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FROM WEB TO CYBORG: TRACING POWER IN CARE

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Late into my eight and a half hour shift as a hospital chaplain, the paper tally I keep in my breast pocket says that I have had only fifteen visits today. My goal is nineteen, given the pressure from administration to boost our office's coverage and increase the number of electronic forms we log into the interdisciplinary chart. The next visit initially appears to be a quick one. A middle-aged woman in a hospital gown greets me cautiously as I knock and enter. Perhaps because the patient is intuiting my fatigue or is just too tired to talk, she responds to my questions with one word answers: She feels "fine"; her stay has been "good"; she feels "ready" to leave to hospital "soon." At the end of a long day, with a few more to go, I feel this visit going nowhere beyond these surface-level greetings, and I am ready to leave a few minutes into the conversation. I ask the patient if she would like prayer. She nods but does not voice any immediate concerns, so I pray for God's accompanying and loving presence to be felt in the room as the patient finishes her hospital stay, a version of the same prayer I say with most patients. Yet, when I open my eyes, thinking this quotidian, going-through-the-motions visit is over, there are tears in the woman's eyes. She wipes them away sheepishly, and when I inquire about them, she tells me of the loneliness she has felt recently. We speak briefly of troubled relationships and the felt distance from loved ones being exacerbated by uncomfortable days in the hospital. She smiles appreciatively as I leave. In the hallway, as I remove my notes and draw a new mark on my sheet, I pause. That brief encounter, the sudden and unexpected meaning at the end – it is poignant encounters like this that keep bringing me back to the hospital. So much subtle meaning is condensed into a sixteenth mark of the pen made before I move on to the next visit. I have three more, so I had better keep moving. Such is cyborg ministry.

Pastoral care is a religious practice and a theological discipline guided by central images and metaphors. Anton Boisen, a longtime sufferer of schizophrenia who co-founded the Clinical Pastoral Education movement, inaugurated this characteristic in the hospital context with his description of patients suffering mental illness as "living human documents" (Boisen, 1960, p. 187). With this term, Boisen sought to expand traditional theological education beyond a narrow study of texts towards an examination of life experience itself as revelatory of God's work

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in the world. Yet while Boisen's image holds lasting influence on the discipline of pastoral care, especially after Charles Gerkin (1984) expanded it into an elaborate hermeneutical methodology for pastoral counseling, the guiding images of the discipline have continued to evolve and proliferate, as Robert Dykstra (2005) catalogued thoroughly a decade ago. Perhaps most directly, Bonnie Miller-McLemore (1993, 1996), expanding upon a line of thinking that was begun most prominently by Archie Smith (1982) and Catherine Keller (1986), challenged Boisen's image to include greater awareness of the sociopolitical contexts of both caregiver and care receiver. Modifying Boisen's image, Miller-McLemore (1996) then challenged the discipline of pastoral care to expand its service to the "living human web" – the social relations, contexts, and forces impinging on the care situation.

Taking the living human web as my starting place, I am proposing here a supplementary image of pastoral care based on my own work as a hospital chaplain: that of the cyborg. Part human, part machine, the cyborg expands the image of the human web by illuminating the fact that in today's neoliberal economy, the caregiver is a part of the web's mechanisms of power.[1] Such a vision is pertinent to the care of the chaplain who, as an employee of the hospital and a part of the medical team, is formed by today's healthcare economy – not just caught in, but a part of this web. Moreover, like the cyborg, who unites and blurs two dissimilar natures (human and machine), the chaplain also blurs the boundaries between care and commodity, striking an ambiguous pose. The cyborg image illuminates the chaplain's ambiguity, posing a number of central questions about the character of care in its current context: how completely is the chaplain molded after her neoliberal setting? Is she more machine than human? Or does the human care that the chaplain offers modify the machine that also forms her? Do human care and political machine unite to make something new, something even caring and life giving, even in the midst of neoliberalism?

In order both to place the image I offer here within the discipline's historical context as well as to argue for the necessity of the cyborg today as a supplementary image, I first briefly trace the modification offered by Miller-McLemore and others of Boisen's living human document. I then link and contrast the cyborg to the web by examining recent critiques of neoliberalism, focusing primarily on the connection established between neoliberalism and current trajectories in pastoral counseling and chaplaincy care. However, with the cyborg as my guiding image, I also argue against a wholesale rejection of care produced within and by neoliberalism. Rather, employing the theories of the feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway and the Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben, I conclude that the cyborg image points to an open, undecided trajectory of care, one that is both steadily advancing the dehumanizing trends of our political context while at the same creating moments of human connection, not in spite of, but exactly through and in the midst of neoliberalism.

Images of Care: From Document to Web

Dykstra (2005) opens his edited collection of images of pastoral care by explaining, "One finds here ongoing attempts by pastoral theologians to say, by means of a wide

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variety of imaginative metaphors, just how they have come to understand themselves and their colleagues in ministry and what in particular they hope their work will accomplish" (p. 2). This disciplinary use of metaphor, according to Dykstra, began with Boisen (p. 1), who sought a new footing for theological education by means of clinical experience in the first half of the 20th century. Having found pastoral care absent during his own experience as a patient in a mental hospital, and doubting the strict physiological approach of his doctors to mental illness (see Boisen, 1951), Boisen, alongside his teacher Richard Cabot (1925), inaugurated a new approach to theological education: "In a time when students of religion were making little use of methods of science, and scientists were failing to carry their inquiries to the level of the religious, we were seeking to make empirical studies of living human documents" (Boisen, 1960, p. 187). With the image of "living human documents," Boisen meant the empirical study and care of suffering individuals, so that pastoral caregivers could learn the religious roots of mental illness, often spanning from moral crisis according to Boisen, as well as offer acceptance and care (Boisen, 1952, p. 280; see also Coble, 2014). Thus, by reading patients as texts, he sought to align empirical medical research with religious care, creating a new avenue for the training and practice of ministers.

When Bonnie Miller-McLemore proposed the living human web as a modification of Boisen's foundational image, she critiqued its assumed empiricism. In formulating the image, Boisen had imaged the caregiver holding an objective stance towards the human document, much like the stance medical professionals of his day held towards their patients. In his (1951) own words, "I should favor some plan for encouraging high-grade research work on the part of pastors in the field, comparable to that which medical men are now doing" (p. 11). A critique of the detached individual who is able to observe and treat the care-seeker objectively was already gaining traction in religious studies by the 1980s prior to Miller-McLemore's modification of Boisen. Archie Smith's book *The Relational Self* (1982) drew pastoral theology towards a critique of "The liberal bourgeois idea of the triumph of the detached, and unmediated, solitary individual ego, capable of self-emancipation"; Smith calls this idea "a delusion because it obscures the dynamic interconnection between the person and the system which constitutes it" (p. 186). In contrast to this mistaken ideal, Smith envisions the self as existing in "the dialectical relationship between the self, society, and culture" (p. 50). He names the interplay between these three spheres the "web of life" (p. 53), claiming that knowledge of the self can only happen when one takes into account one's communal and social formation.[2] A few years after Smith, feminist theologian Catherine Keller's work *From a Broken Web* (1986) also called the "self-structure of separation," establishing the autonomous, objective individual, a "patriarchal artifice," a denial of our deep, constitutive connections within the community and between generations. In contrast, she proposes the metaphor of the web, which "claims the status of an all-embracing image, a metaphor of metaphors, not out of any imperialism, but…as a metaphor of interconnection itself" (p. 137, 218; quoted in Miller-McLemore, 1996, p. 17). According to Keller, this connectivity is rooted in the self's foundational social and familial relations, which are often discounted by patriarchal norms of success that hinge upon separation and autonomy (Miller-McLemore 1991, pp. 75–80). In these ways, Smith and Keller, along with other early contemporaries (e.g., Glaz and Stevenson-Moessner, 1991; hooks, 1984), were drawing the field towards a

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greater appreciation of the limits of objectivity and the close connection between subjectivity and wider political institutions and cultural trends.

Miller-McLemore's (1993, 1996) innovation then is in employing the web of selfhood to critique and modify the practices of care that Boisen's image inaugurated. In proposing the living human web, she draws together past scholarship critiquing the individualism of Boisen's generation while also pushing towards a more overt political agenda for care: "In the past decade, several feminist pastoral theologians have modified the individualistic leaning of Anton Boisen's metaphor by turning to an alternative, related image of the living web…It simply means that the individual is understood in inextricable relationship to the broader context" (1999, p. 90). By challenging Boisen's sense of individuality and objectivity, Miller-McLemore critiques the ideal of decontextualized empathy that is assumed by the image of the living human document, lest care unknowingly omit and reinforce wider structural inequalities and oppressive forces. Examining particularly the issues of gender inequality within the context of care, Miller-McLemore (1996) explains, "When those involved in pastoral care do not know how to recognize the realities of violence toward women, they foster further damage and violence" (p. 20). In place of "indiscriminate empathy" (p. 20), Miller-McLemore urges pastoral theology to learn from voices in marginalized social spheres – "Those within the web who have not yet spoken must speak for themselves" (p. 21) – as well as to expand its mission beyond singular episodes of individual care. As she summarizes in a later article (2004), "Anton Boisen's wonderful 1950s metaphor of the 'living human document' as a prime text has mutated into the 'living human web.' Pastoral theologians and counselors today are more accountable in study and practice to the political and social factors that impinge on people's lives on local and global levels than previous definitions of the field have acknowledged or allowed" (p. 45; c.f. 2008, p. 12). The web thus expands our work to the level of culture and politics, alongside care of the individual.

In sum, the image of the web illuminates for caregivers both our connection to and our distance from others. It shows us that we are not lone individuals who are able to stand objectively at a distance and observe the problem of the care-seeker dispassionately. Rather, we are caught up in a web of wider sociopolitical forces and institutions that create bias and limitations to our understanding of another. As we are situated by such forces, we are also separated from others – those who have their own history and formation within the web, but in different places, set at varying angles within it. We cannot then assume we are the same, or that we can directly empathize with the plight of another. Nonetheless, paradoxically, we are also all connected to one another by the web and are all therefore responsible for care, not only of each other, but also of the web itself, building more just and loving connections.

The image of the web came at a time of and articulated a lasting change within the field of pastoral theology and care. Beginning in the 1980s, but coming to full force in the 1990s, pastoral theology shifted from a clinical focus on individual therapy to wider communal, intercultural, and political foci, as recorded by an extensive review of the literature by women scholars of these decades by Kathleen Greider, Gloria Johnson, and Kristen Leslie (1999). As Nancy Ramsay (2004) summarizes, "Bonnie Miller-McLemore articulated a particularly helpful reframe of the focus for pastoral care…The image of the web…has emerged as an apt metaphor for

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describing a wider focus for pastoral care, counseling, and theology and contextualizes the self and ways of knowing" (p. 10). Moreover, since Miller-McLemore's initial work, other pastoral theologians have utilized the image of the web to expand the discipline further through social constructionist and process anthropologies (Cooper-White, 2011; McClure, 2010a), while others were propelled to offer their own critique of dominant pastoral images from their social position (Watkins Ali, 1999).

Necessity of the Cyborg Image in Contemporary Neoliberalism

While pastoral theologians continue to find the web to be a generative image of care in the midst of our current corporate and neoliberal context (Couture, 1996; Louw, 2002; McClure, 2010b, p. 282), I argue here for the supplementary image of the cyborg as illuminating not only the caregiver's embedment within this context, but also the ways in which her identity and care are formed as a part of neoliberalism itself. On the one hand, the image of the web continues to bring us to an ever more critical awareness of the operation of power in care. Miller-McLemore employs the web to identify differing sociopolitical locations, or in her words, "political prejudices or discrimination based on difference" (2008, p. 10), between caring partners and populations. Varying levels of power and culpability within care are therefore illuminated in her differentiation of locations within the web. Moreover, Miller-McLemore points out the ways in which uncritical care from privileged social spheres can remain complicit or even deepen violent inequalities. All of these facets of the web continue to clarify my work as a chaplain, as well as my embodiment as a privileged, white male caregiver. Yet, I turn here to the image of the cyborg to supplement the web because I want to emphasize not only how my care can uncritically advance social inequalities, but also how care in general has become a part or a device of power. Today, not only are we caught in varying positions of exclusion in the web of difference, but in these varying places we are also appropriated by wider political and economic forces to advance a dehumanizing agenda – that of neoliberalism. We are a part of this machine, being human caregivers formed by the mechanisms of corporate capitalism. Thus, I append the web with the image of the chaplain cyborg, an ambiguous image.

While the realities and consequences of economic disparities have been relevant throughout the history of the pastoral care movement, a new appropriation of care has advanced in recent decades with the progression of neoliberalism. Through a series of articles, pastoral theologians Ryan Lamothe and Bruce Rogers-Vaughn have outlined this appropriation. Lamothe (2012) describes our current economic context, arguing "that state–corporate capitalism's ethos of zero-sum competition; commodification of seemingly all aspects of daily life; the singular aims of profit, productivity, never-ending market control and expansion; and the prevalence of contractual–functional relationships in society have become the dominant interpretive frameworks in society" (p. 16). This framework thus relies on the deregulation of markets and the economic appropriation of relationships and other facets of human experience, exploiting human needs as open markets to be satisfied by purchasable commodities and professionals. Moreover, like a religion itself, these appropriations are supported by "socially held symbols,

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narratives, and rituals…embodied in a group or society's public institutions and social–symbolic spaces" (Lamothe, 2014, p. 378). Foremost among these, according to Lamothe (2006), are claims of exceptionalism, altruism, and innocence, narratives that name the West and its military and economic interests as the guarantors of stability, freedom, and democracy around the globe. These narratives are then supported by rituals; for example, those of public mourning for American service members who perish in expansionist wars, while lives taken or destroyed by Western military, intelligence, and corporate interests go unseen and un-mourned (Lamothe, 2013; c.f. Coble, 2015). In other words, foundational narratives and ritualized practices support and protect neoliberalism; which takes over or appropriates a sphere of devotion and identity formation once claimed by traditional religions and communities, proffering individual satisfaction and public good while servicing market needs.

Not only does neoliberalism appropriate the spheres of religious narrative and formation, it also employs religious caregiving practices. Rogers-Vaughn is particularly concerned with the appropriation of pastoral counseling by neoliberalism through the former's adoption of the medical disease model and its shift to spirituality. Critiquing the disease model, he claims that, "The dominant discourses of depression in societies of late capitalism view it simply as a disease. Thus, the objective of care is basically to expunge this nuisance and render individuals, and the populace as a whole, optimistic, happy, and productive" (2014, p. 504). In other words, the medical model individualizes issues, such as widespread depression, which actually reflect wider social dysfunctions. Isolated, fragmented, and depressed individuals and communities are, in reality, the result of the commodification of human activity and systemic economic disparity (2013, p. 4; see also Helsel, 2015), yet the disease model denies these systemic issues by simplifying illness to chemical imbalances and isolated relational difficulties. Pastoral counseling, in turn, according to Rogers-Vaughn (2013), "has found it necessary to adopt, or at least accommodate, the prevalence of the disease model in order to compete in the psychotherapy market" (p. 9). It has thus surrendered its communal and prophetic impact in order to stay viable as a profession (Couture and Hester, 1999).

Along the same line, Rogers-Vaughn (2013) critiques the discursive move by the profession away from the titles of religious or pastoral care, adopting the more general term "spirituality." Whereas religion holds connotations of historical traditions and communities, spirituality remains individualistic; thus, it is more easily packaged by professionals needing to sell their spiritual services to wider, pluralistic audiences. According to Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2005), cited by Rogers-Vaughn, spirituality *is* the neoliberal appropriation of a need that was once met through communal belonging and religious traditions. Today, this need is repackaged into notions of personal development and authenticity, satisfied individually by a number of commodities and professionals. Thus, concludes Rogers-Vaughn (2013) passionately, "The replacement of religion with spirituality is perhaps the most pervasive, effective, and malignant strategy neoliberalism uses to marginalize theology and neutralize its prophetic threat. I intend to be quite clear on this point: in the context of global neoliberalism, spirituality is not part of the solution. It is part of the problem" (p. 5). In summary, according to Rogers-Vaughn, as pastoral counseling appropriates the models and discourses of medicine and secular

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psychotherapy, so too is it appropriated by wider economic forces, servicing marketable individual satisfaction and moving away from systemic change.

Both of the charges Rogers-Vaughn brings against pastoral counseling are applicable to hospital chaplaincy. In its precarious place in medicine, our profession molds itself after a diagnostic model by promoting spiritual screenings and carrying out spiritual assessments (Fitchett, 1993), which chaplains then log into interdisciplinary charts as part of our institution's overall care. Though spiritual assessment takes a dialogical approach with the patient as the chaplain seeks to understand her meaning-making capacities, strengths, and support networks, the chaplain nonetheless diagnoses the patient's spiritual health in her role as a health professional, recording data for other professionals on the care team. This task thus secures the chaplain's power as expert over the patient; the patient becomes an individualized object of the chaplain's screening and intervention.

Further, like pastoral counseling, chaplaincy is also adopting the term "spiritual" in place of pastoral care. The *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality and Healthcare* reflects this change in its definition of "spiritual care":

> *When we use the term 'spiritual care' we are referring both to aspects of religious care and also to actions taken in situations where there is no formal religious identification, but many of the issues usually associated with religion are present, such as existential considerations, concerns about hope, anxieties about isolation, and the need for contemplative silence. When we refer to 'chaplaincy care', we are addressing that part of spiritual care specifically reserved for professional chaplains.* (Swift, Handzo, and Cohen, 2012, p. 185)

Thus, in healthcare, spirituality is becoming understood as a human capacity for meaning-making, often employed within, but not necessarily through, religious traditions. As healthcare has become focused on spirituality, chaplains have moved to make themselves the experts in the hospital of this generalized capacity. As physician and researcher Harold Koenig (2013) argues, "chaplains are the true spiritual care specialists, and are the only professionals within the health care setting who are specifically trained to meet spiritual needs" (p. 155). Both healthcare in general and chaplaincy in particular have moved to make spirituality, rather than religion, a central concern of health and wellbeing.

These moves bring chaplaincy under the critiques of Lamothe and Rogers-Vaughn. In chaplaincy, the personalized care once carried out by congregations and community clergy is partitioned out to medical professionals employed by hospitals under the title of "spiritual care." As a chaplain, my care is a service, packaged within the market of healthcare, sold as one of the numerous products provided by the hospital to its patients. I am therefore pressed by my office and the hospital administration to expand my coverage in order to service as many patients as possible, but only for individualized care rather than systemic change, and just for the short time that these patients are in the hospital. Moreover, my care is generalized, said to serve a wide variety of faith backgrounds under the title of spirituality, separated from a specific religion. As a chaplain, my care is beyond innocence; my very presence in the hospital room with a patient is made possible by a capitalist system that today runs our healthcare. I am a part of the neoliberal matrix of the hospital, thus implicated in its networks of power and exchange.

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Rogers-Vaughn (2014) characterizes neoliberalism by its objectifying stance. It renders us into objects of exchange rather than subjects in community, "cutting individuals off from deep connection with others and from social institutions" (p. 512). The current economic system thus mechanizes people, caregivers and care-receivers, making us a part of a machine that turns needs into markets and care into a commodity. Thus, I name the chaplain a *cyborg*, not just caught in the web of neoliberalism, but also a part of its objectifying machine. Understandably, Lamothe and Rogers-Vaughn are both pessimistic about the possibilities of community and care under the hegemony of neoliberalism. As a consequence, they offer traditional Christian symbols and theologies – for example, the *imago dei* (Lamothe, 2012, p. 17; 2013, p. 15; 2014, p. 384) and the theology of Edward Farley (Rogers-Vaughn, 2013, pp. 12–15) – as alternative political trajectories. While I am sympathetic to such pessimism in our current system, nonetheless I turn to the image of the cyborg because I wish to illuminate more of the ambiguity, even the possibilities, of care in neoliberalism. As my care is created and shaped to meet market needs, I still catch moments of humanity and community with patients, like the moment after prayer in the opening vignette. Such moments appear not in spite of, but precisely because of my presence as an agent of the market. As a cyborg, my care thus blurs the boundaries of the human and the machine, subject and object.

The Ambiguity of the Cyborg: Donna Haraway and Giorgio Agamben

Donna Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985) was first published in the *Socialist Review*. In it, she speaks critically against a tendency within second-wave feminism, especially white feminism, to rely on homogeneous and innocent portrayals of its own political project. Such reliance, according to Haraway, polices the boundaries of feminism and disregards its own historical compliancy with racist and capitalist structures. Thus, Haraway turns to the cyborg, a synthesis of human and machine, "as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings" (p. 66). Cyborgs know no Garden of Eden and cannot feign innocence. Appearing in science fiction, they promoted and guided the arms and space races of the 20th century, and thus "are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism" (p. 68). Yet while the cyborg is implicated as a tool of domination, says Haraway, it also illuminates lived experience at places of boundary confusion, "not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (p. 72). Seeing ourselves in the image of the cyborg helps us understand our compliancy and associations with the forces of domination, but at the same time it reminds us that the boundaries and discourses of domination are fluid, constantly negotiated and refigured, part machine, but also, in part, human.

Haraway (1997) employs the cyborg figure from her standpoint as a feminist philosopher of science, "a child of the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and technoscience" (p. 3). As a scientist, she sees "contending popular and technical languages constructing biomedical, biotechnical bodies and selves in post-modern scientific culture" and wants to have a hand in such constructions, reworking

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discourse towards connection and liberative political action (1991, p. 204). In other words, Haraway sees how discourses – scientific and popular – draw and refigure boundaries around and between persons, and thus sees these boundaries as mobile and contestable: "The point is to get at how worlds are made and unmade, in order to participate in the processes…If technology, like language, is a form of life, we cannot afford neutrality about its constitution and sustenance" (1994, p. 62). Haraway is thus optimistic about the possibilities of cyborg political action. The cyborg is an image of world construction. Defying any myth of origin, it illuminates the socially constructed nature of selfhood as well as its always-already implication within the mechanics of power. Yet the cyborg is also finally undecided, machine yet human, implicated yet striving to construct new connections, new boundaries, new human–machines: "A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity…The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; *they* do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they" (1985, p. 99). Haraway thus imagines cyborg actors reconfiguring dominant discourses towards more just systems, or, as she articulates the project in a later work, "Feminist inquiry is about understanding…how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently" (2003, p. 7). Thus, even though we find ourselves interpellated into oppressive systems, we may still find avenues for agency, coalitions, and action in the contestation of systems. The cyborg is certainly inscribed in the political machine, but she also blurs and redraws boundaries between the machine and the human.

Like Miller-McLemore's web, the cyborg image illuminates our contextual embodiment, thus critiquing ideas of universal objectivity such as those underlying Boisen's image (Haraway, 1991, pp. 188–191).[3] Yet the cyborg also adds to the web an emphasis on care's formation *within* systems of power; the cyborg is always already in part machine. Moreover, as an amalgam of mechanical and human elements, the cyborg illuminates the ambiguity of care, caught in a neoliberal machine, but also, in varying ways, retaining its humanity, in fact seeking new possibilities of the human within hegemonic, mechanical systems. I align the chaplain with the cyborg because there are moments when, following Haraway, I am optimistic regarding spiritual care in its neoliberal setting, when my pastoral presence as a chaplain allows room for human connection in the midst of medical alienation. Chaplains certainly advance the neoliberal project of modern healthcare, but do we not also change that project by our work and care? Does the chaplain not rewrite – in however fragmentary a manner – the possibilities of community as a part of the hospital? Can we realize our place in the neoliberal empire of American healthcare and rework its boundaries, at the borders of the human and the commodity? Did I not make room for just that – even accidently – in a prayer asking for a reminder of God's presence in the above vignette?

However, while scholars of religion continue to find Haraway's cyborg image generative for rethinking liberative theological anthropologies in our current mechanized climate (e.g., Brasher, 1996; Garner, 2011; Mercedes and Thweatt-Bates, 2009), as a practitioner of spiritual care, I must also recognize the threat inherent to the image. As feminist practical theologians Elaine Graham (2002) and Heather Walton (2004) point out, although Haraway concedes to the cyborg's connections to patriarchal domination, she is at times overly optimistic

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of its possibilities to redraw boundaries and liberate spheres of entrenched oppression. In contrast, Graham (2002) points out how the cyborg is also easily co-opted in service to hegemonic structures and images: "Haraway cannot claim a monopoly on cyborgs, or assume that they are innocent of contrary readings" (p. 210). Both Graham (2002) and Walton (2004) point to patriarchal readings of the cyborg in the Terminator and Robocop franchises of the past decades as examples of the image being employed in hyper-masculine ways that entrench rather than subvert violent structures.

Likewise, might the cyborg chaplain also simply entrench structures of domination, under an all-too-optimistic illusion of redrawn, more human boundaries? Rogers-Vaughn (2014) and Carrette (2004) point to such a possibility by emphasizing the cyborg's continued connection to neoliberal commoditization, or as Carrette puts it, "capital concealed inside the narrative of the machine" (p. 50). Arguing that technological and cyborg innovations simply create new markets, Carrette writes, "The machine…is not so much the imaginative space of the digital, genetic and biomedical world providing us with new visions of being post/human, but the relationship between 'representation' and the means of production, the production of capital" (p. 52). Rogers-Vaughn (2014) holds a similar assessment, concluding that cyborg liberation has only collapsed under and perpetuated neoliberal dominance: "Whereas Haraway (1985) once celebrated the 'cyborg' as a version of liberated humanity, it seems now to have become the mindless, machine-like fate of vacuous servitude to capitalist consumption" (p. 514). In contrast to Haraway's optimism, these scholars are thus far more distrustful of the cyborg operating in patriarchy and neoliberalism. What then of the cyborg chaplain? Can the chaplain, working under the image of the cyborg, be relegated to a similar fate? Are we simply absorbed in the neoliberal machine, under the illusion of agency?

To examine this threat, I turn to another theorist of our technologized age, Giorgio Agamben, whose ongoing series *Homo sacer* (1998, 1999, 2011) poses the provocative claim that the Nazi concentration camp represents "the hidden paradigm…of modernity" (1998, p. 123).[4] In the camp, the political subject is rendered into pure biological life, free of any legal protection and able to be killed without the charge of murder (p. 171). Agamben argues that Western politics mirror the operation of the camp today by continually placing life outside of political protections and into situations of extreme precariousness. He sees "the highest political task" of political sovereignty today as differentiating the citizen – protected by the conferral of rights (p. 130) – from the non-citizen, or bare life, which remains exposed and vulnerable. Though Agamben wrote his early formulations of *Homo sacer* almost two decades ago, I see his theory of the camp as paradigm clarifying current political processes, such as the blockage of Syrian refugees from American states (Healy and Bosman, 2015), or the disproportionate number of unarmed African–Americans killed by police who are then not charged with murder (Swaine, Laughland, and Lartey, 2015). Under narratives of protection and order, we see in these instances the state actually subjecting certain peoples to extreme precariousness and death. For Agamben, the logic of the camp constantly reappears when people are able to be killed without legal consequence.

Agamben's project brings him to questions of humanity's ever-new confrontation with technology, or what he, following Foucault, calls the apparatus and Haraway calls the cyborg.[5] However, whereas Haraway holds out for the possibility of

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responsible political action via the cyborg, Agamben is far less optimistic. With Agamben, the machine and the cyborg merge closer together, as he theorizes humanity captured by various technologies. Rather than these couplings signaling new avenues for responsible action as they do for Haraway, Agamben (2009a) fears that, like the camp, they much more often de-subjectize their target. Technology turns us into numbers, products, and property, sapping away our humanity and opening us to risk and injury. For example, "He who lets himself be captured by the 'cellular telephone' apparatus…cannot acquire a new subjectivity, but only a number through which he can, eventually, be controlled. The spectator who spends his evenings in front of the television set only gets, in exchange for his desubjectification, the frustrated mask of the couch potato or his inclusion in the calculation of viewership ratings" (p. 21). In contrast to Haraway's hope of redrawn boundaries, Agamben states definitively, "It is impossible for the subject of an apparatus to use it 'in the right way'" (p. 21). Rather, the desubjectification that technology renders according to Agamben makes it all the more easy for political life to be rendered into bare life, that which may be killed without protection (see Campbell, 2011, p. 56). Agamben (2009a) ends his essay on the apparatus with the following warning: "Surveillance by means of video cameras transforms the public space of the city into the interior of an immense prison. In the eyes of authority…nothing looks more like a terrorist than the ordinary man" (p. 23). In other words, technology dehumanizes us, rendering us subject to violence.

With Agamben, spiritual caregivers must ask ourselves if our practices of care render us and/or our patients into subjects or into objects. As a chaplain, I know many of my own practices turn my patients into numbers: not only is each visit reduced to a tally that I log into a spreadsheet, but the patient herself is reduced in my electronic chart to the terms of my assessment and interventions. Those of us who operate within the hospital know that the spiritual care visit becomes a few clicked boxes, registering the patient's mood and outlook into a few predetermined categories. Our care and our patients are thus rendered into *data*, read by the wider care team and hospital administration. The shift to spirituality from religion aids in this reduction. With my visit, the patient is not necessarily placed inside a historical narrative of God's redeeming love and action, nor do my patients necessarily join a practicing, confessional community. My care may in fact do these things, but they are not the first priorities of my work, according to the discourses of the hospital and professional chaplaincy. Rather, my care satisfies an individualized need rooted in the ideas of healthcare.

And yet, there are those moments of real human connection and community, which are made possible by my place in the hospital. There are these fragmentary episodes: tears in a patient's eyes, prayers with distraught families, deep human conversations about fear and desire. These moments happen not in spite of my neoliberal setting, but because of it, because the hospital places me in the room under the title of chaplain. Thus, the image of the cyborg leaves us in a place of undecidedness, perhaps undecidability, *for ambiguity is the place of the chaplain and pastoral care today in the space of neoliberalism*. Supplementing the web, the cyborg is my image of this uncertainty. Caught in a zone of ambivalence, unable to decide if she is human or machine, the cyborg illuminates care's character today, advancing domination in the same movement that it subverts it. Is the cyborg chaplain within the neoliberal empire she serves redrawing our boundaries in more just, life-giving,

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less violent ways? Admittedly, I lean towards Haraway in my more optimistic moments. But I must also hear the warnings of Agamben. My neoliberal setting also pushes me to de-subjectization. My work surely serves the market, and therefore this cyborg can easily turn into a machine. Sometimes, it feels like I already have.

Biographical Note

Richard Coble recently defended his doctoral dissertation entitled, "Chaplaincy in the Modern Health Care System: Presence, Dying, and Community in the Advance and Subversion of Biopolitics," for Vanderbilt University's Religion, Psychology, and Culture program. He is a visiting faculty member at Wake Forest School of Divinity for the 2016–2017 school year.

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Notes

1 Bruce Rogers-Vaughn provides a useful overview of neoliberalism in a recent issue of the *Journal of Pastoral Theology*: "A consensus is emerging among political theorists, economics, and sociologists that the moral ideology and economic practices designated by the term neoliberalism represents the current reigning hegemony…Known to the general public primarily as 'deregulation,' or simply 'the free market,' the threefold neoliberal agenda is free trade in goods and services, free circulation of capital, and freedom of investment…It accomplishes this agenda through a trinity of instruments: deregulation, globalization, and technological revolution…Financial consequences include the privatization of public wealth, suppression of fair wages, record poverty, and a global increase in economic inequality. Social consequences include unrestrained consumerism and radical individualism, both of which were required by 'free markets' for the sake of efficiency and economic growth" (2013, p. 4). I explore these dynamics for pastoral care in depth in the second section of the article.

2 Writing from a Black Church perspective, Smith (1982) is especially interested in the ways marginalized communities – "acting in the context of their groups and out of awareness of the history of the people" – allow individuals to view critically extrinsic and internalized oppression (p. 94; see also Andrews, 2002, pp. 104–105).

3 Haraway (1991) actually holds out for "feminist objectivity," by which she means embodied and contextual ways of knowing: "Objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision" (pp. 188, 191).

4 By "paradigm," Agamben (2009b) means, "A singular object that, standing equally for all others of the same class, defines the intelligibility of the group of which it is a part" (p. 17). In other words, the paradigm of the concentration camp in modernity illuminates the character of other political institutions in the West. It is a paradigm in that it is the starkest example of a range of institutions that create bare life, that which can be killed without the charge of murder.

5 Agamben's (2009a) definition of the apparatus coincides with a more general definition of technology: "I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings…the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself" (p. 14).

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