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THE MECHANIZATION OF HUMANITY

by

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B.A., Southern Illinois University, 2020

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

THE MECHANIZATION OF HUMANITY

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Joshua Lipe

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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THE MECHANIZATION OF HUMANITY

In *The Theory of Business Enterprises*, Veblen states that factory workers should—or naturally will—become more mechanized alongside of the growing industrialization of the Gilded Age. A fear of (or disconcerted perspective surrounding) this mechanization of humanity, as a consequence of the expanding industrialization during the Gilded Age, is something which is observable within multiple works from this time period—at least in those which possess a noticeable focus upon labor struggles. This is not to say that the following works: Donnelly's *Caesar's Column*, Stevens' *The Heads of Cerberus*, or Poole's *The Harbor*; are in any way directly influenced by Veblen's work, or that any of the previously mentioned authors were even aware of Veblen, but merely that Veblen's work encapsulates a perspective that existed during the Gilded Age about the mechanization of humanity which all of the previously mentioned fictional works appear to look upon with some degree of trepidation (if not outright fear). Within the novels written by Donnelly, Stevens, or Poole (to some extent) it appears as if humanity as a whole has fallen into a state of acting with certain autonomous attributes. Within all three of these fictional works, it is not only the worker which has become mechanized though—which the ninth chapter of Veblen's *The Theory of Business Enterprises* mainly, but is not solely, focuses upon—for the upper-class also appears to be affected by this mechanization. To some extent, most characters outside of an exemplary main character (or a few exemplary main characters) within each work appear to be noticeably acting with at least a few nonhumane characteristics. And, through this display of characters who act out a mechanized (or nonhumane) existence, a fear of the mechanization of humanity is displayed within these fictional works from the Gilded Age.

Within Veblen's writing, an economic observation (and speculation) from the Gilded Age, Veblen states that:

His [the worker's] place is to take thought of the machine... [and the process of taking this line of thought will] drive home the absolute need of conformity...The machine process is a severe and insistent disciplinarian in point of intelligence...other intelligence [outside of the mechanical process] on the part of the workmen is useless; or it is even worse than useless (Veblen 308-309)

This view of how industrialization discourages other sources of intelligence for the worker, outside of the strictly occupational, is reflected in all three of the previously mentioned fictional works in a dystopian-esque way. Within Donnelly's work it is clear that the mechanization process has served to limit the knowledge of the workman, or at least dissuade the worker from growing intellectually outside of the occupational sphere. *Caesar's Column* describes the workmen as: "They [the workers] seemed merely automata...The illusions of imagination... had departed the scope of their vision" (Donnelly 40), and "Without stopping in their work...they [the workers] snatch bites out of their hard dark bread" (Donnelly 41). Later, Donnelly again reemphasizes that: "Their [the workers] hard fortunes have driven out of their minds all illusions, all imaginal, all poetry" (Donnelly 61). Within Donnelly's work the predicted outcome of Veblen is displayed to have occurred, with noticeably dystopian results, for within Donnelly's novel the workmen have essentially become mechanical parts within a mechanized process even to the extent that eating has become efficiently inducted into the industrialized process.¹ And, alongside of the mechanical existence of the workmen (which is

¹ Jean Pfaelzer, despite not exactly writing upon the mechanization of humanity, concludes through this action of eating that the workers have become "objects rather than subjects of their own consciousness" (Pfaelzer 124).

seemingly portrayed as a causality of industrialization), there has arose a parallel intellectual opposition which is heavily pressed upon the working class as displayed by the workmen's tightening of their intellectual scope to the point where their knowledge is highly limited outside of occupational matters. In short, the workers have lost their understanding of the artistic, philosophical,² and the imaginative due to becoming mechanized within Donnelly's writing. This derogatory mechanization of the worker, due to the process of industrialization, is a sentiment which is also reflected within both Stevens' *The Heads of Cerberus*, and Poole's *The Harbor*.

Within Stevens' a member of the upper-class states that obtaining knowledge outside of the practically occupational will make workers "dissatisfied" (Stevens 108), and part of what is seemingly implied by this moment in the text is that the dissatisfaction caused by knowledge will lead to the workers becoming both less submissive and less practically occupational (or efficient). Thus, this is why the working class is dissuaded by the ruling-class—or possibly outright disallowed through the educational system in some cases (Stevens 108)—from engaging mentally outside of occupationally focused content. In Stevens' text, it appears as if the mechanization of the worker has even progressed so thoroughly that the workers' dissatisfaction can be stopped in a mechanically mirroring fashion³ due to "the power of life-long submission" (Stevens 136) which the workers have endured. So, subservience has brought about a class which is able to be commanded similarly to how a machine reacts to a user's inputs. It is also worth

² There is a direct opposition to the religiously philosophical by those who align with the working class, since it is viewed by the working class within Donnelly's novel that the philosophical has no relation to their mechanical existence, when it is stated: "We have ceased to men—we are machines. Did God die for a machine? Certainly not" (Donnelly 134). Essentially, engaging in the philosophic is displayed as human characteristic within Donnelly's novel. Within the working class's mind they are no longer human, and thus have no need of philosophy.

³ What stops the surging crowd of the rebelling working class is "Again the old man raised his yellow, skinny hands, this time with a silencing, pacifying gesture, and silence followed...Only the occasional wail of some infant, too young to recognize the supremacy of ruthless force, broke the ghastly quiet" (Stevens 136). The near instantaneous control of the crowd by simple hand-gestures makes the crowd of the working class almost appear mechanical in the way they can be controlled within Stevens' work.

noting that the concept of worker dissatisfaction, stemming from the acquiring knowledge, is present within Donnelly's work as well. Except, in Donnelly's work, this is seemingly taken a step further than what is portrayed within Stevens' novel. Unlike the desires of the working class within Stevens' novel who wish to see one of their own risen above a member of the ruling class within an aspect of the arts (singing), as signified by the crowd's cheering on behalf of a working-class youth who enters into a musical challenge with a member of the upper-class of Stevens' society (Stevens 130), in Donnelly's novel the working class has come to despise the concept of gaining knowledge outside of what is practically occupational due to the discouragement of the despair which knowledge is stated to cause for the worker. Within *Caesar's Column* a member of the working-class rails against the acquiring of intelligence, and the discontent it may bring, since intelligence is not viewed as leading towards advancements within the occupational sphere—or to the general acquirement of utility (Donnelly 128). Not only does this display the limiting of the working class's perception to that of a strictly occupational (and practical) focus, it arguably shows a further completion of Veblen's previously mentioned ideals—specifically the ideal that the working class should only peruse intelligence which is focused on both occupational efficiency and the industrial process (Veblen 308)—than what is relayed within Stevens' work; given how the working class within Donnelly's novel has abandoned the desire to search for knowledge outside of what is strictly occupational. By becoming repelled by the idea of gaining knowledge, the working class in Donnelly's novel doesn't need an authoritative presence which ends the disgruntlement associated with the workers gaining of knowledge outside of the occupational sphere⁴ like within Stevens' work, for

⁴ Though, it does need one to stop the discontent of emotional social movements.

the perspective of the working class serves as its own dissuasion towards the acquiring of both intellect and ability that are not directly related to the practicality occupational.

But not all dissuasion of knowledge within the previously mentioned Gilded Age novels stems from a blatant disregard for the acquiring of knowledge on behalf of the workmen, or a seemingly deliberate action by a governing body. Within Poole's *The Harbor*, though the same outcome of dissuading knowledge from the working class is achieved, this is mainly shown to come about as a causation of the difficult working conditions which the workers labor within. Strenuous working conditions within *The Harbor* lead to workers, like those on the steamship, experiencing both extreme forms of physical and mental fatigue. Within *The Harbor* the steamship workers are also shown to become mechanized due to their working conditions, through both the strictly timed nature of their labor and its mechanical-like efficiency, inside the steamship's furnace room. This industrialized process is then shown to lead to the outcome of the mental obliteration of everything that does not pertain to the operation of the furnace, for those who specifically work within the furnace room. Joe (a character who has socialist leanings)⁵ states when describing the working conditions: "They [the workers] not only shoveled coal into the flames, they had to spread it out as well and at intervals rake out the 'clinkers'...at each stroke of the gong you [the workers] shovel...till you forget your name...And all you think of is your bunk and the time when you're to tumble in" (Poole 218). Like the other two works of

⁵ Though it is worth noting that the character with socialist leanings is the one who reveals these conditions to the main character, and that the character who is a capitalist (Dillon) tries to move the main character away from Joe's perspective surrounding work reform during multiple occasions throughout *The Harbor*, as will be stated later in this critic *The Harbor* does not entirely endorse Joe's means for changing working conditions (and is noticeably critical of Joe's perspective through displaying Joe's actions as fanatical). It is noted by the main character of *The Harbor* that Joe has given himself so extensively over to his socialistic philosophies that Joe displays "a creed so stiff that you [Joe] can't think of anything else" (Poole 332). Joe then confirms this sentiment with conviction (Poole 332), and *The Harbor* appears to imply through this exchange that Joe's socialistic philosophies are equivalent to a blind faith that excludes the ability to perceive both other possibilities and alternatives.

fiction, the workers within Poole's novel are clearly shown to operate with mechanical (or autonomous) attributes. In this case, these characteristics are displayed through the highly synchronized actions of the workers themselves as they work to the tempo of "the gong [which] keeps on like a sledge-hammer coming down on top of your [the worker's] mind" (Poole 218).⁶ And, as a consequence of both the mechanical nature and dangerous characteristics of the work itself, the workers thoughts are subsequently narrowed down to the scope of what is strictly occupational.⁷ Like the other fictional works, this narrowing of thought leads to a lack of consideration—on behalf of the worker—upon the knowledge which exists outside of completing certain autonomous tasks. Also, despite the possible hyperbole of the lines "till you forget your own name...And all you think of is your bunk" (Poole 218), these lines imply a potential loss of knowledge from both the industrial conditions that the workers find themselves in and the sheer exhaustion that the workers face.

Though—in contrast to both the works of Stevens and Donnelly—in this case of Poole's work it is neither the potential discontent caused by knowledge which leads to the working class losing a desire for gaining knowledge, nor is it the implementation of deliberate guiding actions on behalf of a governing body which exists alongside of the process of industrialization which leads to specific categories of knowledge being disallowed for the working class such as what is displayed with Stevens' novel. In Poole, it is instead merely the nature of the work (or industrialization) itself which leads to this outcome. Now this is not to say that there isn't the

⁶ The workers are also expendable (and replaceable) much like machine parts given that "Hundreds of men had been killed" (Poole 218) in this line of work. It is implied within the text that a worker is just replaced without any major change to procedures when a death occurs. This then makes the workers both expendable, and replaceable, in this industrialized process. Given the commonality of this type of occurrence, as implied by the text, replacements for this reason are also not viewed as unnormal.

⁷ Or, only what is necessary to complete the job at hand.

potential for an employer to actively try to prevent their workers from gaining knowledge within *The Harbor*, but upon the steamship it does not appear as if there is an active intent to specifically suppress the knowledge of these workers on behalf of their employer. Instead, the employer seems to be indifferent to the intellectual capacities of the workman altogether. The employer seems to mainly be focused upon the acquiring of efficiency, and consistency. As stated before, the discouragement of knowledge for the workmen seems to only be a byproduct of both the sheer exhaustion that the workmen face and the working conditions themselves. The reason that this is important to highlight is that—unlike the other two fictional works by both Donnelly and Stevens—it is possible that this outcome is being displayed as only an unintentional side-effect due to the increasing industrialization of the Gilded Age, which means that ruling-class intent towards preventing the intelligent of the workman is not necessary to create an intellectual opposition for the working class when considering the industrialization process according to *The Harbor*. The process of industrialization is of itself directly opposed to the intellectual growth, and development, of the working class according to Poole's work. To a noticeable extent this coincides with Veblen's claims about how due to "the [mechanical] process that is going forward. His [the worker's] thinking in the premises is reduced to standard units of gauge and grade" (Veblen 308). Essentially, according to both Poole and Veblen, the intellectual opposition which specifically acts against the worker's potential expansion of knowledge towards what exists outside of the occupational sphere—specifically when living in an industrialized society—is not the result of explicit intentions on behalf of a governing body: intent is not required to achieve the outcome of the automation of the worker when industrialization is present within society. Instead, both the intellectual limiting and automation of the worker is relayed as being only a side-effect of society's drive for increased efficiency

which was simultaneously occurring in tandem with—and as an effect of—the industrialization process which was occurring during the Gilded Age.

Though, also, it is worth noting that it is not only the working class which these novels display as being dehumanized due to industrialization. In all of the fictional novels the upper-class is negatively impacted by the process of industrialization as well. To an extent, this also coincides with the writing of Veblen. Despite that Veblen concludes in his writing “in no case with no class does the discipline of the machine process mold the habits of life and of thought fully into its own image...[due to] propensities and aptitudes carried over from the past” (Veblen 309), it is worth noting that Veblen partially attributes this lack of current uniformity during the Gilded Age to “The machine’s régime...too short duration” (Veblen 310). But, this lack of time for technology’s reign is clearly not a factor within both of the perceived futures of Stevens’ and Donnelly’s novels. And, the duration of technology’s reign is even displayed as being a major force which helps to shape the dystopian outcomes of both works: consider how the presence of the bell (and the technology which creates it) in *The Heads of Cerberus* aids in leading to the outcome which is shown within Stevens’ work, and how the mechanical characteristics of the individual characters within *Caesar’s Column* appears to have arisen over a prolonged expanse of time. Also, when reading the fictional novels, some of the principles that Veblen attributes to the industrialization process should be noted since these characteristics are directly observable within the upper-class of all three of the fictional novels to varying extents. Veblen notes certain characteristics of industrialization which include: “phenomena of impersonal character...The Machine throws out anthropomorphic habits of thought” (Veblen 310)⁸, that “The machine

⁸ When dealing with Donnelly’s novel, Pfaelzer notes that due to the society portrayed in Donnelly’s novel creating citizens “who lack motivation and identity” (Pfaelzer 123) leads many to die by suicide according to the text.

process gives no insight into questions of good and evil...and can make no use of any of the attributes of worth [outside of causation]" (Veblen 311),⁹ and that "The intellectual and spiritual training of the machine...is very far-reaching. It leaves but a small portion of the community untouched" (Veblen 323).¹⁰ It is these ramifications which can be observed within certain characteristics of the upper-class inside of the fictional novels.

Within *Caesar's Column* specifically, after an extended time of living with the industrialization process the upper-class has become something that possesses a "soulless likeness" (Donnelly 24). This characteristic comes about seemingly due to the process of industrialization causing those in the upper-class to adopt a similar characteristic of a cold, inhumane, personality. The main leader of Donnelly's society, like the rest of the upper-class, is also described as missing many "humanizing trait[s]" (Donnelly 58). Also, the prince is seemingly incapable of perceiving the value of human life outside of both the constraints of causality and effects (Donnelly 106-107; 110) which serves to make the leader even more machine-like.¹¹ The Council, as a whole, is even said to react with an almost mechanical-like

Pfaelzer notes, also, how "collective activity and, potentially, collective conscience, isolates its citizens by denying the existence of common social needs" (Pfaelzer 124).

⁹ The quote had to be shortened, but here is the full quote (which is possibly even more of an alarming conclusion): "The machine process gives no insight into questions of good and evil, merit and demerit, except in point of material causation, nor into the foundations or the constraining force of law and order, except such mechanically enforced law and order as may be stated in terms of pressure, temperature, velocity, tensile strength, etc. The machine technology takes no cognizance of conventionally established rules of precedence; it knows neither manners nor breeding and can make no use of any of the attributes of worth. Its scheme of knowledge and of inference is based on the laws of material causation, not on those of immemorial custom, authenticity, or authoritative enactment" (Veblen 311).

¹⁰ The full quote is: "The intellectual and spiritual training of the machine in modern, therefore, is very far-reaching. It leaves but a small portion of the community untouched; but while its constraint is ramified throughout the body of the population, and con-strains virtually all classes at some points in their daily lives, it falls with the most direct, intimate, and unmitigated impact upon the skilled mechanical classes, for these have no respite from its mastery whether they are at work or at play" (Veblen 323).

¹¹ Other beings do not seemingly possess inherent value according to the Council and Prince. Values are seemingly based on causality (and maybe to some small degree utility though feelings of joy seem stifled).

coldness which the main character finds “repulsive” (Donnelly 110). Not only does this help to display to a heightened degree the extent to which the leaders of this society have taken on a mindset which contemplates primarily in terms of efficiency, to the point of thinking in a machine-like way with strictly cold rationalization, the willingness to coldly end life without a consideration of morals helps to further display the extent to which the thought process of the highest class has become inhumanly mechanized. Also, to further highlight the degree to which the upper-class has been thoroughly mechanized as a whole, the upper-class of Donnelly’s society appears to worship both the process of mechanization (Donnelly 144) and that of general technological advancement (Donnelly 139-143) as a sort of pseudo-deity.¹² Essentially, both technology and the mechanical process have become deified to a noticeable extent among those of the society’s upper-class given the subjects which are praised during the sermon within the upper-class’s church. This scene also helps to further display the upper-class’s disregard for morality, and moral degradation, as well. The reason these details are important to note is that, within *Caesar’s Column*, the upper-class is displayed as not being immune to the dehumanizing (or mechanizing) effects of industrialization since they are also portrayed as living out a certain type of mechanically focused existence such as what Veblen notes in his description of the mechanization process: the attributes of cold practicality, and amorality (Veblen 311). Even though the automation of the upper-class takes on a different form than the mechanized existence of the working class, the remission of humane traits—which includes “the phenomena of

¹² There is also as noticeable worship self-love due to becoming the pinnacle of humanity through technological advancement, and implied biological modifications. Also, though Alexander Saxton doesn’t note the technological advancements specifically in the way they are noted here, as noted by Saxton: “the sermon is in effect an anti-sermon...Let the congregation rejoice, says the preacher, in belonging to the ruling class. The ruling class rules because it is the best, and it is the best because it is the strongest. Its duty is to remain strong and to enjoy its good fortune to the full” (Saxton 228).

impersonal character... [the removal of] anthropomorphic habits of thought” (Veblen 310), and the general waning of anthropomorphic traits (Veblen 312)—within Donnelly’s novel shows how the perceived future contained within *Caesar’s Column* brings about an undesirable existence for those even of the upper-class when it is considered how their humanity has been degraded to the point of possessing mainly mechanical-like attributes. So, within the writings of Donnelly, the widespread effects of industrialization have led to a seemingly dystopian outcome for both the upper and lower-classes despite the lower-class being significantly worse off.

The concept of generic identities accompanying industrialization, or the “phenomena of impersonal character” (Veblen 310) as stated by Veblen, is also apparent within Stevens’ work as well when it is considered that all classes within Stevens’ society have essentially become labels more so than individuals. When considering the upper-class within Stevens’ work, though, the specifically named labels given to the upper-class (in comparison to the numbered labels of the lower-classes) are often only generically attributed to the individual members of the upper-class since the labels themselves have commonly very little to do with the specific characteristics of the individuals themselves. This means that all of the members of the upper-class are essentially subject to the dangers of a changing political current, and the political mechanizations this entails, since the labels they possess can be generically applied to any individual within society. Thus, to a lesser extent than the lower-class, the members of the upper-class are also disposable pieces within the grand scheme of the political system for the society depicted within Stevens’ work. The upper-class’s identities in many ways are easily interchangeable, and a change of personal identity (including the subsequent death of the previous holder of the identity) appears to be able to go on without consequence, since possessing a specific individual identity is not conducive to the continuation of the society’s daily mechanizations within

Stevens' work. What is important to note here is that the generalization of the personal identities of the upper-class, along with the degradation of both their overall knowledge and intelligence when compared to past generations (Stevens 107-108, 174-175),¹³ is revealed to have been produced by both technological invention and the presence of said technology within society (Stevens 174-175). So, much like the work of Donnelly, both technology and the effects associated with technological expansion are shown to lead to the overall degradation of all individuals within society. Though the degradation is not uniform, for the conditions of the lower-class are noticeably worse within both dystopian works, it is clear that those of the upper-class are still unable to escape the negative side-effects of technological advancement since the effects themselves become widespread across all of society much like what is claimed within the writings of Veblen.

Despite Poole's *The Harbor* not being set in a dystopian future, the effects of the mechanization are still present within the upper-class as well—even if this appears to a lesser extent than the other two fictional novels. Within Poole's work Dillon is observed by the main character as portraying the identity of one who agreeably exists under both the orders of ambiguous sources (or initiating forces) (Poole 136, 163)¹⁴ and the observable shaping of corporate mechanizations (Poole 162-163).¹⁵ Dillon is also shown to put a degree of faith within

¹³ The upper-class is more educated than the lower-class, but is fairly ignorant when compared to those of the past in Stevens' work.

¹⁴ "You want to look harder and harder—until you find out for yourself that there are men up there on Wall Street without whose brains no big thing can be done in this country. I'm working under their orders and some day I hope you'll be doing the same" (Poole 136). "behind him those mysterious powers downtown, the men he had called the brains of the nation, who read the signs of the new times" (Poole 163),

¹⁵ "My view of the harbor was different now. I had seen it before as a vast machine molding the lives of all people around it. But now behind the machine itself I felt the minds of its molders. I saw its ponderous masses of freight, its multitudes of people, all pushed and shifted this way and that by these invisible powers. And by degrees I made for myself a new god, and its name was Efficiency. Here at last was a god that I felt could stand! I had made so many in years gone by, I had been making them all my life—from those first fearful idols, the condors and the cannibals, to the kind old god of goodness in my mother's church and the radiant goddess of beauty and art over

the current industrialization process, which may be seen as alarming by some due to its degree of fervor, as a sole hope for creating a utopian state since Dillon proclaims that over time by individuals joining into their places within the process of industrial advancement “ignorance and poverty will in time be wiped completely out” (Poole 318).¹⁶ Despite evidence to the contrary (as displayed by the steamboat workers), Dillon’s identity is shown to be so directly interlinked to the process of corporate mechanization that Dillon chooses to forego a belief in the power of the individual—for the purpose of creating an impactful change—for a faith within the ambiguously guiding system of industrialization that is currently bringing about an observable pain for those of the lower-class. Thus, by placing his hope of an unforeseen better future (that there is substantial reason to doubt given the current evidence) in such a blatant way, a character of the upper-class is displayed as both willing to conform to the idea that one’s role within the cooperate industrial process should override one’s desires of retaining individually and is displayed as possessing a degree of cold amorality. This degree of faith which Dillon expresses, also, partially ties back into how—under the influence of Dillon—the main character views technology in a deified light (Poole 162-163) similarly to how the upper-class also views technology within *Caesar’s Column*. Though these seemingly religious-like musings are not shown to be Dillon’s thoughts directly within the novel, this awe of faith in the technological process is shown to be an extension of the ideals which Dillon relays unto the main character. So, through the use of Dillon, *The Harbor* shows the following within the upper-class of its fictionalized present set in the Gilded Age: a faith within the technological process that to some

there in Paris. One by one I had raised them up, and one by one the harbor had flowed in and dragged them down. But now in my full manhood (for remember I was twenty-five!) I had found and taken to myself a god that I felt sure of. No harbor could make it totter and fall. For it was armed with Science, its feet stood firm on mechanical laws and in its head were all the brains of all the strong men at the top” (Poole 162-163).

¹⁶ This can be seen almost as a type of a Heaven on Earth, which ties back into the potential religious devotion.

extent mirrors the upper-class' faith found within Donnelly's novel, the genericization of the individual to that of an industrial role (or a role within a greater corporate process that has led to the broad machination of society) as in both Donnelly's and Stevens' novels, and the normalization of an industrialized process which allows for one to view certain tragedies¹⁷ with a degree of cold rationalization (or amorality) which may be perceived as a sign of humanity's mechanization. The reason it is important to note that these elements of the dystopian works are also apparent within the upper-class of *The Harbor* is that Poole reveals how the process of industrialization, or mechanization, is potentially perceivable as not needing a long reign (such as what Veblen may be suggesting) to have a major impact upon the upper-class of a society—even if the impact is less noticeable than in lower-class. The negative effects of industrialization, according to the work of Poole, can happen in a fairly rapid manner without the need of a distantly dystopian future to help portray the ideas of a mechanized humanity. Thus, under seemingly normal circumstances—for the time period of Gilded Age—the mechanization of the upper-class is displayed as already taking place during the time period of the Gilded Age according to Poole's work.

Still, unlike Poole, it can be said with some degree of truth that the reason both of Stevens' and Donnelly's works focus noticeably upon the mechanization of humanity is due to their genre given that an array of other works within the dystopian genre can be found to focus upon how "he [humankind] will so completely introject the ethos of technology that his highest aspiration will be to become a machine himself" (Beauchamp 62). But, given how *The Harbor* portrays many of these elements as well, it should be noted that the other two definitively dystopian works appear to be tapping into a broader discourse which was being expressed during

¹⁷ Such as reports of the conditions of the steamboat workers.

the Gilded Age through fiction; a discourse that existed outside of just the dystopian genre.¹⁸ Though—as implied earlier—this is not to say that genre plays no role within these two dystopian works displaying a sense of fear towards humanity’s mechanization, or that the dystopian genre does not aid both of these works towards showing this fear effectively, but that instead both of these dystopian works appear to be taking part in a broader discussion that was portrayed for the purpose of warning the general populace about a possible oncoming mechanization of humanity due to the industrialization process. Yet, despite these works containing a highly similar warning concerning a potential oncoming mechanization, it should also be noted that as a warning all three of the fictional works: Poole, Stevens, and Donnelly; respectively display dramatically different solutions as to how to deal with this potential concern. As where Stevens takes the route of destruction, by quite literally disintegrating the entirety of the dystopian society towards the end of the novel; Donnelly proposes the creation of a new commune instead of resorting to destructive means, and Poole proposes some degree of acceptance towards the circumstances which are associated with the industrialization process due to a perceived imminence of the process’s guidance of humanity.

Within Stevens’ work the main characters are shown to justifiably bring about a violent end to the dystopian reality which they find themselves in, when the path of reasoning is shown to fail, since it is portrayed by the ending of *The Heads of Cerberus* to be just in saving the few from a dystopian level of servitude at the cost of an entire society. This occurs at the end of the novel when one of the main characters fails to reason with the ruling class, in specifically

¹⁸ Beauchamp notes Veblen, among others, for the purpose of noting this attitude during the time period. This sentence is also not meant to be seen as a disagreement with Beauchamp, but merely as a further clarification which Beauchamp doesn’t fully include. For the sake of the point being made within this argument above, it should be noted that this moral also extends outside of the dystopian works from this time period since this moral does not seem to be entirely genre specific during the Gilded Age due to the time period’s labor concerns.

explaining to the ruling class how the society has entered into such a degraded state due to technological advancements occurring alongside of ruling class injustices, the main character then finds only one option remains when reasoning has been proven to fail: “He had not convinced; only enraged. Nothing but death remained” (Stevens 176). Essentially, in Stevens’ novel, once reasoning has failed to stop the dystopian characteristics of a society—and correct the understandings of the upper class—then the anger of those who are both able and poorly used must rise “like boiling lava...[and] must strike at something” (Stevens 176). In doing so, within Stevens’ novel, through the use of violent action the main characters successfully bring about the end of both the entire dystopian existence of the society and the influence of technology’s mechanization upon humanity. This is not to say that Stevens’ work does not display some degree of concern for a potential downside to this course of action: the harm of innocents; considering it is for this exact reason that one of the characters self-identifies as entering into a state of nihilism (and amorality) at the loss of an innocent lover due to the fallout extending from the dystopia’s destruction (Stevens 196). But, within Stevens’ novel this issue is quickly pushed into the background of the text—specifically by a reconciliation scene which strongly pushes the focus away from the now nihilist character towards other characters within the novel, and the reconciliation scene also serves to push the focus of the novel away from the concerning issues which are specifically associated with the nihilist character like the loss of a lover—for the violently anarchic actions taken by the main characters in destroying the dystopian reality are stated to give the main characters a much needed strength for overcoming the issues that were present within the reality of the Gilded Age.¹⁹ Thus, while simultaneously downplaying the

¹⁹ The dystopian reality is an alternate reality which is destroyed, and the experiences from this reality are shown to give the characters the potential ability to correct the wrongs of the present from when *The Heads of Cerberus* was being serialized. Also, see Stevens 198 for how the destructive actions are shown to give the characters the

moral concerns of anarchic destruction, *The Heads of Cerberus* portrays the character's destructive feat as leading to a generally positive outcome overall.

An outcome created by destructive action is also present within *Caesar's Column*, but within Donnelly's novel this is not viewed positively, considering the negative outcome displayed at the end of the novel where a majority of the world experiences a state of overall decline (or degradation) due to destructive actions. In a slight concurrence with Donnelly, Veblen appears to also be concerned about the fallout of potentially violent anarchic action.²⁰ Donnelly's writing seemingly agrees with the Veblen to a certain extent²¹ about the type of anarchic action used by the main characters within *The Heads of Cerberus*, by showing that this type of action leads to a purely negative fallout within Donnelly's novel, for Donnelly seems to agree with Veblen that the type of action used within *The Heads of Cerberus* may instead cause the following: the harmful destruction of property rights (Veblen 340),²² a lack of setting up a successful governing body after the overthrow of the current system (Veblen 356), and the possibility of leading to an outcome of both moral and spiritual decay (Veblen 356-357). All

strength to overcome the issues of the Gilded Age (and it may be loosely implied by the comment about the bell that the destructive actions taken by the main characters may be justifiable during the time period of the Gilded Age).

²⁰ Veblen connects socialism and anarchism together, and makes no distinction between them. Given that Donnelly's utopia contains some degree of socialism with the existence of a ruling intelligent class, Donnelly may not have quite the same feelings towards socialism as Veblen.

²¹ Donnelly does not seem as concerned about the patriarchy as Veblen, at least Donnelly does not seem to bring this up as an explicit concern within his work (though there may still be some defense of the patriarchy present within Donnelly's work). For Veblen it seems that morality is only an issue when the action that makes people immoral hurts economic efficiency. The fact that the mechanization process makes people less moral does not seem to bother Veblen, but when efficiency—as well as both governmental and economic structures—are threatened then morality becomes an issue. So, Donnelly and Veblen are not entirely compatible. But, their arguments do show some of the same conclusions such as those mentioned above.

²² Though Donnelly may be less stringent on property rights, given Donnelly's utopia, the novel views it as a negative when the upper-class's homes are invaded by The Brotherhood of Destruction given that this action leads to a greater harm (and potentially no benefits) for those individuals who reside within the society that has now been overthrown.

three of these outcomes are clearly visible after, and during, the overthrow of the upper-class within Donnelly's novel as displayed by the actions of those who make up the rebelling faction. So, as an effort to avoid the downsides of violent actions—while also serving to give an alternative towards changing the dystopian nature of a mechanized humanity (which Donnelly views in a negative light unlike Veblen)—Donnelly proposes the creation of a new commune which is separate from both the abuses of the upper-class as portrayed within Donnelly's novel and the anarchically violent tendencies of those who are portrayed as being part of the rebelling faction. But this utopian commune may not be the seemingly perfect solution that it is portrayed to be within Donnelly's work, for the commune can also be said to have certain characteristics which could potentially turn dystopian (or have dystopian leanings).

Though the commune within Donnelly's novel does not explicitly take the form of a new utopian corporation within the novel, per se, the commune itself possesses some characteristics which Prettyman proscribes to "Utopians of Cooperation."²³ Within the commune formed inside of Donnelly's novel there is still an observable differentiation (or hierarchy) between those who are deemed to be part of the intelligent-class and those of the working class, which establishes a power dynamic within the utopian community, and the presence of religious rhetoric is also used to signify that everyone is conjoined beneficially in this new type of government despite the community potentially not being as conjunctive as the rhetoric seems to imply. As Prettyman points out the utopian communities conceived during the Gilded Age, which show themselves to have certain corporate characteristics, may include "subordinating division of the corporation into management and labor—or head and body, brains and muscles—can be used to justify institutions that more or less literally embody economic and/or social class distinctions"

²³ This phrase is taken from the title of Prettyman's article "Gilded Age Utopias of Incorporation."

(Prettyman 31). Within Donnelly's utopia these types of class distinctions exist, for those who are of the founding intellectual class of the utopia are able to decide one's right to freedom based on an individual's perceived intellectual ability (Donnelly 128).²⁴ Also, those who have created the outline for how this society functions—the intelligent-class—have the right to be “wisely selfish” (Donnelly 90) due to their intelligent standing which is not a freedom allowed to those outside of the intelligent-class. So, there is a clear social (and governmental) hierarchy based off of standards of intelligence within this utopia.

Lastly, despite the claim that the community within Donnelly's utopia is bound by a proclaimed faith in God, it is worth noting that the faith which binds the community is implied earlier in the novel to be divorced (to some extent) from traditional understandings of Christian doctrine given what the main character declares earlier in the novel. The character who sets up the utopian government, for it is the main character who thinks into existence the utopia's governmental structure, states that the role of the church is to: “*fight corruption and take possession of government...*[and to] Turn your [the church's] thoughts away from Moses and his ragged cohorts, and all the petty beliefs and blunders of the ancient world. Here is a world greater than Moses [or the scope of traditional creeds] ever dreamed of” (Donnelly 133). So,

²⁴ Pfaelzer states that Donnelly uses the “bestial and mechanical images of the workers to underscore the workers inability to design a better society” (Pfaelzer 127) when the main character makes this claim. Yet, if this is the case, then the workers are merely trading one ruling class for another (despite one possibly more benevolent than the other). So, the structure of government in some few ways does not change between the proposed dystopia and utopia within *Caesar's Column*. There is still an upper-class within the proposed utopia who have significant privileges over those of the working class, and those of the working class are denied entry into this ruling class on the basis of intellectual grounds established by those of the ruling class. So, the novel does not fully subvert the idea of having an upper ruling class for governing the whole of society given how the novel displays that the workers in the city are incapable of fully governing themselves. Pfaelzer states that how the workers are shown to operate under The Brotherhood of Destruction is used as a justification within the novel for having a defined ruling class within the utopia, when the utopia is established at the end of the novel, to prevent this outcome from reoccurring (Pfaelzer 138). Yet, it should be noted, that this also serves as a justification for creating a barrier to entry which prevents the laboring class from entering the highest level of the utopia's government, and guarantees a select few members of the society an upper-class status.

though other voices are allowed to exist within the commune who speak on religious topics, the main character who sets up the scaffolding for the government of the utopia within Donnelly's novel notes a willingness to create a faith whose main goal is to govern the populace in a political sense. This faith, according to the main character, should also be realigned from traditional creeds to suit a more modern worldview as determined by the understanding of those who comprise the intellectual class (or the understanding of just the one member of the intelligent class who also determined the structures of societal roles). What this means is that the intelligent-class of the utopian society believes that they have the right to create a state-run religion whose goals, creeds, and principles are determined by the members (or singular member) of the intellectual class for the potential purpose of conforming the general populace to both the ideologies and guidance of the intellectual class. Even if this state-run religion is not shown to be entirely in existence at the end of Donnelly's novel, it should at least be realized that both the possibility is there for this to occur and that a state-run government which exists as mainly a governmental functionary to control societal understandings of the populace is often a characteristic which is associated with dystopian governments. This presence of Christian sounding ideals (and rhetoric) when discussing these matters of government also coincides with what Prettyman notes, in so far as that during the time period of the Gilded Age Christian imagery was often used as a way of symbolizing unity in political matters within utopian fiction for utopias that contain some degree of corporate characteristics (Prettyman 32).²⁵ Donnelly's novel clearly displays a religious rhetoric which implies a degree of beneficial unity, that is potentially without social standings, given the image of the commune being of one body. But, by

²⁵ "images of incorporation as a body politic, the metaphorical fusion of (generally Christian) spiritual ideals and incorporation constitutes a related appeal" (Prettyman 32).

the creation of an intelligent social class which is inherently part of the utopia's structure of government—that possesses the earlier noted abilities—the following occurs against unity: the ability to define the requirements needed for possessing freedom by an upper-class (which allows for some to be cast outside of the right of freedom), the upper-class's ability to define the role of religion (including religion's purpose as a governing body) for the community, and an upper-class who is able to decide the structure which the utopian government will take²⁶ by being the intellectual designers of the utopia's governmental structure. And, it is clear that there is a power dynamic—or an inherent structure social of standings—which strongly favors the self-proscribed intelligent-class who designed the initial structure for the utopia. Thus, the intelligent-class was “wisely selfish” when considering how the utopia would be structurally formed in multiple ways. Some of which may not be entirely benevolent, or beneficial, to the lives of the laboring class within the utopia.

When it is also considered that the intellectual class both convinces the community to entrap themselves within the bounds of the utopian government which the intellectual class devised, permanently without a means of escaping into the outside world (Donnelly 232), and that the only transportation to the outside world (and the information contained within the outside world as well) is placed under the control of a select few for whom access is only allowed (which seemingly appears to be those who are mainly of the intelligent-class) it is clear how a guiding of information could easily occur within this utopia for the purpose of shaping the general populace's lifestyle in a dystopian manner according to the intelligent-class's desires. So, even if the community at the end of Donnelly's work is in not meant to be read as dystopian (or

²⁶ Which servers to create defined roles for groups of individuals to a certain extent, including how the upper-class stands within governmental structure.

actively operating in a dystopian manner at the point in time where the story ends), the previously mentioned elements towards building a new dystopian government are present. This brings into question if Donnelly's utopia can actually be considered as a substantial alternative, or answer, towards proceeding away from a dystopian outcome. Even though this society is displayed as the utopian opposite of the mechanized dystopia within *Caesar's Column*, the potential workings for another mechanization of society—depending upon the actions of the intelligent-class—that could potentially mirror the society found within *The Heads of Cerberus*²⁷ is present at the end of Donnelly's novel given how utopia's governmental structure is displayed.

Considering that Donnelly's utopia may easily lead to another dystopia, and that Stevens' outcome may contain some reasons for concern due to the effects which stem from violently destructive actions, does Poole offer a better solution? Though Poole displays some degree of doubt towards the effectiveness of violent actions, the immanence of society's mechanization which is displayed by Poole's novel may be equally just as unsettling as the other two conclusions. According to the writings of Poole the idea of rebellion can lead unto a state of obsession: a state of religious like fervor in which one's dedication to rebellion for rebellion's sake may go unrecognized by the individual who experiences it (Poole 332). This depth of belief in rebellion is associated with both fever and fever reasoning within Poole's novel (Poole 223-224), as well as, maniacal actions through being paralleled to the questionably sane laughter (Poole 285-286) of one who is at the very least physically unwell if not also mentally (Poole 286).²⁸ So, *The Harbor* seems to have a somewhat doubtful view surrounding the idea of positive

²⁷ And, possibly Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* as well.

²⁸ It is stated that Joe is physically "ice cold" (Poole 286) signifying one who is both physically unwell and potentially feverous. This description is directly tied to Joe's dedication to rebellion when it is considered the previous scene where he laughs (Poole 285).

change becoming attainable through rebellious actions—even to the point of derogatorily associating the idea of rebellion with a lack of wellness in both body and mind—which is even more so enforced by the fact that the main rebellion within the novel seemingly comes to naught for no social changes are shown to occur due to the efforts of the rebellion itself. But, the novel does at least show some sympathy towards the characters who rebel. At least, in so far as, displaying both their poor working and living conditions—such as with the steamboat workers—which are revealed to be essentially inhumane. And, also, Poole's novel does not entirely rule out the possibility that one day a positive change could stem from the rebellion of a mass disgruntled laborers (Poole 334). Yet, when considering how probable Poole's novel displays this change as likely to occur, the novel does not show this to be a likely outcome during the time period of when the novel was written given how the novel ends with future speculations.

Yet, as mentioned previously, the novel also takes a fairly negative view towards the mechanizing effects of industrialization. So, the novel cannot be said to be advocating for the corporate lifestyle either as a means of positive change (or for creating utopian outcomes) during the Gilded Age. Instead, *The Harbor* appears to take the stance that worry, disgruntlement, and the path that industrial progress was moving upon during the Gilded Age had no perceivable end point—or a point where it could have been perceivably derailed (Poole 333-335). The progress of the industrialization which was progressing during the Gilded Age, such as the mechanizations of the harbor displayed within Poole's novel, had become something which extended well beyond the power of being stopped; even by the collective effort of a mass of disgruntled individuals such as the harbor workers. The power of the industrialized process, and its effects upon the culture at large, which was present during the Gilded Age had essentially become personified according to *The Harbor*: the powerful force of industrialization had become

something which mirrored a living force that had the ability to proclaim unto the observant “I am life! I am the book that has no end” (Poole 335). So, in the face of such power, Poole’s novel does not offer direct solution. *The Harbor* seemingly concludes that none can be given, or at least known, during the Gilded Age. The power of industrialization had extended beyond the power, or control, of mankind in becoming a sort of enteral force according to the novel. So, Poole’s novel then takes the stance that—given the state of industrialization during the Gilded Age—one can only be pushed around by the current of life which had become intertwined with the process of industrialization. Or, had in of itself become the process of industrialization. The tide of industrialization had extended past the grasp of being controlled by merely simple, or even perceivable, means by the time period of the Gilded Age according to Poole’s work.

Given how each fictional work proclaims a different way to move about inside—or even potentially change—an industrialized world, and how each outcome seemingly provides both noticeable downsides and concerns when each respective conclusion is considered alongside the proposed conclusions of the other aforementioned works, this then goes to show the scope of complexity which industrialization had taken on even during the time period Gilded Age. Each of these novels relay a fear (or discontent) which was felt during the time period, and warned that humanity would at some point become subservient to the industrialized process if they were not so already. In light of this fear, of humanity’s oncoming mechanization, some authors such as Stevens encapsulated a desire to fight against the oncoming effects of industrialization by portraying the destruction of society as preferable to an outcome of dystopian subservience. And, yet, the concerns of this destruction potentially harming the innocent remains, even within works such as *The Heads of Cerberus* which displays this destruction as an overtly positive outcome. Others, such as Donnelly, proposed the idea of a better tomorrow through the formation of a new

utopia. But, when placed under the scrutiny of close observation, it is highly likely that the utopia Donnelly displays is just another waiting dystopia under the label of another name. Lastly, some writers like Poole concluded that there was seemingly no escape from “the process that is going forward” (Veblen 308) as Veblen would state. Instead, one can merely be pushed around by the process of life despite the level of acuteness that one observes towards the industrialization process. But, for many, this lack of all control against the moldings of both mechanical and societal mechanizations is not be a satisfying conclusion to live by. Poole even seemingly concludes this, to some extent, by ending on the concerns—and nervous energy—relayed at the end of *The Harbor* within the main character’s train of thoughts. But, yet, the one thing these three fictional works—and Veblen—conclude is that during the Gilded Age the mechanization of humanity was a noticeable point of interest for those living during this time period when industrialization was taking hold of society. Given the array of attitudes (and outcomes) these works display, it is clear that even by this time period industrialization’s effects upon humanity were a significantly more complex problem than something which merited a simple—or even perceivable—solution. Though some writers embraced this coming industrial existence like Veblen, and others showed an obvious trepidation, the one thing that remains clear is that no one was able to find a singularly universal solution to the problems which were associated with the oncoming industrial lifestyle without at least pertaining some degree of noticeably potential downsides. Like today, when viewing all of the historically contrasting opinions focused upon life in an industrialized world, during the Gilded Age the answers to the problems that faced an industrialized society were all conclusively: varied, contradicting, uncertain, and maybe even inconclusive as to what the best answers may be going forward. And yet, even as both writers and society debated the best outcomes for dealing with the concerns of

industrialization, mechanization continued to move forward through the process of ever-increasing technological advancements—and the continual pressure which stemmed from society's implementation of new technology—which acted as an almost perceivably personified force like what *The Harbor* portrays it to be.

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