existence of the Cleavers from the late 1950's to 1960's television show *Leave it to Beaver*, or, even better, in a mystifying condition similar to Willy Loman's from *Death of a Salesman*.[188] Cameron, on the other hand, seems mystified by his own

[188] This latter description is one offered by a comment from Barry Brummett, who, while reading early drafts of this work made certain to mention the consubstantial link between Saverin and Loman.

upbringing, by being raised with privilege, yet assuming that as he was raised, so was the rest of the world. That being said, there are some interesting commonalities between the two, such as the fact that both have people time and again trying to wake them from their respective reveries, both seem absolutely determined to go about things their way, both in the end are only given scraps compared to what they feel they are entitled, and both are presented in the text as though, with just a little help from the people who so often attempt to demystify them, they would have been right in their actions, or their actions would have been more successful. This last insight is especially important, for it helps to indicate a beautiful use of the film's innate understanding of *audience*, and what the term means. It is certainly true that to the audience sitting in the seats of a theater, we see before us two very human, very kind characters, two people who deserve more than they will ever get; but to the audience on screen, the people witnessing their actions as real and consequential, Saverin and Cameron are two decent idiots who have no idea of *how the world works*.

Conclusion

We could say more. This text is by no means exhausted of mystery and the hierarchical circumstances of human social relations. For example, one could analyze the scene in which Larry Summers, the President of Harvard University, admonishes the Winklevoss twins for using their parent's contacts to secure a meeting with him on such a trivial matter as someone taking their little website. One could analyze the theme of farm animals as embarrassments, not only as they manifest themselves in the film directly, but how embarrassments themselves found in the text can be all be placed under the heading of *farm animals*. One could analyze the statements Zuckerberg makes to Albright in the first scene, attempting to make her consubstantial with him by his claim that she and he are alike because they got the into a bar because she slept with the

door guy, and her assertion that they are very much different, and that she never slept with the man. Or, one could understand the use of vituperative statements made by Zuckerberg, not only as embarrassments, but as forceful comments about the state of the world which so often only interacts with him by excluding him or confronting him, never relating with him. But we have said enough to exemplify mysterious criticism's importance to the analysis of texts, but also to exemplify how it can be utilized to bring complex meanings revolving around human social relations to light.

However, let us end by noting one more thing. Though in these pages much has been made of the distinction between older and younger hierarchies, or the ways in which they are presented in the text, nothing is nearly so explicitly stated in the film. Its form of communication is as a visual medium, for the most part, at least in the eyes of many who make up the disparate audiences who view *The Social Network*. That being said, if one were to become so wrapped up in the hierarchical wrangle of the film, it's import to the changing views of social relations, business dealings, and, most of all, distribution of income, one can easily be distracted from one of the most important aspects the film as critique offers. For if it is true that what we are watching on the screen is a depiction of brilliant minds who are all wrangling for millions and billions of dollars, it is also true that we are witnessing a bunch of kids—and not in any metaphorical sense—aged 19-22 years at the time much of the action in the film is taking place. What we are watching are people fresh out of high school, with little or no experience in how to handle something so potentially life-altering or lucrative as Facebook, and what it will come to be. And so what we see on the screen is as much a bunch of children, all screaming *It's mine! It's mine!* as we are seeing the founding and eventual winning of a phenomena that has changed the way people act, and interact, with one another across the world. That being said, and our

foundation firmly planted on the mysterious ground of consubstantiality, eulogistic and dyslogistic language, identification, courtship, and embarrassments, perhaps that is all we are being presented with anyway.

Chapter Four: Kevin Smith's Speech at the Sundance Film Festival[189]

Their social norms and social rules, We're social scum and they're social fools

They tell us all their social lies, Ignoring all our social cries

We'll lose the game before we start, They watch us dance, we fall apart

Well lets be ourselves and never be social, We'll play their game but never be social—Squirtgun, from the song "Social," featured in the film Mallrats

In the first chapter of this work two goals were hopefully accomplished: a lack of scholarship pertaining to *Burke's understanding of mystery* was noted, and an accurate an honest description of the little work that utilized his understanding of mystery was explained. In the second chapter of this work, *Burke's articulation of mystery* was explained, and it was changed to the point that it could be utilized as a form of criticism. In this second chapter, five key terms were identified as pointing to the mystery of human social relations: consubstantiality, eulogistic and dyslogistic language, identification, courtship, and embarrassments. The third chapter aimed at exemplifying mysterious criticism's use and its import to the analysis of human social relations, including an analysis of the film *The Social Network* and how an implicit understanding of the estrangement brought about by the mystery of hierarchical circumstances was used in the film to convey certain messages to audiences. In this last chapter, as a concluding remark, we will do something a little different.

[189] Kevin Smith (LIVE) Red State Sundance Premier. Accessed March 30, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1EfY2xXkaU. All quotes from this chapter are derived from the YouTube video cited here. It's riveting and funny, but can be hard to cite perfectly; therefore all quotes below are simply listed as coming from this video, without mention of paragraphs, lines, etc.

In the first chapter it was claimed that if one was not convinced of mystery's intrinsic link to hierarchy, or to hierarchical circumstances that revolve around human social relations, that one could analyze quickly the form that the numerous stories of the man on the mountain takes. We should look at this form again, because it helps illuminate one of the many messages which conveyed by the numerous tales. When the honest, earnest human being admits in these stories that he or she doesn't know something, and wishes to know it (how often it is that what one wants to know is *the meaning of life*), that person automatically finds him or herself subservient not only to the person who tells the character about the man on the mountain, the village in which the character was told of the man on the mountain (for ultimately it is the people in the village who define whether or not the man on the mountain has the right answers), the man on the mountain, and the mountain itself; this person also finds him or herself subservient to the direction of the gaze that is required in order to obtain what he or she desires, seeks, or needs. In the stories of the man on the mountain, the gaze is turned upward, and we can see how one's attention is directed throughout—the person eventually reaches the man on the mountain, and gains what is sought. In order to get to the man on the mountain, the person usually goes through many adventures, many dangers, or many tests, and at the end, usually gets what he or she was looking for: the person finds that he or she had the answers all along, and only needed the right prompting in order to go about understanding it; or the person learns how to live on the mountain, far from the paltry day-to-day stresses life in the village burdens upon so many; but either way the message is the same—the character has achieved a sense of *enlightenment*, and this enlightenment is translated into *transcendence*, or, the achievement of a rank so high above others that he or she no longer feels the pull of the hierarchy that sent the person on the path in the first place.

Mysterious criticism would question this assertion, this claim to transcendence. For in the stories the character ascending is so often still linked to the village itself and its day-to-day wrangling, and, what's more, so are the people for whom these tales are told. I personally am reminded of Burke's example of the superior and inferior in the office and their attempt to *aim at a dialectic transcending their discordancy of status*, because of the simple fact that even if this dialectic is attained, it is only temporary, and the moment another factor (such as another human being, or a new situation, or any of the things that being on the top of the mountain is meant to eliminate) is introduced, the dialectic dies, and the reinscription of hierarchy is felt again, and quite often in day-to-day interactions, felt more keenly. And so, just as the king can only treat the peasant in certain ways (and vice versa), so too do we all feel the hierarchic pull so long as we are enmeshed in the hierarchy itself. We are taught, and I think it is by the direction of the gaze that a given hierarchy invites everyone within its grasp to look, that the ascending of a given hierarchy to its zenith is the way to transcendence, of the path not only to the top of the order, but also to the one great perk that being at the top is supposed to afford those who reach its peak: immunity from the hierarchy's influence. Mysterious criticism sees this assertion as a lie.

There is no transcendence at the top of an order, and I think the analysis of the film *The Social Network* helps to illuminate this fact. In the film Zuckerberg is portrayed not so much as changing the face of social relations nearly so much as he is portrayed as being the purveyor of its application to another form of reality, and in so doing becoming the lord of the same hierarchy always in place. All told, if one spends one's time attempting to achieve what it is the hierarchical gaze asks us to achieve, then what one gets is what one sought, and not what one originally stated he or she wanted. Another way of saying this is that the hierarchical motive

often takes over, and we find ourselves winning a race we never realize we entered, when all we wanted originally was to go the speed limit.

So, as a final analysis, and as a conclusion to this work, I would like to analyze a portion of a speech given at The Sundance Film Festival on 24 January 2011. I want to analyze this speech for three reasons: first, it is a recent speech, and one that I assume would receive little rhetorical attention; second, it is an example of something that can be analyzed under the rubric of mysterious criticism, and yet it is not so finely crafted as a film would be due to the extemporaneous nature of speech-making, and; third, it is a speech which announces a formal break with a given hierarchy, namely the Hollywood film-making industry.

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During the beginning of the 1990's, Kevin Smith was an early-twenties slacker who had worked at a little convenience store near his hometown. Fresh from dropping out of film school, he went back to the store where he once worked and got his job back, on the condition that he could film a story he was writing in the store itself, a story about a couple of clerks who simply didn't know what to do with their lives. He made the movie and after much travail it ended up at The Sundance Film Festival, at the time the premier film festival in The United States where independent films were bought by the Hollywood film-making machine. Intending to go back to the convenience store after the festival, his life instead was changed forever. The film—*Clerks*—was bought by Miramax studios, and he has been making movies ever since.

On 24 January 2011, Smith brought his 10th film—*Red State*—once again to The Sundance Film Festival. There to exhibit his movie, the crowd watched the film before Smith stood up and made an announcement. The speech is a long one (not quite 25 minutes according to the YouTube video cited), but in a nutshell it is this: 17 years before, Smith came to Sundance

hoping and praying to be allowed into the Film business, and to be allowed in he needed to sell his film to Hollywood; 17 years later, already established in the film industry, and now with a firm audience behind him, there is no way in hell he is going to sell his film to Hollywood; instead, he would break with the Hollywood film-making machine and attempt to distribute this film himself, without the usual marketing strategy of spending more than the cost of the movie to get people's attention. The speech, from the standpoint of mysterious criticism, is a brilliantly insightful rebuke of the ways in which hierarchy is normally described through language.

The concepts described by the five key terms of mysterious criticism are certainly in Smith's Sundance Speech, no doubt about it. For example, one can see consubstantiality used for the purpose of identification when Smith refers to the making of his 10th film as *the same old independent story you've heard a zillion fuckin' times. We were all in it for the love*.[190] One could note eulogistic language put to the use of courtship via sexual imagery when Smith states to movie exhibitors (and not the Hollywood film distributors) that *Exhibitor partners, you wanna get in bed with us*.[191] There is multiple usage of dyslogistic language in the speech, as when Smith vituperates the business-end of filmmaking, saying that *if somebody had told me in the beginning of my career, 'You're gonna have to learn so much about business, finance, amortization'…all this shit…'monetization,' I would have been like, 'Fuck it, I'm just gonna stay home, smoke, and masturbate,' because that's just too much work*,[192] or in consubstantial and economic senses, as when he equates looking at the money that people spend to advertise a film these days in Hollywood as *thinking about the math*,[193] or, when, using dyslogistic language to laud the people who helped with the production of the film, as when he states that *Everyone*

[190] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.
[191] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.
[192] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.
[193] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.

there cinched the belts to pull it off.[194] One can see identification through emulation in the speech, as when Smith lauds Harvey Weinstein (once the head of Miramax Studios, who now, with his brother, own his own studio) when he states that he and his producer, John Gordon, named their production company—*The Harvey Boys*—after him. And, lastly, one can note the existence of an embarrassment when Smith claims to have an auction for his film, bids $20 on it, and *wins* the auction, only to say to the distributors in the room *I will say this in my own defense: A lot of youse work for studios and shit; studios make movies, movies have trailers; so you guys make a lot of trailers; you've lied to me many times! You know what I'm sayin'? I've seen many trailers where I've been like, 'This is awesome!' I put my money down, and I'm like,' You fuckin' lyin' whores!*[195] The speech, by virtue of being about a break with a given hierarchy—in this case the Hollywood film-making industry—is full of mystery. But, as stated above, in this chapter I intend to close by highlighting a potential insight provided by mysterious criticism, rather than reiterating mysterious criticism's ability to aid a critic in reading texts according to the five concepts established in the last chapter.

What interests us here is not the fact that a filmmaker is running away from his home of 17 years (after all, if you are not in the film business, then this break may not *seem* to be of much import to you). Nor is it the fact that what he wants to accomplish is something similar to *cutting out the middle-man* in film distribution. What interests us about Smith's speech, and what ultimately links discussion of his speech to the discussion of the gaze detailed above, is the imperfect metaphor he uses to describe his vision of what hierarchy can be, as well as what it can do for us if we take the opportunity or are given the invitation to gaze elsewhere other than

[194] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.
[195] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.

where a hierarchy asks us. Standing before the audience who has just seen is latest film, hockey stick in hand, Smith states:

> *Ladies and gentlemen, this is the very last hockey stick that Wayne Gretzky ever used as an Edmonton Oiler. This is the last stick that he was holding when he won his last and final Stanley Cup back in 1988. Right after that, everything changed. The very next year he went to Las Angeles and expanded the NHL throughout the United States, but at that point, it was the beginning of the end of something. 4th Stanley Cup, he'd been with those people forever, and then everything changed the next year. I wanted to hold on to it because Wayne Gretzky has become something of a personal hero of mine over the last two years, and Wayne Gretzky's father, Walter Gretzky, became a friend of mine—he's a guy I like very much—gave his son a piece of advice, when he was a kid, because his father was his hockey teacher. He took him out on the river out behind his grandmother's house, strapped skates on him, and would train him all the time, and there was a backyard rink and he would flood his back yard, train his kid there as well. The piece of advice that Walter Gretzky gave Wayne Gretzky was this—and it's, I've been using it for the past two years now:* Don't go where the puck's been, go where it's gonna be. *The philosophy was simple: if you puck chase, you're always gonna be behind the game; but if you kinda know where the puck's gonna wind up or if you study or if you watch the game enough, you wanna be the person that's*

where the puck's going to be; not scrummin' in the fuckin' corner, but ready to take your shot.[196]

The imagery this metaphor takes is drastically different from that given in the stories of the man on the mountain, or for that matter, from the imagery given in the film *The Social Network*. For the imagery of the mountain and the imagery of *hierarchy as race* from the film both have as their primary initiative a sense of focus, of *keeping the eye on the prize*. But not here. Here the people who *keep their eye on the prize* are the ones who are in the corner fighting over it, without a thought that it might slip away from all of them. In normal descriptions of hierarchy there is no room for the understanding of prediction, for the prize itself, and its position at the zenith, is fixed. In Smith's metaphor, the prize and its position in relation to all other things is dynamic, and the person who can keep him or herself out of the scrum is the one with the best chance of obtaining the prize, which is not the puck itself, but what one can do with it.

Earlier I stated that Smith's hockey metaphor was imperfect, and I call it so for a reason. The metaphor itself is not fully developed or extended throughout the entirety of the speech nearly so much as the imagery changes. For if his idea of distributing his film is successful, and if it can then be replicated, then, to Smith, this *this kicks open the door* for a future endeavor, one where Smith quits making his own films and instead helps other independent filmmakers create their art: *if this works for us, SMODCAST Pictures belongs to all of us. And you're gonna make your movies, and put 'em out through our studio, and it ain't gonna cost you a fuckin' dime.*[197] If it can be accomplished, then it also will *kick open the next logical step in the evolution* of

[196]Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*. For easier reading, the author has omitted Smith's "uh's" and "ah's". Though extremely important for the purposes of conversation analysis, the author believes that these idiosyncrasies would distract from the reading of the speech.
[197] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.

independent filmmaking: *But indie film isn't dead, people, it just grew up. It's just indie film 2.0 now. And in indie film 2.0, we don't let them sell our movie, we sell our movie ourselves.*[198]

These last two descriptions—that one might *kick open a door* or that something might kick start *the next logical step in the evolution*—seem are important to our analysis, because they present us with a different understanding of *transcendence*. In the usual understanding of transcendence, or at least the one with which I am so accustomed, transcendence and the attainment of a given hierarchy's summit are one and the same, synonymous. But in Smith's speech, what one sees as transcendence is less the attainment of a position in a hierarchy and more a rebuke of its influence altogether, a leaving behind the older hierarchy for something that is different, suppositional, *strange*. And so we begin to see one potential reason for the incomplete nature of the metaphor: Smith doesn't know what is on the other side of the door, or where the next step in the evolution will take him.

This of course is suppositional, but that is no reason to ignore its potential import, and so it also acts as a call upon those who might take up mysterious criticism for the benefit of understanding human social interaction where the hierarchical motive is so heavily in play. This then is the call I am giving: to look for language in hierarchical struggle indicating a means to change it; to look for redundancies inside the text, and between texts; to try to explain the changing role of hierarchy by understanding the changes we use to describe it. *For if humans use language in social interaction, and language helps to dictate how action is to be played out, then attention to how people change the language used to describe hierarchy may well indicate how they have understood it in the past, are envisioning it for the future, and are therefore calling for action in the present*. That we might find metaphorical *doors* through which we might walk, doors which give us access to other understandings of hierarchy is a good thing. And those

[198] Smith, *Red State Sundance Premier*.

understandings of hierarchy might just give humans a new means of action, of moving in the world, in essence, *agency*. And that seems not only an endeavor worth encouraging, it is also something utterly worth studying.

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